5-1-2015

Landscapes From The Road

Darren B. Schroeder
Southern Illinois University Carbondale, darren10660@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: http://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/theses

Recommended Citation
LANDSCAPES FROM THE ROAD

By

Darren Schroeder

B.A., Southern Illinois University, 2011

A Thesis
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Masters in Fine Arts Degree

College of Mass Communication and Media Arts
In the Graduate School
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
May 2015
THESIS APPROVAL

LANSCAPES FROM THE ROAD

By

Darren Schroeder

B. A. Southern Illinois University, 2011

A Thesis
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for a
Master of Fine Arts Degree of
Collage of Mass Communication and Media Arts
In the Graduate School

Approved by:

Danial Overturf, Chair

Antonio Martinez

Alison Smith

Graduate School

Southern Illinois University Carbondale

April 20, 2015
AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

DARREN SCHROEDER, for the Masters of Fine Arts degree in MASS COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA ARTS, Presented on April 20th April 2015 at Southern Illinois University Carbondale

TITLE: LANSCAPES FROM THE ROAD
MAJOR PROFESSOR: Prof. Daniel Overturf

In this paper I will discuss the images from *Landscapes From The Road* and how they function within a canon of landscape. I will discuss these images in relation to traditional romantic and pastoral constructs of landscape as well as the ways in which the images formulate landscape as uniquely and materialistically contemporary. I will discuss landscape as a concept related to the contemplation of the Sublime, renewed individuality, and its contemporary treatment as a location of transactional and material interest.

I will contextualize the images of *Landscapes From the Road* as representing a more inclusive definition of nature wherein certain contradictions arise. These contradictions primarily involve a conflict between ideations of an originary or primal landscape and that of a landscape defined by human processes of habitation. In my photographs and in this paper I present the idea of landscape as inclusive of both halves of
this equation. I offer a holistic landscape that engages on an ontic and transcendental level as well as on a material level in which the landscape becomes the sight of ambiguities intrinsic to and inseparable from the process of human habitation.
DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents Jim and Donna Schroeder. Also to Christina Smith, thanks so much for your understanding.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTERS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2 – PHOTOGRAPHS – FRAGMENTATION – AND THE ROAD</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3 - AN AESTHETIC OF OBSERVATION</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 4 – NEW TOPOGRAPHIC – A NEW REAL</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 5 – HORIZON LINE – COLOR – SCALE</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 6 – CONCLUSION</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VITA</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIGURE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 8</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 10</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 11</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 12</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 13</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 14</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 16</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 17</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I began *Landscapes From the Road* as an exploration into the relational structure of contemporary landscape, which in this case, happens to be of the everyday American vernacular of apartment house, plowed field, newly constructed subdivision, and strip mall parking lot. The landscape of many contemporary urban societies have shifted from a pastoral relationship with nature to one foregrounding utility and transactional relations. Landscape becomes representative of a condition of ownership and domination in which the personal, social, and natural become fused in a ever evolving matrix of singularity; a unity where-in concepts of the romantic can no longer be thought of as distinct from the material and transactional structure of the urban or cosmopolitan. In *Landscapes From The Road*, I seek to explore boundaries, conceptual as well as physical, in which the categories of the man made, transcendent, and pastoral become blurred, as a result a more inclusive configuration of landscape emerges. In this way I hope to present a more nuanced understanding of what can today fall under the heading of landscape.

All of the images in *Landscapes From The Road* were taken in geographic
relation to the interstate highways of southern and central Illinois in order to examine how these roadways and the environments that surround them function within traditional definitions of landscape while providing an integral vantage point from which to approach a more inclusive and contemporary understanding. By traditional I am referring to landscape as romantically and aesthetically positioned from Casper David Friedrich through Emerson and Ansel Adams.

