

AN INTERVIEW with Rodrigo Thome

We asked Rodrigo Thome about his life, the pandemic, and his mission of “opening a window that brings humanity closer to the oceans.”

What were the formative influences for your work?

I have had a close connection with the ocean since I was very young. As a child, I remember eagerly waiting to watch the Jacques Cousteau television series each Wednesday. And ever since I can remember, I always wanted to be like him.

Years later I became a dive instructor and my connection with the oceans became much stronger. Other strong influences have been Sir David Attenborough and his documentaries about our planet, which highlighted to me the need to spread knowledge about and empathy for nature. Both Ernest Brooks II, the late underwater photographer and ambassador of the marine environment, and the Brazilian photojournalist Sebastiao Salgado and his amazing black and white photos, taught me a lot about how effectively photography can communicate. Also, the nature photography of the Australian Peter Lik, showed me how powerful images can truly be.

***The Ocean Voice* clearly conveys a message. Could you share with us why you find film and photography an effective medium to communicate?**

Empathy... All my photographs and authorial films are intended to create a connection - to connect the audience with their subject. The intention is to engender in the viewer an immersion into the same feelings I experienced. And through empathy, I believe that we can make much stronger connections. Images are a powerful method to enable those connections that create empathy and can kick start an infinite cycle.

What are the major lessons you have learned during your career as a filmmaker?

I have learned that we can only connect people to our work when we are fully connected to it ourselves. It's impossible to make the audience experience a feeling that you as a director don't feel in your bones.



Have you been able to work during lockdown and adapt to the new reality?

I am still learning how to work during lockdown. As most things in life, there's a good and a bad side to it. I'm having more time to do things that I really believe in.

What are your aspirations for the future?

To spread more and more empathy with the ocean and its creatures. I want to open more windows to the ocean.