

## William Wegman

07.13.12



Left and right: **William Wegman**, *untitled*, 1993, silver gelatin print, 20 x 16".

*Throughout his career, William Wegman has consistently created drawings, paintings, photographs, and videos about and within the natural world. From July 13 to October 21, the Bowdoin College Museum of Art will present "Hello Nature," an exhibition featuring some thirty years of work inspired by Maine, where the artist spends his summers. Here Wegman discusses his long-standing relationship with nature and how it has influenced his work.*

**I GREW UP IN RURAL WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS** in the 1940s and '50s in an era when parental supervision wasn't so important. We didn't have play dates. We were on our own. In the summer I rarely slept inside—I was always in a hut I built or on some adventurous camping trip with buddies. You could just take a thirty-mile bike trip and maybe come home that night, maybe not. People didn't worry about kidnapping. You could even hitchhike. I'm sure it was dangerous, but no one really knew that. It was a great time to be a kid. I played baseball and

hockey and swam in the sandstone quarries that were in everyone's backyard. I had a paper route. I mowed lawns. I wished I was an Indian, having read about them in the *Book of Knowledge*. I painted pictures of Indians using pigment made from berries. Some of my friends hunted. I fished. I knew every pond and brook you could bike or walk to. Waters beyond beckoned.

I probably first heard of Rangeley, Maine, in an issue of *Field and Stream* circa 1955. President Eisenhower had famously fished a stream there around that time. My best fishing buddy Donald, the first of us to turn sixteen and therefore the first to drive legally, got his driver's license and we drove there with two other teenagers. I was fourteen. It was an all-day trip from our town in Massachusetts. On the twelve-mile dirt road to Kennebago Lake, the most alluring of the Rangeley Lakes, we hit a rock and disabled our car. Bud Russell put us up at his camp, the Kennebago Lake Club, and treated us royally. He even had our car fixed. We were shown incredible fishing spots. It was a memorable eight days in 1957.

Then I went to high school, college, and grad school. In 1970 I moved to LA, got a dog, fished the Sierras and rivers near by. My dog Man Ray, besides being an amazing photo and video subject, was a great fishing companion. He was very respectful of the water, never disturbing the pools. A few years later I moved to New York City and fished the classic Long Island, Catskill, and Adirondack streams.

In 1978, after a spell of exploring nearly every lake and river in the Northeast, I found myself in Rangeley again. I ended up buying a cabin on a small lake in the Rangeley region and ten years later an old lodge across from it, which, seven dogs later, I continue to work on and in.

— As told to Miriam Katz