I found it important to photograph from an observational distance in order to more objectively observe what I refer to as transactional landscape. I define the transactional landscape as a landscape that is ideologically impersonal, and one, which exist primarily as a cultural commodity within the larger flow of material exchange. While claiming a position of objective distance, I also understand that this stance of objectivity can claim only so much credence in a photographic project. So let me state that these photographic observations are mine and mine alone. And while I claim in making them in the position of a detached observer, I also understand that all observation originates from a particular point of view that is unique and personally based. Given this, it is my hope that the photographs from *Landscapes From The Road* will provide some nominally fresh insights.
regarding the material process of human habitation in relation to the
ontologic primacy of the land itself. I will frame the origins of the afore-
mentioned Romanticism of Freidrich, Emerson, and Adams, within a context
of aesthetic and spiritual traditions that imbued landscape with transient
mystic qualities. I will frame them photographically in a tradition that has
evolved from the 19th through the later twentieth and early 21st century, to a
point from which photographic perception and visuality can fully embrace
the nexus, and/or conflict, between those elements of human processes and
the ontologic primacy of the land or landscape itself.

Figure #1.
Fir Trees In Snow, 1810
Casper David Friedrich

Figure #2.
Pine Trees – Frontage Road
CHAPTER 2

PHOTOGRAPHS – FRAGMENTATION – AND THE ROAD

The origins of my project stems from an interest in the relationship between what are generally referred to as landscape and documentary photography. To begin, I will offer a definition of landscape, if only a malleable one, with which to contextualize the title of my project, *Landscapes From the Road*. In using this title I want to suggest an exploration of landscape that is congruent with the everyday, and to suggest that this everydayness is consistent with our state of mobility and urban material habitation. With this condition of mobility central to our landscape experience I want to examine those areas of landscape that come together between the road, the boundary of the urban, and in relation to 19th century romantic constructs of landscape. I will try to show why the concept of landscape plays such an important part in our conceptions of art and as a signifying gatekeeper to our location – historically, spiritually, and conceptually.

Within the idea of landscape there emerges ideals, with origins ranging from Virgil’s early concept of the pastoral as a solitary place apart from from the urban center to David Casper Friedrich and Emerson’s intimations
of landscape as a place symbolic of religious contemplation and transcendental renewal. These ideals bring about an interesting set of relations regarding the understanding of landscape, its relationship to concepts of nature and culture, and the ways in which it exist within the transactional framework of modern urbanism. While I approach the concepts of landscape as beginning in traditions of romantic and transcendental Otherness, it will no doubt be good to keep in mind yet older etymological meanings of the term. In his essay in the book The Art Sininar: Landscape Theory, Denis E. Cosgrove presents the term landscape as originating from a combination of the older “Danish landscaeb, German landschaft, and Old English landscape. According to Cosgrove, “‘Land’ means both a place and the people living there,” as well as the implied associations and partnerships. [p. 54]

At the beginning of my project I envisioned Landscapes From The Road as an exploration into the concept of landscape as a coexistent effect within our order of modern expansion and mobility. Part of that effect is the fragmentation of land that begun with the necessity of commerce and expansion that begun with the railroads of the mid-nineteenth century and
subsequently with the advent of Eisenhower’s interstate highways in the 1950’s. This ever-increasing mobility paved the way for the broadening of urban boundaries and the further scattering of material culture into previously isolated rural locations. In the early stages of my project I was particularly interested in questions such as, are there places where an individual can experience a sense of “freedom from the grip of the external world?” a kind of freedom that Freud understood as our attachment to the unspoiled landscape. [Machine In The Garden, Marx p. 8] Given that this is a freedom that Freud also viewed as an irrational hostility toward the technological advantages of organized civilization, it seems all the more interesting of a question today. In Landscapes From The Road, I respond to how this conception of an unspoiled landscape remains a powerful impulse within the cultural-urban drive to expand. I recognize the urge to escape the core of our urbanity into an idealized, if liminal pastoralism that consequently produces the contemporary landscape. I am also interested in whether the desire to inhabit this liminal-boundary space between the urban and rural is similar to Emerson’s seeking “in nature the spiritual authenticity that the new world of factories and business offices threatened to extirpate
with its endless mechanical routines.”[Kunstler, The Geography of
Nowhere, p. 40] Whatever the reason, whether of individual volition or
socially constructed demand, the urban liminality that exist along the
interstate highways produces a specifically contemporary landscape, a
landscape that functions to connect the remnants of an ontologically primal
sense of nature with a landscape that emerges directly as a result of human
process and habitation.

