

Echoes of the Cordillera

Attitudes and Latitudes Along the Great Divide

Jim Bones
Photographer

Lucy Griffith and Sandi Stromberg
Co-editors

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La Cordillera emerges from the Pacific Ocean, Baja California, Mexico

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Sul Ross State University

MEMBER THE TEXAS  STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

Museum of the Big Bend
Sul Ross State University
Alpine, Texas


MUSEUM OF THE BIG BEND

The Museum of the Big Bend

Almost 100 years ago, the Museum of the Big Bend began with a lone arrowhead found west of Alpine, Texas. Though the Museum has undergone many changes over the proceeding decades, the mission of the Museum reflects the hopes and dreams of its founders. The Mission of the Museum of the Big Bend is to collect, preserve, exhibit, and interpret the cultural, historic, and natural materials that relate to the prehistory and history of the Big Bend of Texas and Mexico, with an awareness of the region's rich cultural diversity.

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The Museum of the Big Bend and *Echoes of the Cordillera*

In the summer of 2016, New Mexico poet and teacher, Scott Wiggerman contacted me to arrange for students in his poetry workshop to see two photographic exhibits at the Museum of the Big Bend. At the time, we were exhibiting photographs from juried members of the Texas Photographic Society on one side of the building and on the other side, images by Jim Bones.

Students came, saw the shows, and wrote poems referred to as ekphrastic, a Greek word that describes poetry written after reflecting on an objet d'art.

From this initial exercise, a correspondence began between Jim and Lucy Griffith that led to friendship and birthed the idea of showcasing a sequence of photographs and ekphrastic poems written in response to them.

The result is this 2018 exhibit and anthology. For the Museum of the Big Bend, *Echoes of the Cordillera* is a series of firsts: our first poetry exhibit and our first book. To say the least, we are thrilled beyond belief. We hope that you have the same experience as you take this poetic and photographic journey along the Great North American Continental Divide.

Mary Bones
Interim Director
Museum of the Big Bend

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Textured Messages ... Back and Forth

Tucked in a book of poems, I recently found a letter from Jim Bones. I treasure it, for planted within are the seeds of this venture. He asked me how we might create “something about picture-maker and poets bouncing echoes off each other’s work.” He wrote that he liked a poem I had written about one of his images, how the words reflected the picture, “a textured message ... back and forth.”

From this kernel, an idea of collaboration, *Echoes of the Cordillera: Attitudes and Latitudes Along the Great Divide* was born. Jim gathered images from a lifetime of work, starting with his early days lugging forty pounds of equipment up a mountain, chasing perfect light. I found an indispensable partner in Sandi Stromberg, with her robust publishing and editing skills. We gathered poets to respond to his images. While the project sounded intriguing, we never dreamed how moving it would become. We were touched, watching the poets fall in love with the images, struggle to pick just one, then honor this talented, humble man with their thoughtful offerings.

From Alaska to Mexico, the poets weave a layered story of the North American Cordillera. A startling diversity of voice, perspective, form and language is chronicled in their contributions. Each poem resonates with its sister image in a distinctive way. Look closely, there is a bit of Jim in each poem, echoing his tender love for our fragile Earth.

— Lucy Griffith

A Fifty-Year Odyssey through the North American Cordillera

Jim Bones doesn't just take beautiful pictures.

His mission with the camera reaches deeper, beyond the lens and its subject, beyond the mere capturing of a landscape.

His are not abstract scenes or snapshots. They are portraits of living places—biological communities of plants, animals, and people, who share common characteristics for the environment in which they exist. Fifty-two of these are reproduced in this book, along with evocative responses from thirty-nine poets.

When Jim began this odyssey, he set out to photograph the North American Cordillera, from Alaska to Chiapas, California to Colorado, as part of a larger project to see all the biomes of the continent. Derived generations ago from the Spanish word for rope, chain, or cord, cordillera is a fitting name for the spectacular geological formations it comprises.

Like the muscular backbone of a great mother sierra, ranges cascade from arctic to tropic, coast to desert, and host an amazing biological diversity. Owing to its north-south orientation, it intercepts moist winds from the West along its length, an ancient uplifted wall of stone that reaches heights of more than 20,000 feet, and divides the flow of waters across the land to the Arctic, Pacific, and Atlantic oceans.

