



10075 Commons Street • Lone Tree, Colorado 80124 • www.lonetreeartscenter.org

LTAC Contact: Katie Konishi, Marketing Manager
Phone: 720-509-1024
Fax: 720-509-1101
Email: katie.konishi@cityoflonetree.com

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WE ARE SANTA: PHOTOGRAPHS BY RON COOPER ON EXHIBIT AT THE LONE TREE ARTS CENTER

LONE TREE, CO – The Lone Tree Arts Center is pleased to announce a special holiday art exhibit by **award-winning documentary and portrait photographer Ron Cooper**. *We Are Santa* comprises both black and white and color Santa portraits, as well as in-depth profiles of seven of the Santas (and one Mrs. Claus) in Cooper's book of the same name. *We Are Santa* runs **November 19, 2021 through January 7, 2022, with an opening reception—complete with cookies, milk, and a hot cocoa bar, plus a visit from Santa's Helpers and special guest Mrs. Claus—on Saturday, November 20 from 5-7pm.**

Over a period of six months in 2018 and 2019, Cooper traveled to seven cities across the United States to meet, interview, and photograph more than 100 top professional Santa Clauses. Cooper was inspired to pursue this project after meeting his first professional Santa in Albuquerque, New Mexico in 2017. That St. Nick, named Santa Dusty, is a real-life cowboy whom Cooper was photographing as part of another project documenting characters of the American West. Shortly after meeting Santa Dusty, Cooper became aware of the Charles W. Howard Santa School, the oldest Santa Claus training program in the nation. Cooper was fascinated by the idea that there is an actual school for Santas—and decided then to meet, interview and photograph professional Santas for a prospective magazine article or book.

With the assistance of two leading Santa booking agents, Cooper arranged photo shoots across the country. Each Santa was chosen based on his professional resume and a snapshot wearing his favorite

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suit. Each Santa was asked to arrive at the studio in street clothes—no bells, no red suit—so that Cooper could take their portraits, to be presented in black and white. After that first step, each Santa changed into his favorite suit for another set of photographs, this time in full color. In addition to making their portraits, Cooper interviewed each Santa to more fully understand their backgrounds and motivations, and to hear their favorite stories of interactions with children.

After photographing 120 Santas and amassing almost 5000 photographs, Cooper began approaching publishers about his project. Princeton Architectural Press (New York, NY) was enthusiastic about the work and in late 2020 published Cooper's interviews and photographs in a book titled *We Are Santa*. The book was enormously popular, becoming a best seller on Amazon.

In the introduction to *We Are Santa*, Cooper writes, “I found myself surprised and impressed by the diversity and range of the character we know simply as Santa. I learned about the dedication, professionalism, commitment, and character of the men who portray Santa. They are deeply devoted to their mission—to the children they meet, to the integrity of their persona, to the spirit of the season, and to the history and traditions of Santa Claus. Each one is an inspiration.”

Photographs and more information about the exhibit can be found at

<https://www.lonetreeartscenter.org/wearesanta.php>.

About Ron Cooper

Ron Cooper is a travel, documentary, and portrait photographer based in Denver, Colorado. He travels extensively in pursuit of images that reflect local cultures and people. Since 2015, his work has been exhibited in more than 50 juried group shows in the United States and Europe receiving Best in Show, Best Portrait, Director's Choice, Artistic Excellence and Honorable Mention awards. He has presented four solo exhibitions and his photographs have been published in consumer magazines, newspapers and photography journals. Cooper's portraits have also won several prizes in numerous *Exploring the Light* photography exhibits at the Lone Tree Art Center.

His book *We Are Santa* was published in 2020 by Princeton Architectural Press (New York, NY) and was a best seller on Amazon. His most recent book, *Celebrating Humanity: Faces from Five Continents*, published by Photiq (Leamington Spa, England) will be released December 1.

Cooper's work can be seen on the web at www.ron-cooper.com and on Instagram @roncooperphotography.

About LTAC

The Lone Tree Arts Center is a professional, innovative and environmentally friendly LEED Certified venue. Owned and operated by the City of Lone Tree, LTAC has created a dynamic model for the performing arts by collaborating with premier Colorado performing arts companies to present their productions in Lone Tree while also presenting international and national touring artists. LTAC has quickly discovered its place as a new provider of arts education programs for children and seniors and is an important meeting and event rental site for corporate, civic, private, and community arts groups.

The Lone Tree Arts Center is open to the public from 10am-4pm, Monday-Friday and two hours before performances. Cooper's book, *We Are Santa*, is available at the Box Office for \$22. Artwork is also available for sale through the Box Office.

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