One of the main difficulties I found in beginning to photograph this
process landscape was to locate a conceptual middle ground in which the
contemporary landscape as such is able to retain some grasp, if only
semiotically, to the ideals of a natural or non-transactional order. In mingling
the conceptual categories of ontically primal and process landscape, I
initially felt uncertain about whether I was drifting from the documentarian-
landscape project I envisioned towards an exploration or criticism of the
transcendent landscape genre that artist such as Ansel Adams engaged. My
most basic point of inspiration came from the post-war new topographic
artist such as Robert Adams and Lewis Baltz who most clearly engaged in
exploring the landscape as a conceptual space inseparable from human
habitation. Or again, was I working – hopefully - toward a hybridity, a new
category that could recognize the older romantic and critical strains of landscape while simultaneously understanding the 21st century landscape as being continuous with and contingent upon acts of human process and habitation.

While a certain strain of modern pastoralism as such may exist and while the outer edges of our urban spaces remain tangentially evocative of older idealisms, what primarily remains of the romantic and Emersonian landscape is a liminality, a boundary area that exists in a continual state of slippage and expansion, a bardo in which the skeletal ideals of a transcendent landscape and the modern transactional ideals of materiality and exchange become enmeshed in the spatial and economic rudiments of contemporary landscape. This is a landscape in which the artifacts of habitation and exchange produce a new normal.

Visually, as well as psychologically, this boundary area creates a new normality, and a landscape particular to the later 20th and early 21st centuries that is constructed of repetition, utilitarian tropes, and aesthetic indifference.
This is a view of landscape in which the romantic notion of nature as something exterior from the human process becomes deeply compromised. In this environment, the definition of a landscape photograph as the depiction of a given topographic area is no longer clearly distinct from the idea of a documentary photograph intended to present a frame of information concerning human activity. In choosing to use the term landscape in the title of this project, I want to place emphasis on the primacy of land as the “ground” on which the contingency of habitation is constructed.

The use of the term sublime in relation to this project is intended to be read on multiple levels. On one level it is in support of a traditional definition regarding a sense of awe, fear, and alienation in the face of overwhelming natural phenomena, on another level it should be read in relation to the manmade and the unyielding expanse of urban constructs. As David Nye states in his 1994 book American Technological Sublime, the idea of the sublime has often times changed, particularly in the later 19th century when “a modified form of the sublime emerged that was in harmony with American political, social, and religious conditions” and the idea of the landscape became deeply embedded in America’s literary and vernacular
In this vein natural locations such as Niagara Falls and Virginia’s Natural Bridge were extolled as examples of the sublime, though, in time, they themselves became sights of contradictory forms of worship, as a natural and unbreachable proof of god on one hand, and on the other hand, they became locations of commercialized tourism. As the years moved forward and needs evolved, technological achievements such as the Erie Canal and the prominence of the new railroad entered the evolving lexicon of the sublime and as Nye states, “the American sublime fused with religion, nationalism, and technology…” and “transformed the individual’s experience of immensity and awe into a belief in national greatness.” [p. 43] I suggest that this sense of sublimity as it relates to a perception of national greatness continues to resonate, though in this case, through the breadth of our everyday material and commercial ventures that view the land as a resource to be used for commercial purposes.
CHAPTER THREE