As he journeyed, Jim's project evolved from artistic documentation to spiritual exploration of nature's deep beauty. He also came to understand the need for a bond between humans and our natural environment if life on Earth is to be sustained. The thousands of photos he took became representative examples of the 13 North American Biomes, as designated in the UNESCO Man and Biosphere Programme with its worldwide network of Biosphere Reserves.

Ideally, a Biosphere Reserve has three levels:

- The core consists of an inner area of primal biodiversity, as near to wilderness as possible with extremely limited human interaction.
- An intermediate area of limited, sustainable human activity and exploitation, surrounds the core.
- An outer, more densely inhabited area of related sustainable human activities merges with the surrounding region.

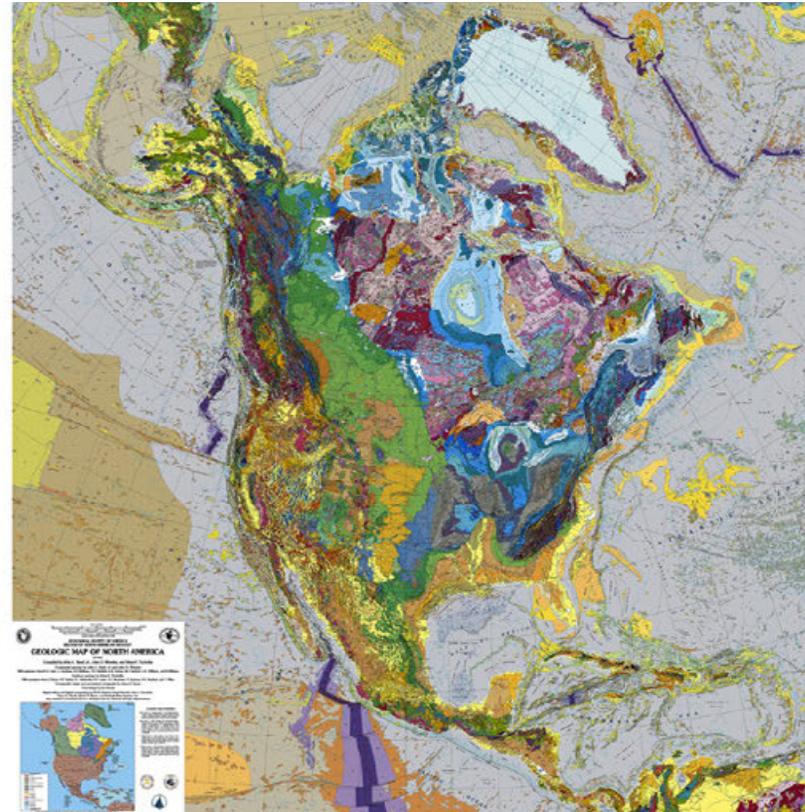
For example, Big Bend National Park is a Biosphere Reserve for preserving Chihuahuan Desert core biological diversity, surrounded by recreational and traditional arid land ranching activities.

“Over a span of 50 years, I have explored the major habitats of North America, looking for images which show that within our shared beauty, we and the earth are one,” Jim says. “They can, however, provide no more than a visual echo, a glimpse of the immense splendor and complexity of this region as they tell one of the great stories of Earth.”

— Sandi Stromberg



North American Relief Map, NASA Earth Observatory, Goddard SFC



Geologic Map of North America, Geological Society of America

The Paleo Magicians: Mapping the Unknown

Reviewing hundreds of pictures for this exhibit, I began to wonder how did the big Cordillera puzzle come together? I recall in 1963 as a freshman geology student, before I defected to landscape photography, being intrigued one day by a department elevator poster that said, “Tech Session Today: Come hear the paleo ‘magicians’ lecture,” with the word, *paleomagnetism*, scratched out. Such was the skepticism about continental migration at the time. Validation of paleomagnetism in the 1960s was a key to unraveling the motions of wandering continents. It revealed recorded echoes of the Earth’s ambient magnetic field and polar orientation locked in the alignment of magnetic iron bearing crystals as molten rock solidified. From contrasting signatures in parallel bands of lava on spreading sea floors, geologists learned that the magnetic field reverses, north to south, about every million years or less, and in the process discovered a chronological “paleocompass,” to track continental movements into the past.

