

## ANDREA MODICA: JANUARY 1

BY ALINE SMITHSON APRIL 17, 2018



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For the past 10 years, photographer **Andrea Modica**, has taken to the streets of Philadelphia, wrapped in her winter's warmest, to capture a 116 year tradition of the Mummers Parade under an enormous dark cloth with a large format camera. The Mummers Parade is unlike traditional parades—it can run over twelve hours with 10,000 men, women and children creating elaborate costumes, performance routines, and moveable scenery, which take months to complete. There are four divisions of participants: the **Comics and Wench Brigades** satirize issues, institutions and people; the **Fancies** impress with glamorous outfits that rival those of royalty; the **String Bands** gleefully play banjos, saxophones, percussion and other reed and string instruments; and the **Fancy Brigades** produce tightly choreographed theatrical extravaganzas. Andrea's project focuses on the Comics and Wench Brigades.

Andrea has just released a new monograph of this long-time project, *January 1*, published by **L'Artiere**, Bentivoglio, Italy. Her work was recently featured at AIPAD and she will be in Philadelphia at **The Print Center**, Thursday, April 19, 6:00-7:30 to sign books.

Andrea is a master photographer, with projects that explore all aspects of the photo terrain, including landscape, still life, even baseball, but her elegant and sensitive portraiture, captured with the slowed down methodology of large format, created as platinum prints, have an exquisite language and beauty that sets her work apart.



January 1 Book Cover



Opened Book

Andrea Modica was born in New York City and lives in Philadelphia, where she works as a photographer and teaches at Drexel University and the International Center of Photography. She is a Guggenheim Fellow, a Fulbright Scholar and the recipient of a Knight Award.

Her photographs have been featured in many publications, including the New York Times Magazine, the New Yorker, Newsweek and American Photo. Her previous books include Treadwell(Chronicle), Barbara (Nazraeli), Minor League (Smithsonian Press), Human Being (Nazraeli), Fountain (Stinehour Editions) and As We Wait (L'Artiere Edizioni), now in its second edition.



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Modica has exhibited extensively and has had solo exhibitions at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art and the San Diego Museum of Photographic Arts. Her photographs are part of the permanent collections of numerous institutions, including the Museum of Modern Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Brooklyn Museum, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the International Museum of Photography and Film at the George Eastman House, and the Bibliotheque Nationale.



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## January 1

*Each New Year's Day in Philadelphia, merrymakers from across the city converge on South Philadelphia for something that at times resembles a well-choreographed parade of highly skilled performers, and at other times is more of a sprawling, shambling mob of happy, boozy, (primarily) men in costumes. These are the Philadelphia Mummers. The event is an amalgamation of cultural traditions that has evolved in working-class neighborhoods for over 300 years. Beginning as small bands of informal revelers scattered throughout the city, today's parade includes recognized performance divisions and organized clubs that compete within those divisions. The group represented by this collection of photographs are the Wenches, a subset of the Comic division, who hew most closely to the Mummers' anarchic, free-wheeling past. The all-male Wenches don female garb, including dresses, undergarments, purses, parasols, wigs, make-up and golden shoes, in tribute to the iconic song of Mummery, *Oh, Dem Golden Slippers*. The Wench tradition, and often the dresses themselves, are passed down from one generation to the next, with some groups including all the male members of a family, from young boys to great grandfathers.*



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*Like so many clubs and teams, this group embodies a male mystique, a paradox of inclusion and exclusion that fueled my attention beyond the aesthetics of the parade. As a woman and a photographer, I joined the festivities as best I could. With an 8X10" view camera, I momentarily removed the Wenchies from their reverie and photographed them, isolated, feet away from the party.*

*All the photographs were made on January 1, 2009-2018 in South Philadelphia: a 10-day, 10-year project.—*

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