

J. D. SALINGER, 1979

The limited edition photogravure by Michael McDermott

ACCLAIMED AMERICAN WRITER J. D. SALINGER is renowned worldwide for a single, remarkable novel. *The Catcher in the Rye* tells the story of teenage angst through the precocious and cynical, but idealistic and charming, voice of Holden Caulfield — a voice that has spoken deeply to generations of readers worldwide. After the novel was published in 1951, it quickly became part of the American literary canon. Salinger's only known novel, it continues to sell over 250,000 copies a year, with 60 million in print.

As the success of his seminal work propelled him into the limelight, Salinger retreated, moving from New York to Cornish, New Hampshire. Despite (or perhaps because of) his growing celebrity status, Salinger has led a life of seclusion, adding to the aura of mystery surrounding the eccentric author. He demanded that his publisher remove his photograph from the book jacket of *The Catcher in the Rye* after its first edition. Over the years, Salinger has turned away scores of journalists and refuses to be photographed. But his obsession with privacy has only fueled public curiosity — and the cult-like devotion of his fans.

When Michael McDermott captured this historic image of a literary giant, the photographer was not much older than 16-year-old Holden Caulfield. For two decades, seasoned veterans had tried, but failed to capture Salinger on film. With a lead, a lot of patience, and a little luck, the freelance photographer spotted the “Bard of Cornish” on his way to pick up his mail. Decades later, this photo is still one of a precious few images of Salinger that the public has seen.

How did the young photographer achieve such a journalistic coup? It was certainly remarkable. But McDermott had been precocious from an early age. Maybe his naive idealism and unfettered enthusiasm were exactly what it took to find a writer famous for portraying insightful youth and rejecting the phoniness of adulthood. As a boy growing up in Vermont, McDermott discovered photography through the lens of his grandmother's Kodak Brownie. With an eye for balance and composition that belied his years, he soon came to realize what many young artists know, but can't always express: They have a calling. Deep down, McDermott knew photography was something he simply had to do.

Though no one is certain if Salinger wrote these words, the original dust jacket of his famous novel reads, “Perhaps the safest thing we can say about Holden is that he was born in the world not just strongly attracted to beauty but, almost, hopelessly impaled on it.” Like Salinger's sensitive protagonist, McDermott's connatural ability to see beauty (and express it on film) was both a gift and a burden. Capturing fractions of seconds of beauty was something he needed to do, to make sense of the world and his place in it.

As a teenager, McDermott became obsessed with photography. Instead of playing sports after school, he would take photos — and his pictures would appear in the next day's edition of the *Brattleboro Reformer*. By age 15, he was stringing for United Press International, and at 17 he had Secret Service press credentials. His photos were published worldwide, and McDermott won a national news photography award as a high school senior. Shortly after graduating, he was publishing his work in *Time* and *Newsweek*.

In 1979, *Newsweek* asked McDermott if he could catch J.D. Salinger on film. Why not? After a two-day stakeout, he spotted the writer as he was buttonholed by two college-aged fans. When they were finished talking, Salinger waved goodbye to the couple and smiled. Acting quickly, McDermott captured a piece of history. What did the writer say to the couple? Salinger had specifically asked them not to repeat the conversation, but they shared two things. America's most sought-after living novelist had told them not to take anybody's advice, including his own. And, he said, it was very important to read.

There were several shots of Salinger on the roll of film, and *Newsweek* paid \$1,000 to print one of them in its July 30, 1979 issue. McDermott retained all rights. *People* chose a different one of McDermott's images for its Feb. 25, 1980 edition — the same one used for this print.

To produce these photogravure prints, McDermott commissioned Jon Goodman to create 100 limited-edition photogravure prints. Developed to provide a permanent, archival reproduction, photogravure is the richest and most permanent method for printing photography. McDermott chose this method not only for its quality and beauty, but also because it translates an image created by light into an image drawn by layers of ink. It also resembles the printing process used for books and magazines, reflecting the literary importance of the photograph.

This 15" × 19 3/8" reproduction was printed on April 30, 2003. Widely credited for reviving the photogravure process in the 1970s (despite its use among the world's illustrious photographers, photogravure had all but disappeared by the end of World War II), Goodman has dedicated his life to the art of reproducing incomparable images. Working with the Aperture Foundation, Goodman has printed photogravures from the negatives of Paul Strand, Edward Steichen, and Alfred Stieglitz. The folio and colophon was designed by Eric Hillerns and Adam McIsaac of Pinch. A Design Office., in Portland, Oregon. Grossenbacher Bros. produced the folio. Inge Bruggeman, Textura Letterpress Printing, printed the colophon on a Vandercook Proof Press. One hundred photogravure prints, numbered and signed by the artist, as well as one bonataire print and six artist's proofs, were created. The copper plate used to produce these prints has been permanently encased in acrylic, ensuring that additional photogravure reproductions will never be made.

“If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you'll probably want to know is where I was born, and what my lousy childhood was like, and how my parents were occupied and all before they had me, and all that David Copperfield kind of crap, but I don't feel like going into it, if you want to know the truth.”

J. D. SALINGER *The Catcher in the Rye*, 1951