The lava at those spreading centers rose to the surface directly from the Earth's mantle. Discovery of convective upwellings led to plate tectonic theories which propose that cooling crust broke into rigid pieces that continue to move, join, part and subside, riding on the Upper Mantle. Currently seven or eight major, and many minor plates, meet at three boundary types: divergent fault zones where plates break apart; convergent fault zones where subducting plates sink beneath more buoyant ones; and transform fault zones where plates move laterally past each other. Cooling crust thickens as it moves away from hot vents, grows dense, slowly sinks, is reabsorbed, and appears to drag the rest of the plate behind on associated thermal currents that move laterally, 2 to 5 inches per year. These are considered two of the most probable forces driving plates, except for rogues like North America that atypically move without being subducted. Not incidentally, most earthquakes occur along active plate boundaries.

Every 300 to 500 million years it appears that supercontinents assemble from smaller pieces, break up, disperse and reassemble. Pangaea, the most recent supercontinent, is believed to have formed from earlier continents at 350-250 Ma (million years ago), mainly in the Southern Hemisphere, surrounded by one great ocean, Panthalassa. It began to break up as the early Atlantic Ocean opened, and was finally fragmented by 250-225 Ma. After separation, Laurentia (early North America), moved westward, pushed by the spreading North Atlantic sea floor toward an opposing Pacific Plate. Along the way, it collected volcanic island arcs and large exotic crustal collages called terranes, as it collided with, overrode and subducted successive slabs of ocean floor.

The Cordillera is the wrinkled result of ninety or more separate terranes, a few up to 200 miles wide and 1,500 miles long, that were swept up and sutured on between the late Mesozoic and early Cenozoic eras at 150-50 Ma. The Farallon Plate, a very large piece of ocean bottom real estate, collided with North America at 100-80 Ma, was subducted at a low angle, and then underplated the continent. In the process, between the Late Cretaceous period at 80-70 Ma, and the Eocene epoch at 55-35 Ma, that plate became reanimated and elevated the Sierra Nevada and Rocky Mountains, generated volcanic activity as far east as the Front Range, and pushed inland under the Mississippi Valley. Most of the Farallon Plate was reabsorbed by the end of the Laramide mountain building, and Basin and Range stretching episodes, although a small surviving piece of the Farallon Plate remains as the Juan de Fuca Plate, now being consumed under the Pacific Northwest. At about 30 Ma, when the East Pacific Rise arrived at the California coast, Farallon Plate subduction ceased, the Pacific Plate detached the western edge of California from North America, rotated, and began to carry it sideways northwest toward Alaska, along a new transform continental boundary defined by the southern San Andreas and northern Queen Charlotte faults.

Subduction of the remaining Juan de Fuca and Farallon Plate fragments now causes frequent earthquakes, and fuels growth of Cascade Range stratovolcanoes, from Mount Shasta in California to Mount Meager in British Columbia, while the Pacific and Cocos plates are generating similar volcanic activity along the Chiapas Cordillera border. The rise of 14,000 to 20,000 foot and higher mountains, along with Pacific moisture in north latitudes promoted repeated growth of large Pleistocene ice sheets and glaciers from 2.6 Ma to 11.7 Ka (thousand years ago). However, except for one new glacier growing around the lava dome in the Mount St. Helens crater in Washington, Ice Age remnants are retreating everywhere as global temperatures rise, and all ice may soon vanish as the world climate turns tropical, and a new epoch arrives. "Tech Session Today: Come hear the paleo magicians lecture," the poster read. Who could have guessed 55 years later where in the Cordillera that invitation would lead?

J. Frank Dobie

This I Believe

For me, the beautiful resides in the physical, but it is spiritual. I have never heard a sermon as spiritual in either phrase or fact as, "Waters on a starry night are beautiful and free." No hymn lifts my heart higher than the morning call of the bobwhite or the long fluting cry of sandhill cranes out of the sky at dusk.

Not all hard truths are beautiful, but beauty is truth. It incorporates love and is incorporated by love. It is the goal of all great art. Its presence everywhere makes it free to all.