AN AESTHETIC OF OBSERVATION

When driving along an interstate, the world appears and disappears with an unending sense of seriality and passes with little time for reflection or genuine understanding. The landscape or the topography upon which we live, arrives and departs as a piecemeal string of shapes, objects, and perceptions, like a relentless and uncontrollable roll of film whose individual frames remain indistinguishable. Yet, this is a landscape as definitive and representational of our cultural moment as Casper David Friedric’s *Fir Trees*.
In The Snow, 1828, John Constable’s The Hay Wain, 1821 or Carlton Watkins’ Half Dome Yosemite Valley California, ca. 1867 are representative of the cultural, spiritual, and aesthetic paradigms of their periods. But there are certain fundamental aspects of the visual/observation of the roadside landscape that are different from Freidric’s snow covered fur trees, Constable’s The Hay Wain, or Carlton Watkins’ later views of Yosemite. Among the primary differences, as I propose, is the shift away from nature as an exterior province for reflection and self renewal, to a relationship of the land as primarily a sight of utility and ownership and a place recognized in the contemporary world first as a location of transactional and cultural exchange.
I understand *Landscapes From The Road* as being both in the lineage of, and separate from, the work of artists such as Casper David Friedric who pursued landscape as a metaphor of sacralic and contemplative activity and Constable, who while providing a bucolic view of the 19th century landscape also “effectively turned the landscape into a kind of open-air factory [that] point[ed] to a contemporary model of alienated labor ---endless anonymous labor indeed.” [Bermingham, Landscape & Power p.142] While both artists worked in transitional moments in landscape, Friedrich, in the founding moments of romanticism, and Constable in the early stages of a new industrialism, neither were confronted by the totalizing effects of the post-industrial era. The landscapes of my thesis provide observations of a landscape that reference both Friedrich’s world of the sacralic and Constable’s portrayal of landscape as a combination of the bucolic, open-air factory, and sight of alienated labor.

As much as contemporary landscape has become the sight of urban expansion, there is something that remains fundamentally primal, pastoral and romantic, while simultaneously functioning as the only possible location of enterprise and human process. As Leo Marx points out in *The Machine in the Garden*, for Virgil the “pasture has two vulnerable borders: one
separating it from Rome, the other from the encroaching marshland” and then again in quoting the 19th century writer Lovejoy he refers the “pastoral ideal as an embodiment of the ‘semi-primitive’; it is located in the middle ground somewhere between, yet in a transcendent relation to, the apposing forces of civilization and nature.”[p. 22-23] While the 19th century is rich in pastoral conceptions, there clearly exist a split within the community of artist and writers on the topic, similar to the divide in the photographic depiction of landscape that has evolved since the early 1960s. In this vein *Landscapes From The Road* presents views of a middle ground, a space that is, neither specifically urban or rural. It is a landscape that while being marked by the artifacts of habitation yet remains an inescapable part of the ontologically primal. While partly concerned with older romantic constructs, *Landscapes From The Road* can more simply be viewed as observations of the transactionally determined 21st century landscape. They seek to be neither positive nor negative and neither wholly spiritual nor purely instrumental and neither idealistically transcendent nor wholly secular, but observational of a landscape suspended in a modern liminality. Rather than the deeply subjective landscape that Casper David Friedrich constructed,
Landscapes From The Road presents a landscape of ambivalent materiality. It is a landscape that can no longer provide a transcendent position of Otherness or illuminate a perspective of religious or natural ideation. It is an instrumental landscape conceptualized around the comforts of materiality and existential necessity.

While this interplay of the nature-as-such and culture-as-such has long existed, as in Friedrich’s semiotics of the sacred and Constable’s codifying of 19th century landscape in terms of a relationship between man as laborer and nature as provider, the 20th and 21st century have brought about further changes in which human processes and habitation can no longer be distinguished from the construct of nature as ontologically separate.
This indifferentiation can be seen in the relationship between Friedrich’s, *Swans in the Rushes*, which Friedrich believed to functioned as a “demonstration[s] of God’s presence in everything” and which Koerner sees as functioning through “the dark surface of the canvas…[to] keep[s] us out looking in.” [Koerner, Casper David Friedrich, p. 22] Friedrich’s image presents nature as definitively separate from human incursion. It is a landscape hermetic and evocative and diametrically opposite of my landscape *Strip Mall Parking Lot – Flood Plain* that presents nature not only as fully penetrable but as directly continuous with secularized human process.

While the landscapes of the nineteenth and twenty-first century in many ways seems worlds apart, we should also remember that other 19th century artists such as the American photographer, Carlton Watkins, while
recognized for his majestic views of Yosemite is also recognized as one of the early American photographers to incorporate elements of the man made into his ideal of landscape.

