FROM THE ROOFTOPS
BY VIRGINIA DWAN

THE YEAR WAS PROBABLY 1969. Bob Smithson and I were having a drink on the roof of the Dakota in New York. I had asked the photographer Roger Piognt to photograph the works in my collection that were installed in my apartment. I wanted the pictures so that I could demonstrate how art looks in a personal environment rather than in a gallery setting. I allowed Piognt to direct the shoot as he wished. When he finished


in the apartment he extended his shoot to the roof, where he captured this image. It was fortuitous that Bob had happened by that day. I think it was the time he came by to give me a copy of Vaughan Williams’s Antartica (the composer’s seventh symphony, from 1953). Some of Bob’s earlier ideas about monuments involving the landscape of Antartica. Bob brought many things into my life. He had a way of tightly referring to works, books, or films that teased my imagination and made me wager to find their sources.

That same year, Bob, Nancy Holt (Bob’s artist wife) and I were to travel to the Yucatan. So we were inculturated with Yucatan lore. Bob was going to place and photograph mirrors in Yucatan locations, creating works that are known today as the Mirror Displacements. He had yet to build the Spiral Jetty and the Spiral Hill, and Nancy had yet to make her Sun Tunnels and other major earthworks. Little could I guess at the time the extent of Smithson’s influence on me or my gallery or his far-reaching influence on young artists today.

This photo was simply a quiet, in-between moment of a precious friendship.

AS TOLD TO BRIAN BOUCHER.