Denali, "The Great One," Tallest Peak in North America (20,310 feet), Alaska Range



Tundra Lichen, Moss, Dryas Flowers, North Slope, Brooks Range, Alaska

Jenny Browne

Tunturia

*...this spill of moss
this rock adrift...*

Hard to be named
for what you are missing.

Taller trees.
Two entire seasons.

Even harder to sleep
with sky repeating

the same question:
Who forgot the ice?

Day stays day
& here comes

more bad news
for the caribou.

*Can you really
forgive anyone?*

The tundra lifts
her chin & speaks

softer at the end
of her shift.

Stan Crawford

Ghost, Dance

How long did the camera suspend disbelief,
how many times the shutter say: *what if... what if...*

before images were caught
of these vaporous columns
rising inside neutral winds.

Bridges between stone and sky,

white as puffs of lace through windows blown

white as the memories ice has before it melts

white as the ghost shirts
of phantom tribes gone wild with dancing.

Listen for sounds of breath,

like tires hissing west on wet highways

like fading notes from a frozen drum

or whispering from the ever-cycling wheel, singing
rising is ... falling is ... rising

The earth gives up its ghosts.



Cloud Wraiths, North Slope Tundra, Brooks Range, Alaska



Lichen, Folded Metamorphic Rock, Chugach Mountains, Alaska

Chuck Wemple

Every Photograph a Message Home

We sit here on the edge of your field, clumps of crusty lichen orange as a fox pelt tacked to the barn door. Sedentary as oysters covered in rust, composites of algae and fungus, clinging with rhizine hooks to acid softened stone.

Do you think of us today? Or are we now no more than acquaintances who've settled into a space smaller than your wallet? Do you know I woke early and watched you slip away across the pasture? Carry off my heart in the knapsack that held a camera, journal, old photos. I've spent years listening to brittle darkness. Longed for lightning white as bone to reveal your silhouette. Have you spawned other clusters that mark the path of your travels? Left a trail of tiny orange suns across a slate grey sky?

Now you send me this photo from the Chugach Mountains and a tiny pebble that gleams in the morning rain like a child's hand littered with minnow scales.

Don't come home. Stay lost. I've home schooled our son and daughter and we've built up a blanket of glass at the wall of the shooting range. My heart is hard as bull quartz and nothing settles there nothing pushes through—not even your letters bright as winter crocus.

Priscilla Frake

Lichen, Chugach Range, Alaska

Small suns bloom
on the storm-dark face
of an outcrop: orange lichen,
perhaps *Xanthoria elegans*,
has colonized this black rock
shot through with fractured veins
of quartz. The lichen,
no more than a thin tating
of algae and fungus,
scribbles itself on a bare slope
of the Chugach Range.

Upthrust peaks on every side
proclaim mountains and mountains—
But the mind shies away
from such immensity of earth
and sky, from the imponderable weight,
the vast history and distance
of the Western Cordillera.

It settles instead on this lichen,
which persists in stitching itself
to this remote corner of Alaska,
breaching the darkness with small
stubborn brightness
that slowly,

slowly,
eats the rock's indifference.

Carolyn Dahl

Destiny of Ice

The red tongues of volcanoes
speak harshly to the sky.
Plumes of ash rise,
dry the perspiration
of the sun, scar
the purity of your skin
with burning basalt veins.

Glacier, great white hump
crawling down the mountain's muscle,
you seem eternal. Dinosaur bones
have slid under your belly, fossils sleep
in the blue beds of your ancient ice,
captured boulders scratch lines on chalk
cliffs. Still, you are a fragile collector.

Your body, snow squeezed to ice,
must fear a destiny of disappearing.
When mountains cough scalding rain,
when winter arrives timid as a rabbit,
when suicide snowflakes refuse to form
on cosmic dust, will you starve, shrink,
lacking the cold meat of winter?

Perhaps it will be a graceful end.
Your spine slipping. Your body leaking
streams of diminishment. Some calamities
make no sound. The ligaments of crystals
dissolve without cries. Alphabet islands rise,
linger, their strange scripts asking if melting
is a loss, nourishment, or a wild warning song.