In images such as *Cape Horn, Near Celilo 1867* Watkins view is focused as much on the railroads neatly fitting into the natural landscape as it is on landscape as transcendent or sacred entity. While Watkins may be the most important nineteenth century photographer to show us the best possible view of locations such as Yosemite he is also one of the first artist to present man made structures as existing in harmony with the natural environment, which
led Mary Warner Marian to refer to Watkins as “one of the first American artist of any medium to construct a commercial sublime, rendering nature's grandeur with subtle, unobtrusive traces of new economic ventures.”

[potography: A Cultural History, 3rd ed., 136] It is from this position of recognizing the place of human process as congruent with naturalistic landscape that all contemporary landscape follows. It is a recognition that moved away from Ansel Adams ideal of an uninterrupted nature and evolved toward the more culturally integrated position of New Topographics. It is in part through the conceptual language of New Topographics and artist such as Robert Adams, Bernd and Hilla Becher, and Lewis Baltz that I began to conceptualize my project, Landscapes From The Road.
CHAPTER FOUR

NEW TOPOGRAPHICS – A NEW REAL

“Paradoxically, however, we need to see the whole geography, natural and man-made, to experience a peace; no matter what has happened to it, has over it a grace, an absolute, persistent beauty…the front range is astonishing because it is overspread with light of such richness that banality is impossible.” [Robert Adams, The New West: Landscapes Along The Colorado Front Range, 1974]

Figure #13
Warehouse, Rt. 255

While beginning Landscapes From The Road via inspiration of the New Topographic movement, much of what I photographed from the
roadside is both similar to and topically dissonant from the earlier
generations work. While in owing a debt of gratitude to Robert Adams
and Lewis Baltz, part of that debt lies in coming to terms with their
undercurrents of romanticism, that rather than observe the new
landscape from the outside, struggled to redeem and criticize a
landscape that they saw as victim of the post-WW11 material
expansion.

In Landscapes From The Road I present a series of photographic
observations of landscape as a system of material and natural processes
as viewed from the everyday position of an automobile window. While
concerned with the interplay of human process in relation to romantic
conceptions of landscape, another central concern is in showing the
landscape as a series of vernacular locations and interchangeable points
of view. My project is to present those elements of landscape such as
factory, fence row, or parking lot, that are generally unacknowledged or
viewed as secondary, as central to an inclusive definition of landscape. I
approach these locations as being simultaneously natural and
determined, and as both ontic and cultural.

While my image making began with the assumption that I was
working from a position of detached observation, there are other aspects of the compositions that need to be taken into consideration. In approaching these other aspects of composition I will begin by discussing the position of objects and buildings within the landscape as well as the use of symmetry, sequencing, and color and light.

As I begun to create the images for *Landscapes From The Road*, one of my first moves away from a generalized landscape involved moving toward the depiction of individual decontextualized objects such as bridges and buildings and factories, and examining the objects contextual relationship to the broader, though excluded, landscape. How does the finite object, the building or factory, become continuous with its natural space, particularly when, the broader surrounding landscape is both alluded to and limited by the photographic frame, thus altering the aesthetic and environmental concept of the centrally depicted object. This segregating of the individual object from the larger context of the environment and allowing it to function as a singular structure in a much broader context of landscape became a central part of *Landscapes From The Road*. The liminal space of the object-centric
landscape depicted in *Landscapes From The Road*, stands anonymous and ambiguous as an interchangeable location in the seriality of the everyday. While the objects produce concrete marks in the landscape, they also, through their generality and repetition, create an atmosphere of ambivalence that becomes interchangeable from location to location. Yet each subject remains embedded in its particularity as well as in the ever-expanding urban periphery. The objects become synonymous with a material as much as a natural landscape, a landscape in which the constant slippage between ontically primal nature and cultural process
fuse into an ever-altering unity.

