



# Animate Objects

*It Will Be Fun!*



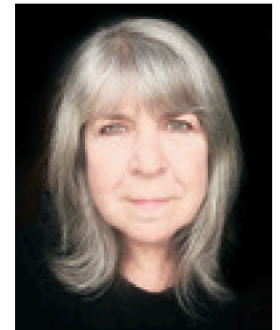
*Gosling*

**By Norma Warden**

Two years ago, we made a lifestyle change and moved from the hectic pace of Los Angeles to the small-town life in Auburn, Maine. I live in a three-generation household with my daughter, son-in-law, and four grandchildren. Like the rest of the world, we have been sheltering in place during the Covid-19 pandemic for over three months now.

As photographers, we are conditioned to be out there photographing people, places, events and landscapes. The virus has been hard on all of us. I set up a small photography studio in the basement. As often as they could be bribed with Skittles, I put the grandkids in different outfits and took pictures. When they tired of it, I set up still life arrangements and shot them. Every time new flowers opened their petals in our yard, I eagerly picked them to photograph. I've taken a number of online photography classes, started making composite images, and dabbled with creating silhouettes, but keeping busy and getting excited about a photoshoot are not the same thing.

When my son-in-law, who aspires to be an urban farmer, announced he had ordered an assortment of baby fowl from the Tractor Store, I was excited! We were getting six chicks, two baby



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*Telling Secrets*

turkeys, two ducklings, and a gosling! I envisioned the wonderful images I would shoot with three granddaughters and a grandson holding and interacting with cute little fluffy babies. Maybe I'd dress them in overalls, and have them sit on apple crates, their bare feet in the grass. Maybe we could put the chicks in a basket they could hold on their laps. The possibilities seemed endless.

When the big day came, we gathered around the cages in the garage where the chicks would live under heat lamps until the weather warmed up. It was immediately obvious that the girls were afraid to touch, let alone hold any of them. They thought they would be bitten, or pooped on, or that they might drop them. For a few days, I (impatiently) waited for them to get comfortable handling the baby critters, but it didn't happen. Only my grandson, Eamon, the eldest child, would hold them. Meanwhile, you could practically see them growing bigger by the minute.

Still life photography is the depiction of inanimate subject matter, most typically a small



*Canning*



*A Boy and His Gosling*

grouping of objects. With Eamon as my assistant, we began to create a new kind of still life, one with animate objects. We photographed the baby fowl in different setups daily in the studio, using items we had on hand. Eamon placed the chicks into the scene, and moved them around to my directions, often several times, as they scurried about. In the evenings, I processed the images in Photoshop, cropping and adding textures to get the look I wanted. Our finished project has twenty-five images, which we had printed in a book. The babies have more than doubled in size now. I'm glad we were able to photograph them while they were small.

In the midst of the pandemic, it was a small thing, but it let me experience for a few days the excitement photographers feel when they look into their cameras and see something special to make their own. ■

Norma Warden is a free-lance writer, award-winning photographer, and a longtime member of PSA. Visit her website, [norma-warden.pixels.com](http://norma-warden.pixels.com) and follow her on [Facebook.com/norma.warden](https://www.facebook.com/norma.warden)

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*Chick Book*