



I See Dead People...Learning from the Hod Carrier

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While enjoying the Delaware Art Museum's "Talking Pictures" exhibit many years ago, I was struck by the image of the Hod Carrier photographed by August Sander (seen at right.) As I studied the photo, I found myself transported back to 1906, the era when Ernesto DiSabatino and his sons stepped off of a boat in New York Harbor and then traveled by train to Wilmington, Delaware. They sought to find a home in a land they had never seen and interact with people they could not understand. In 1908 they took a bold step and established Ernest DiSabatino and Sons, the predecessor to EDiS Company. The courage and perseverance they demonstrated in the face of adversity and uncertainty and the passion demonstrated by them and their fellow immigrants provides inspiration for us today.

The DiSabatinos were stonemasons, plagued by the insatiable desire to build. . . "the disease of the stone," as Father Roberto Balducelli has called it. And build they did. They built buildings, they built communities, they built families, and they built a legacy that continuously challenges us to persevere in the face of adversity and uncertainty. They challenge us to celebrate our "disease of the stone."



Do the lessons of 1908 really apply today in this new century? Don't we exist in modern times with modern conveniences and modern motivations? The answer lies in the image of the Hod Carrier. When I studied the photo, I was drawn to five important features: balance, dignity, spirituality, contribution, and individualism.



Look at the carrier as he **balances** his load. Quite a feat not just for this photographic moment in time, but also in real life. As the Hod Carrier fed bricks and mortar to the masons, he could not afford to drop his load. He prepared his body, he organized his load with perfect symmetry, and he focused intently as he shuffled up the scaffolding. In 2020, we often find ourselves carrying a load. We could learn from his focus and discipline.

I was impressed with the Hod Carrier's attire. He was probably not the highest paid person on the crew, but he sure carries himself that way. Impeccably dressed with vest and hat (pre-OSHA) he exudes **dignity**. When I look at the pride in the eyes of the Hod Carrier I wonder why our industry struggles to attract young talent into the business today. There is dignity in work and there is a special dignity in the field of construction.

The Hod Carrier's frame invokes the image of the cross and reminds me of the intense **spirituality** that the immigrants brought with them to this already spiritual country. The image reminds us, in 2020, of how spirituality was an irreplaceable ingredient in the foundation of our society and in the foundation of our company during highly turbulent times. Let us not forget that this ingredient is readily available to us today, if we so choose.

In his photo, August Sander decided to photograph the giver of bricks and not the receiver. His focus on the humble Hod Carrier reminds me of the immigrants' willingness to contribute their skills to each other, to their families, and to the community. This philosophy of **contribution** is one of EDiS' founding principles and can be witnessed today in every action by every EDiS employee. From retirees to new hires, from skilled laborers to engineers, from clerical staff to our valued field managers, selfless contribution is what sets EDiS apart.

Finally, it is impossible to ignore that the Hod Carrier is perfectly centered in the photo, his own **individual**. The photographer uses the central image of a human being to illustrate the above concepts. Not the hod, not the bricks, not the lighting, not the texture. It's the Carrier. At the center of the greatness of EDiS is the person. My grandfather Paul told me that his father Ernesto always told him, "You are only as good as your people." The people with whom you work, the people you choose to be your friends, the people to whom you sell your services, and the people for whom you pray. You are only as good as your people.

So, are the lessons from 1908 relevant in 2020? I think they are. At EDiS, we are blessed with balance, dignity, spirituality, contribution, and individualism. Thank you Hod Carrier!

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