John Gorman

Matanuska: Two Readings

Snow melts, unevenly
on asphalt, on winter's mulch,
granulated snow fledged
with stems and veins
of decaying leaves.
In black and white,
this stretch of abstraction
might seem an urban yard
or circuit board. Unmelted snow
weakening toward water
then frozen again,
incorporating street grime,
to carry coded destinies
for a Nature where earth thaws
but no crocuses rise
among rivulets of dirty water
under an unrelenting sun.

Say sapphire settled into itself
as amber does from pine sap,
glacial ice from water
an ice like blue silk,
a slab of sky ice like alabaster.
Nature makes what it wants.
We run after, waving nets of comparison.



Volcanic Ash on Matanuska Glacier, Chugach Mountains, Alaska



Volcanic Ash Layers in Matanuska Glacier, Lake and River, Chugach Mountains, Alaska

Kelly Ann Ellis

Man Against

Is this the place of knives,
where sun scatters lavender
across a glacier of ash and ice,

purpling the blue-bowl lake? Where Victor
chased his monster, a mirror fired by lightning,
formed not of clay, but decay.

The creature demanded an answer:
My Father, why have you forsaken me?
But in this place of negation, such passions fall away.

A lone photographer watches sun warm stone the color
of embers. Fire and ice slide in silence to the waiting water.
Like God, at the end of one beginning, he sees that it is good.



Coastal Peaks, Chugach Mountains, Cordova, Alaska



Three Grizzly Bears Salmon Fishing, Katmai, Alaska



Pacific Ocean, Olympic Coast, Hoh Temperate Rainforest, Washington

Marilyn Westfall

Refinement

One hundred feet below the trail
lies driftwood strewn on glossy stones—
trees cut but never trucked to mills
or old growth felled in winter storms,
all tugged by floods to river mouths
then pulled by currents oceanward.
For years untold they tumbled, bashed
by waves with strength to capsize boats.
They're stripped of bark, twigs, limbs.

From here, where wind is ruffling spruce
and cedar, spreading piquant scent
and seeds from cones, you'd liken them
to bones: the ribs and mandibles
of baleens gathered into heaps
or starkly isolated—meant
to pity. Giants humbled, left
for tides to lift, roll, carve,
reduce to purely naked forms.

David Cowen

on being a shadow in the light of an angry god

It is best not to have color
or definition, staring at St. Helen
Loowit, Lady of Fire
Killer of Mountains
the seducer peak that brought men to war

Now bathed in placid sunlight and snow
sleeping the dreamless sleep
after the father of gods
struck her down in her vanity
destroying the world around her

Almost unassuming, the Lady of Fire waits

The observation deck window
open to this panoramic relic of apocalyptic tantrums
is a deception

Let her bask in that warm light
comfortable in dormant slumber
we do not need definition
daring the open agitation of a primeval deity

Best to remain the anonymous silhouette
the quick shadow in the window
than to be the noise that wakes her up
reminding her of her power

Reminding us at the feet of raw eruption
blood of fire flowing from opened veins
we are no more relevant to her
than the burning husks of ancient pines.



Sasquatch, Mount Saint Helen's Visitor Center, Washington



Granite Boulders, Mount Whitney, Sierra Nevada, California



Giant Sequoia, Pine, Fir Friends, Sierra Nevada, California



Grand Teton Mountain Sunrise, Lake Jackson, Wyoming

Varsha Saraiya-Shah

Stones

I've been here before.
This pebble-bed, those turmeric peaks mirroring in
waters, mimicking an expectant autumn.
I pocket a few rounded stones,
ticket to a simple ritual of
touching, holy like my grandma's
Tulsi rosary beads back home.
I arrange them around my coral orchids and
gold coreopsis on kitchen table.
They bring out a camaraderie I cherish
as a memory of the hike we took
at dawn
my son and I passing through the landscape,
rainbow water we tossed like confetti,
we played with these purple-beige beauties,
Lake Jackson's variegated hearts.
The shore a silent commune,
jagged Mount Teton observing, not judging
how I placed them next to mine
inside breast pocket, now attuned to hikers' tall tales
and crystal vase, a new home they share with
cousins from Mount McKinley.

