

A Story of Smut, Forbidden Fruit, Love and what this has to do with a quote

Prologue:

In 1989 and 1990, I created the “Kamasutra” series, consisting of seven large-format erotic photograms.

The images, mostly diptychs, were shown in a solo exhibition in Munich in 1992.

Many years later, two of the images found a home in the stairwell of my new studio.



Chapter 1: The Quote

In early summer 2024, a completely unexpected problem arose. The fire department conducted a fire safety inspection, and I had to remove the images. So now I had to find a place for these treasures. I found one on a farm in the countryside. Unfortunately, the walls of my stairwell were now empty...

Then, in November, I visited Paris Photo. Among the many galleries, there was one that had displayed a large stack of beautifully designed and printed posters at its booth, each bearing just this one sentence:

YOU DO NOT
TAKE A PHOTOGRAPH
YOU MAKE
IT

(Ansel Adams)



You were allowed to take these posters home, and that's exactly what I did. Back in Munich, I hung it in the empty spot in my stairwell where my beautiful, large photogram "Rati" had previously hung. Without knowing that it was a quote from Ansel Adams, I simply loved this saying; I felt it perfectly summed up my attitude toward photography.

Chapter 2: The Big Mountain Farms Lab

Back to the farm in the hinterland: It's run by a woman who has been living there again for six years, in part to care for her two now very elderly parents, who can only manage the work to a limited extent.

After she had already taken care of my photos two years ago, she helped me a great deal last year with another problem:

She offered me space to store the belongings from my late parents' house, which had been sold last year. Among them were many beautiful pieces of furniture, paintings, and other valuable items.

After all these items had finally been sold off piece by piece, all that remained was my darkroom.

She then offered to rent me a small room so I could set up my darkroom there.

Of course, I gladly accepted this offer; now I finally had a functioning lab again where I could also produce my photograms. I simply named the lab after the village of Grossberghofen and translated the name literally: Gross - BIG, Berg - MOUNTAIN, Hofen - FARMS: Big Mountain Farms Lab.

Chapter 3: Love comes, Love goes, Smut is made, Forbidden Fruit stays

With so much support from her during the difficult situations I've described, it was inevitable that I would fall in love with this attractive woman who happened to be the plant manager.

And I had high hopes that she might feel more than just sympathy for me. I had become friends with her family and friends and was particularly close to her father. However, that turned out to be a false hope.

But my extremely turbulent emotional life found its way into my work:

While I was full of hope at first, I created works featuring flowers and, so to speak, was floating on cloud nine with my motifs.

The more our relationship cooled, the more my work changed: I tried to translate the contrasts, which were becoming increasingly clear, into images.

There was an unspoken power struggle between the two of us - or rather, between her and her father - which could also be broken down into a general power struggle between men and women.

And then, of course, there were my romantic intentions.

“Forbidden Fruit” is the romantic, dreamy part. The feminine part.

It idealizes the longing for togetherness, for intimacy, for purity - for floating on a cloud, for seeing the world through rose-colored glasses. Yet the fruits depicted here have always been associated with sensuality as well.

“Smut” is the opposite of that. The masculine part.

For the series, I actually placed blood sausage, liver sausage, and sauerkraut on the film strips. Or even an oyster with all its juices. In Bavaria, the fillings of both sausages are traditionally seasoned and combined and make for a popular, hearty meal, especially among men. In this case, the father of my unrequited love and myself.

So I didn’t just take all these pictures, i made them.

And here the circle closes with the Ansel Adams quote that was chosen as the introduction to the press release for my exhibition, without anyone knowing this story.

Bernhard Schmidt, June 2026