While each photograph functions as an autonomous aesthetic image, they also function conversantly within the serial framework of the exhibition. The concept of seriality comes into play through the individual images functioning within a non-heirarchical structure, that is, by not allowing any image to become structurally or visually more important to the series than any other. As Diarmuid Costello and Margaret Iversen state in relation to Bernd and Hilla Becher in Photography After Conceptual Art, seriality functions because the separation of frames that defines serial photography does
not allow each to be displaced by the next in a narrative of temporal structure, and instead generates tensions between the general and the particular, distance and proximity. [56]

In the case of *Landscapes From The Road* the seriality of the exhibition not only plays between the generality of the overall landscape and the particularity of what is shown in individual images, but it is also related to the serial unfolding of the highways and the interchangeable nature of the built structures that punctuate the adjoining land. This play of seriality creates a sequence of images in which interrelated concepts and forms become part of a conversational body. In the exhibition I used the concept of the serial not only to create an order among the images but to create a dialectic structure in which to invite the viewer to more wholly enter the landscape and from which to pose questions concerning the meaning and relationship between various parts of landscape. The use of serial structure also allowed me to replicate the sequential nature of driving on the highway itself, in which each passing location is related to each previous location and to each location yet to arrive. Each image in the sequence becomes equally important and reflective of each of the other images as well as the
overall system and concept of landscape production itself.

Landscapes From The Road presents the landscapes as a series of interchangeable locations and as the outcome of socially determined processes. Or as Debora Bright states in her essay Of Mother Nature and Marlboro Men an inquiry Into the Cultural Meanings of Landscape Photography, the “landscape is an artifact that can be viewed as a record of the material facts of our social reality and what we have chosen to make of them.” [http://www.deborahbright.net/PDF/Bright-Marlboro.pdf. Web, Feb. 10, 2015] In this case those artifacts are more
than material, they are emotional, historic, and ideological constructs.

Figure #17
Construction Mound

Figure #18
New Construction
CHAPTER FIVE

HORIZON – COLOR – SCALE

While the central position of my thesis explores various conceptions of landscape and their corresponding relations to sights of human process, the images themselves are reliant on a variety of compositional and conceptual concerns. Some of these concerns include the repeated position of the horizon line, the manipulation of color and light, and the size and scale of the images.

While I noted earlier that I undertook the making of the images from a position of observational distance and a somewhat hubristic notion of objective neutrality, the images necessarily contain particular moods and positions of understanding. They present themselves through a certain atmospheric and compositional starkness which functions to unify the images within a particular yet ambiguous psychological and sequential comportment.

In this section I will discuss aspects of composition and technique that each of the images hold in common. I will explain the use of horizon line and the systematic division of the images into foreground, a sliver
of mid-ground, and sky, as a means of situating each of the images within a particular geographic location. At the same time the horizon line functions in accentuating the limitations of the photographic frame in relation to the physical landscape's continuous extension beyond the boundary of the photographic image. I composed each of the images to allow the horizon line to become a unifying constant and a means of systematically organizing the images both collectively and individually. From image to image I position the horizon line in an almost identical position, accentuating a sense of topographic continuance, as well as illustrating the landscape’s randomness and interchangeability.

While the horizon line creates an effective narrative thread as it stretches from image to image, the inclusion of commonplace objects in each frame further unifies the images as both a topologic and typological set. And as Sarah E. James writes in Photography After Conceptual Art in relation to Bernd and Hilla Becher, it is “the typological arrangement of their photographs that enables the viewer to sense the similarities between each and the emergence of a generic type...” [53p.] It is just this sense of similarity and difference that brings Landscapes From The Road together as a sequential yet generic
set of location.

The images also relate through their consistent use of neutral color and light that works to produce a sense of evenness and distance of mood. In order to keep the lighting and color as uniform as possible I limited myself to only photographing on overcast days, often times in a light snow or drizzle. Additionally I used a lower contrast portrait film to create a neutral pallet and a smooth unobtrusive evenness of tone. One of my main concerns in using color film was that the color itself would overwhelm subject matter and distract from the concept of the photographs. What I did not want was to create a set of images in which one would be distracted by an ornateness of color rather than be invited into the depicted environments. To this end I felt that the softening and naturalizing of color, which I found visually comforting, would position the images as presenting neutrally depicted objects and locations that could be viewed for their content rather than visual gratification. To this end I heard from numerous people during the exhibition that the color was so neutral that they at times felt unsure if particular images were in black and white or in color. This uncertainty over the nature of the color seems to have helped some viewers to concentrate more closely on
what they were seeing. The images that I heard this comment about most often were Housing Project #1 and Housing Project #2.

