

# Hospitality: Touching Strangers

## Touching Strangers

There is a triple meaning to “Touching Strangers.” For Richard Renaldi, the meaning is captured by the nature of touch that he crafts. For the subjects of the photos, the meaning is the unexpected response of connection while posed. For those viewing the photographs, the meaning is how touching and evocative they are: a testament to our longing for connection.



Since 2007, photographer Richard Renaldi has worked on a series of photographs for which he asks complete strangers to physically interact while posing together for a portrait. Working on the street with a large format 8-by-10 view camera, Renaldi encounters his subjects in towns and cities all over the United States.

Renaldi's objective was to introduce an unpredictable variable into a traditional photographic formula, and to create spontaneous and fleeting relationships between complete strangers.

In the Spring of 2014, Aperture Foundation published *Touching Strangers* as a photobook (128 pages with 71 four color images), including new photographs from Renaldi's shoots in Albuquerque, Chicago, New York City, and Southern California.

Website: <http://www.touchingstrangers.org/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/touchingstrangers>

## Explore Renaldi's work

*Touching Strangers: Photographs* by Richard Renaldi (3:38)

Link: <https://vimeo.com/68258476>

*On the Road: Photographer proves strangers are friends you haven't met yet* August 2, 2013 (2:33)

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SELDTUaHRxQ>

*Surprisingly Moving Portraits of Strangers Touching Each Other* (9 photos)

Link: <https://newrepublic.com/article/117208/touching-strangers-richard-renaldi-surprisingly-moving>

*Touching Strangers: Richard Renaldi* (12 photos)

Link: <https://fadedandblurred.com/touching-strangers-richard-renaldi/>

**We have met the stranger, and she/he is us!**

## Photo Credits:

touching-strangers-richard-renaldi-05, photo posted by angs school, September 24, 2011, (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0) <https://www.flickr.com/photos/angsschool/6177517006>

man from Moscow, Brandon Statnton, <https://www.facebook.com/humansofnewyork/photos/a.102107073196735.442.9.102099916530784/1874239849316773/?type=3&theater>

## To a Stranger by Walt Whitman

Passing stranger! you do not know how longingly I look upon you  
You must be he I was seeking, or she I was seeking, (it comes  
to me as of a dream.)

I have somewhere surely lived a life of joy with you,  
All is recall'd as we flit by each other, fluid, affectionate, chaste,  
matured,

You grew up with me, were a boy with me or a girl with me,  
I ate with you and slept with you, your body has become not  
yours only nor left my body mine only,

You give me the pleasure of your eyes, face, flesh, as we pass,  
you take of my beard, breast, hands, in return,

I am not to speak to you, I am to think of you when I sit alone  
or wake at night alone,

I am to wait, I do not doubt I am to meet you again,

I am to see to it that I do not lose you.

Source: <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/to-a-stranger>

## Humans of New York (and more)

“This is a picture of me before I lost my job. It was only a year ago but I barely recognize that person now. I was thirty pounds heavier. I was much more confident. It felt like a guardian angel was guiding my steps. Things always seemed to work out for me. Now it seems like my guardian angel is drunk. Now I look at this picture and see a man who's wearing a mask. The man in the picture wants to be seen as a person who does important things. He wants to be seen as confident, and harsh, and a leader. He wants to be seen as an attorney. Now I just want to be seen as a person. Someone who's calm. Who's balanced. Who loves his friends and family. And who's kind.” (Moscow, Russia)

Brandon Stanton started *Humans of New York* in 2010. He writes, “The initial goal was to photograph 10,000 New Yorkers on the street, and create an exhaustive catalogue of the city's inhabitants. ...Along the way, I began to interview my subjects in addition to photographing them. Alongside ...portraits, I'd include quotes and short stories from their lives.” The project expanded to feature photos and stories from over 20 countries. Stanton's work is featured in two exquisite books: *Humans of New York* (2013, 304 pages) & *Humans of New York: Stories* (2015, 428 pages).

Website: <http://www.humansofnewyork.com/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/humansofnewyork/>  
*The Best of Humans of New York* (3:47)

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pw4IHVS9WY0>

## Also see Humans of Canada

Website: <http://humansofcanada.ca/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/humansofcanadaofficial/>

## Why you should talk to strangers by Kio Stark (11:52)

Kio Stark explores the overlooked benefits of pushing past our default discomfort when it comes to strangers and embracing those fleeting but profound moments.

Link: [https://www.ted.com/talks/kio\\_stark\\_why\\_you\\_should\\_talk\\_to\\_strangers](https://www.ted.com/talks/kio_stark_why_you_should_talk_to_strangers)

## 20 Day Stranger

For 20 days, experience the world with a stranger. You'll never know who it is or exactly where they are, but hopefully it will reveal info about someone to engage their life... and more broadly, the imagination of strangers everywhere. App for iPhone.

Link to Video: <https://vimeo.com/92930928> (1:02)

More info at <http://20daystranger.net> and <http://20daystranger.net/faq/>

