



*The
Spirit
of the
New
Landscape*

The Spirit of the New Landscape

Some distinctions. Landscape, not scenery. The 'photogenic'—whether grand, or sordid, or merely 1977 trivial—is left aside. Further, 'landscape' is not confined to the out-of-doors; for certain photographers a stairwell may have the potential of a chasm. ¶ But at the same time, these photographs hardly touch that domain, closely allied to modern photo technology, commonly thought of as *the* contribution of photography to our way of seeing: the domain of the incidental, the fortuitous conjunction so unexpected as to lend it the significance of a Darwinian sport. Rather, these photographs bespeak continuity. ¶ What may most characterize them as 'landscapes' lies in the way the photographer has viewed the subject. (This perhaps based on the egalitarian view furnished by his lens, which records indifferently a cornstalk and Mt. Rushmore.) These views testify both detachment and delight on the part of the photographer. Detachment from the subject matter and indeed from any particular mode of expression, romantic or sardonic or otherwise. And delight in a point-by-point exploration of visual events, of constellations of events, in composing a fabric of isolate yet complementary observations. One would be hard put to state here's a picture of, say, a bush as one might say here's a picture of Laura; the bush is an aspect of the landscape, not its subject. ¶ Indeed, many of these images give precisely the impression of looking at some organism: a di-

versity of parts, none dominant, each following its own cycles and subcycles, and the whole working without any discernible master control or even moral purpose. *The squirming facts exceed the squamous mind*, Wallace Stevens wrote. *And yet relation appears, / A small relation expanding like the shade / Of a cloud on sand, a shape on the side of a hill.* ¶ If we allow ourselves this notion of landscape as consisting more in a way of seeing than in a particular subject matter, there is still the question of 'spirit'. The astonishing and almost paradoxical thing about these photographs, albeit detached and indeed factual, is that they suggest a presence, a spirit. Quite possibly, the more one is intentional and businesslike about conjuring up a mood, the less likely one is to note what the elements themselves propose. The inherent spirit is elusive, except to the unbiased observer. Perhaps, then, these photographs, being a subtle alloy of human and optical, could best be described in Sōetsu Yanagi's terms as a way of seeing with the naked mind.

—John McKee

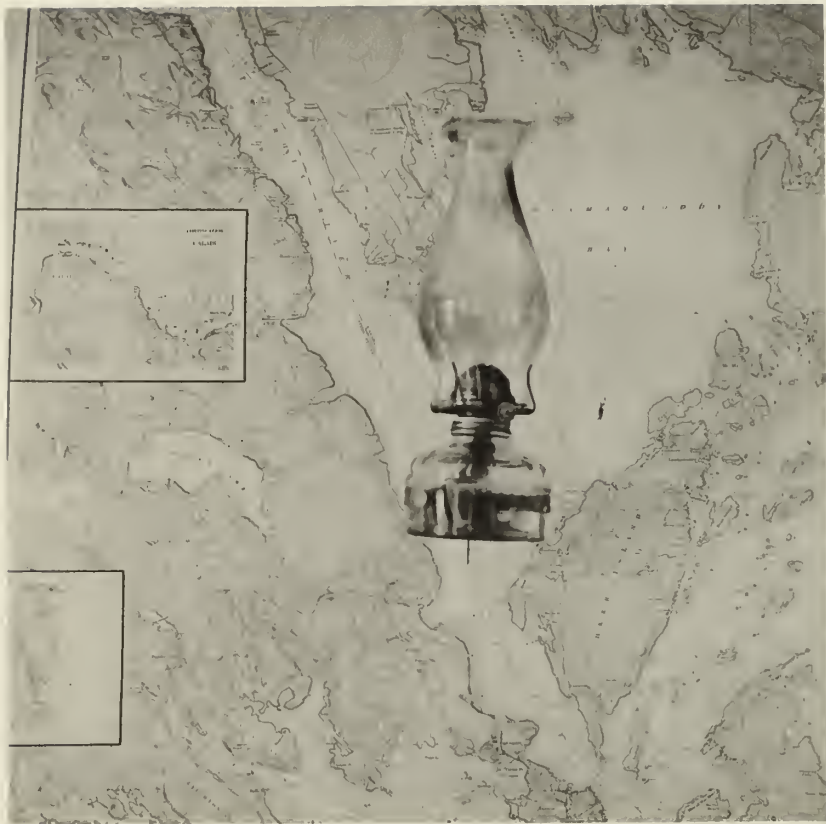
The exhibition has pooled the efforts and talents of several people. For the idea & selection of works, we thank John McKee, guest curator, and for suggesting the varieties of the new landscape, the six participating photographers. May the few landscapes here reproduced encourage visitors to come see the others for themselves.