Perhaps this effect was due to the neutral gray and brown tones inherent to these images or perhaps because one has to adjust to the use of color as a medium of neutral realism rather than one of accentuation. Whatever the cause, I found that many people responded to the color of the images favorably.

After composition, context, color, and sequence, the scale of the images is the last important piece of the exhibition. In thinking about the content of the project I knew that I wanted the scale of each image to coordinate with the idea of the images presenting neutral realistic depictions of their subject. While I began tests with smaller work-prints
to work out issues of color saturation and contrast I knew I wanted the final images to reflect the scale and experience of the landscape from the position of the roadside or as one would experience them through the window of a passing automobile. In choosing to print each image at twenty-four inches I found them large enough to produce a realistic sense of viewing the actual environment, a sense of standing in front of the actual location or viewing the depicted space from the relative scale of an automobile window. Finally, the scale helped to further cohere the sequential and naturalistic structure of the images. And in being large enough to be viewed from any position in the gallery it allowed for comparisons to be made between the individual images no matter the viewer’s location in the gallery.
CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I feel I am able to approach image making from a much clearer perspective. Sense the beginning of graduate studies my main focus has been in creating works that reflect and respond to our constructed lived world and the way we emotionally and visually move through it. While always interested in representations of the natural world this project has allowed me to investigate the concept of landscape from a more critical and nuance position. It has provided a ground on which to become more intellectually engaged in concepts of landscape as natural as well as social, aesthetic, and historic phenomena. One of the more enjoyable aspects of this project lies in being able to reflect on the considerable arc of personal and artistic growth the project provided, and in understanding exactly how far the original concept evolved from its point of inception. In finishing, my satisfaction lies not only in knowing that something worth while has been accomplished, but in seeing how the project encompassed a distinct before and after, and in knowing that in the after I have a clearly enhanced understanding of my medium, not only as concept and craft, but as a process of thought interacting in the world.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDICES
Fig. #1
Strip Mall Parking Lot - Flood Plain – Part 1

Fig. #2
Strip mall Parking Lot – Flood Plain – Part 2
Fig. #3
Strip Mall Parking Lot – Flood Plain – Part 3

Fig. #4
Frontage Road – Pines
Fig. #5
Refinery

Fig. #6
Apartment With Barrier
Fig. #7
Warehouse - Rt. 255
Fig. #8
Tanker Trucks – Ditch

Fig. #9
Drainage
Fig. #10
Housing Development #1

Fig. 11
Housing Development - #2
Fig. #12
Construction – Snow #1

Fig. #13
Construction – Snow #2
Fig. #14
Brush Pile & Borrow Pit

Fig. #15
Gravel Pit & House
Fig. #16
New Construction

Fig. #17
Construction Mound
Fig. #18
Artifact #1 - Antenna

Fig. #19
Artifact #2 - Landfill
Fig. #20
Illinois Prairie Restoration

Fig. #21
Observation From Field #1
Fig. #22
Observation From Field #3

Fig. #23
Observation From Field #3
Fig. #24
Foundation #1

Fig. #25
Street – For Sale
Fig.#26
Foundation #2

Fig.#27
Apartment – Green Barrier

47
Fig. #28
Display Home

Fig. #29
Apartment – Field

48
Fig. #30
Hydrant – End Of Street

Fig. #31
Two Story Family Home
VITA
GRADUATE SCHOOL
SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

Darren B. Schroeder

Darren10660@gmail.com

Southern Illinois University Carbondale
Bachelor of Arts, Photography, May 2011

Thesis Title:
LANDSCAPES FROM THE ROAD

Major Professor: Daniel Overturf