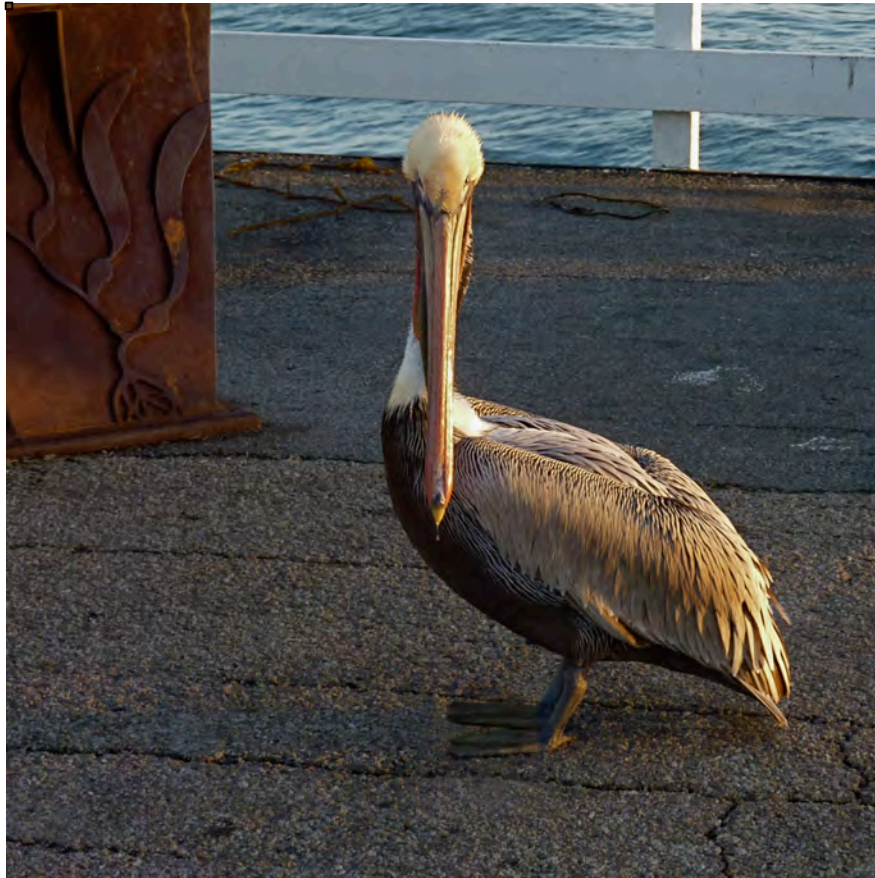


# Balancing Acts



**A photo essay by James Clifford**

**It is enough that it have weight.**

**--Francis Ponge**



**This picture was taken by Don Rothman, a friend who shared my interest in photography. Don died suddenly a couple of years ago. What follows is written in his memory.**

**He sent the image to me, a New Yorker who, like him, had moved to California. I recognized Central Park, the lamppost style, the yellow call box (still operating?), the winter light.**

**We wondered about the image. Does it tell a story? Something must have pushed the lamppost off-center, perhaps violently. Or is its predicament just the result of gravity and time, of life itself?**

**Its not hard to identify with the figure—tipsy, Chaplinesque, intrepid.**

**There's something inescapably human about a thing like this—and more. Objects have their own relations with gravity, with space, with each other. The lamppost is leaning, but so are all the other bodies in the picture. There's nothing level or vertical, nothing but balancing acts.**

**Don told me that he was walking by and felt a presence, almost as if he heard it . He turned and took the picture without conscious composition. What he found was a gently comic, modestly heroic figure; a non-human soul mate; and some information about persisting in time and space.**

**Don's image reminded me of a photograph I had made a few months before, on the UC Santa Cruz campus: an uprooted bollard resting on a stone (or is it somehow holding its partner down?)**



**A certain weight—yielding, resisting,**

**Gravity is something that, with time, we get to know intimately: all the little strategies of steadiness; a reliance on things; the ways we hang together.**

**So much depends upon...**



**Standing up**



**Sitting down**



**Friction**





**Techniques**



**Angles**



**Tangles**



**Horizontal**



**Vertical**

□



**Horizons**



**Roots**



**Hooks**





**Habits**



**Supports**



**Touch**



**Composition**



**Resistance**



**Waiting**



**Persisting**