—Laura Harrington

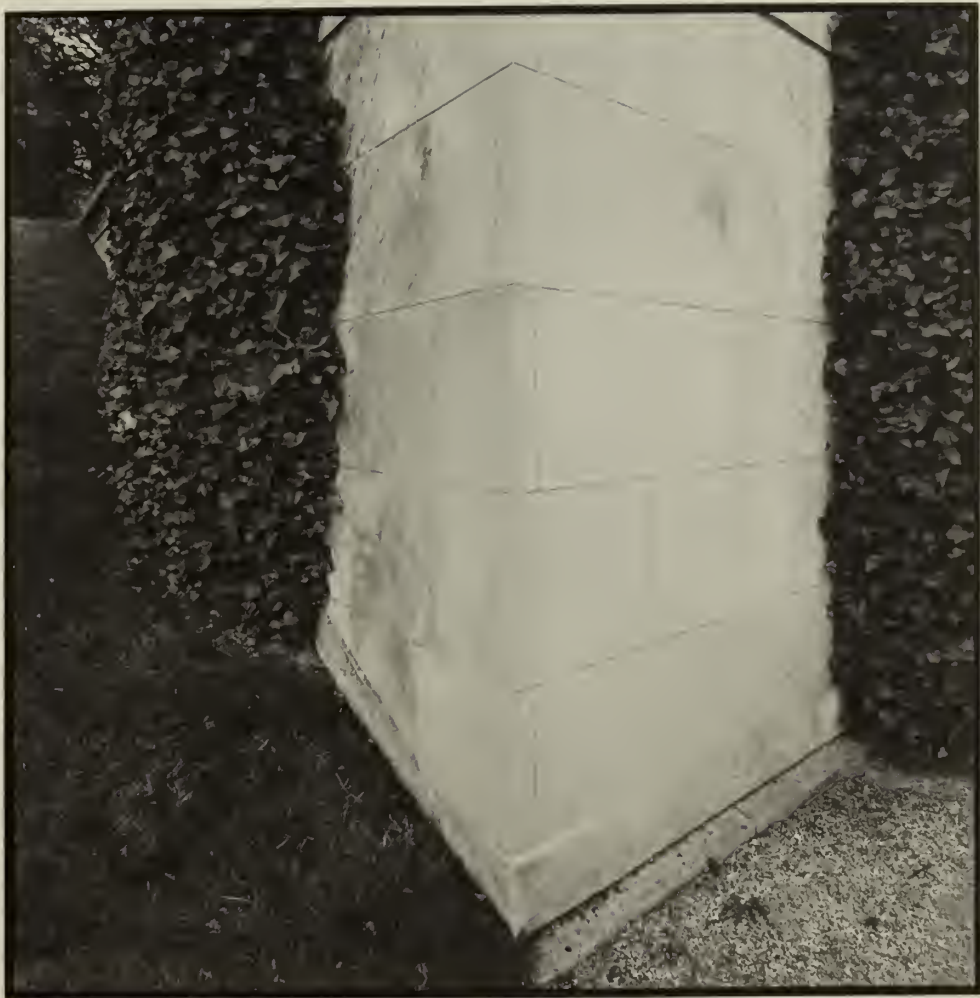
Cover: Paul Caponigro, Trees, Zion National Park



PAUL
CASCIGRO
Coastal Shrub
2000



JOHN COHEN
Lubec, Maine, 1976



HARVEY
HIMMELFARB
untitled





ART SINDBAUGH
Chicago Architecture Biennial



JOEL MEYEROWITZ

Provincetown Cape Cod, 1976
(original a color print)

MARIO GIACOMELLI

Terra abbandonata



PAUL CAPONIGRO

b Boston 1932; studied music and liberal arts, BU; lived in New England and now in Santa Fe. Guggenheim Fellowship 1966, grants under National Endowment for the Arts 1971 & 1975. Published and exhibited widely; has issued several portfolios. PHOTOGRAPHS: from Portfolio Three and others.

It seemed to me that I was exploring two separate worlds, and that somehow I must unite the two. Through the use of the camera, I must try to express and make visible the forces moving in and through nature.... The subtle suggestions generated by configurations of cloud and stone, of shape and tone, made of the photograph a meeting place, from which to continue on a even more adventurous journey through a landscape of reflection, of introspection.

JOHN COHEN

b NY 1932; MFA Yale 1957. Photographer, also collects and performs traditional music, notably that of US and Peru; founded New Lost City Ramblers 1958. Teaches SUNY (Purchase). PHOTOGRAPHS: Kentucky, Maine, and other places, 1959-1976.

In 1959, while documenting the music of eastern Kentucky, I took a set of photographs of mountain musicians. One of these, of Roscoe Holcomb and his banjo, was an image that fulfilled a need and thus became the symbol for the traditional musical roots it represented. Today that image has the look of its time. Recently I printed another portrait of Roscoe and his wife from the same roll of film, and it is this image which looks contemporary now. So I can only ask whether the new landscape represents a change in the world around us, or a difference emanating from our inner sensibilities and perceptions.

HARVEY HIMMELFARB

b NYC 1941; MFA San Francisco State; lives in Davis, California, teaching at UC there. Formerly taught at other colleges and universities, mostly in California. Creative Arts Institute grant, 1974.

The landscape is properly devoid of meaning, particularly if one avoids the 'picturesque', and hence very available as a carrier, a matrix, of personal ideas.... I am interested in the photograph as a surface upon which to array ideas rather than a window through which one looks. I am interested in the minimum amount of information necessary to experience an idea. I am interested in the photograph becoming a new experience, not simply a reference to a previous experience....

ART SINSABAUGH

b 1924, Irvington NJ; lives in Illinois, teaching at U of Illinois (Champaign-Urbana). Formerly at Institute of Design (IIT), University of Chicago, and elsewhere. Guggenheim Fellowship 1960 and numerous other grants; has published and exhibited widely. PHOTOGRAPHS: from Chicago Landscape Group (1964-1966) and from American Landscape Group (1969-).

I don't usually make statements for such things; it is hoped that the photographs can do it for me.

JOEL MEYEROWITZ

b NYC 1938; BFA Ohio State 1959; lives in NYC. PHOTOGRAPHS: Cape Cod, 1976-1977.

Like most street photographers since Cartier-Bresson, my work was structured around and took its energy from the incident. [But] working in color places new demands on the photographer; in turn the results suggest new ways of seeing. One of the strongest messages I received was that the incident might be sacrificed and the photograph might hold together for new reasons, plastic as well as emotional, with color bearing the weight.... On Cape Cod, I was interested in the day-to-day measurement of such vast constants as the horizon, the sky, the sea, and the light itself, and the way dwellings and structures look in relation to those vast systems.

MARIO GIACOMELLI

b 1925 in Senigallia, Italy; lives there. Painter, poet, and, since 1954, photographer. Has exhibited in US, Japan, and eastern and western Europe.

I photograph everything that affects me emotionally. Creation lies entirely there; the photographer, linked to the camera, to be able to catch this universal instant, must know how to choose, wait, then capture the supreme moment of action and expression.

The Spirit of the New Landscape

SIX CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHERS

Bowdoin College Museum of Art

Brunswick, Maine

20 January-12 March 1978