Wade Martin

Clepsydra

Time wound tight as a water clock feeling in veins
buried deep beneath the skin my mother put me in
like a scar in a schoolyard the steam of its streak rising
to spit a hot pressed hiss between fissured lips
broken as jasmine on a last fragile kiss
singing my singeing salt blood waves
upon waves waving to the sky
a salt-brick sigh of hallowed swerves
from the blackbriar pit of a holy core
where mother and father like fire and fire
dream of drowning in what they once were



Clepsydra Geyser, Yellowstone Volcanic Caldera, Wyoming



Willow Creek Silver Mines, San Juan Mountains, Creede, Colorado

Margo Davis

Squatter

The mere sight of me chafes lovers
of the Wild West. My grandfather, Robert Ford, shot
Jesse James in the back of the head.

Ford, shot here in Creede.

I lie low. Carry no gun. Make no mistake,
I'm no coward. I move slow, speak straight as wind barreling
through spaces carved by spent trees.

Cathedral, Ford's hideaway north of Willow Creek Mines.

I pass through shadows thrown by
miners' cabins, then hike through Rio Grande forest, where
lodgepole pines suffer bark beetles.

These trees I have grown to love, one by one, like offspring.

I nest each night in starlit needles
in a clearing no one lays claim to. Overhead,
a slippery moon the color of zinc.

Allyson Whipple

The Impossible Longevity of Stone

I split my mother open
as her volcanic interior
smashed against itself,
as the rough plates
of her body buckled
and shattered, the lava
boiling inside her pushed
me past core, mantle, crust.

I've lived long enough to know
all the incarnations of God,
heard all the language of people
who walked across the fields,
who climbed, with their animals,
and their provisions up
the steep slope of my back.

I wove a blanket of wildflowers
at my feet to cover my mother's
scars, to make her feel
beautiful again. Some seasons,
I fear I'm dressing
her body for burial.

Not all who traipse up
and down my spine are friendly.
Not all wanderers come curious.
I hear the irreverent languages,
feel the rumblings of their godless
machinations attempting to delve
all the way down to the liquid
fire, to the brimstone
that birthed me.

Ann Howells

Summit

If ghosts exist
they must abide in places such as this.
Mountains erupt from thick green:
towering trees, cliffs, jagged rock, steep
narrow trails. Fog flowers bloom

like agates—gold and vermilion.
I sleep, beneath myriad white stars
shining, awake to mercury-like shimmer
enveloping mountain flanks, filling valleys
like rivers of milk, exploring

every dint and rift the way a tongue
explores space where a tooth is lost.
A vast empyrean whiteness enshrouds.
Behind me, companions' tents blur blue.
Air smells green,

heavy. Relentless magpies have yet to begin
wock, wack-a-wock, tassel-eared squirrels
their chitter, and any creature navigating
undergrowth is both stealthy and silent.
Sapphire sky clears

my mind; ambiguity vanishes. It is
as though I am no longer mortal, flawed,
but larger than myself. Whatever presence
dwells here confers benediction,
snaps silent fingers, and recedes.



Pinnacles, Fog, Wildflowers, Mount Sneffels, San Juan Mountains, Colorado



Autumn Aspens, Sangre de Cristo Mountains, New Mexico



South Rim Sunrise, Grand Canyon, Colorado River, Arizona

Nelson Sager

In Situ, in Continuum

My mind's eye perceives a V-space, edged by
rugged, tapered, rock-bound canyon walls,
framing a distant vista of gorge and sky.
This view replaces what memory recalls:
a wandering endless, broad ravine, when seen
from its surface rim—a myriad of channels
weaving through ridgelines and buttes, that careen
up from its bed—yet, in this picture, panels
of rock shape the scene; the brown river flows
between, ever incising the stolid
earth's surface, wid'ning the existing *Narrows*,
carving out what seemed *rock solid*.
Thus, one's gaze, led down to the canyon's base,
observes creation—here, now, continuously, in place.

Laura Peña

Sunset in the Narrows

High cliff walls
form V's, converge
with sky, water, plants
as a powerful river
cuts its way through
rock and soil
creating layer
upon layer
of seismic history.

This land inhospitable,
and beautiful, is not
for humans to live in
but to admire,
to scale and reach
for something elusive.

And the sun alights
on mountains
in the distance,
the river seems
to drop off into
the unknown
like this majestic canyon
that no one knows for sure how
it was created.

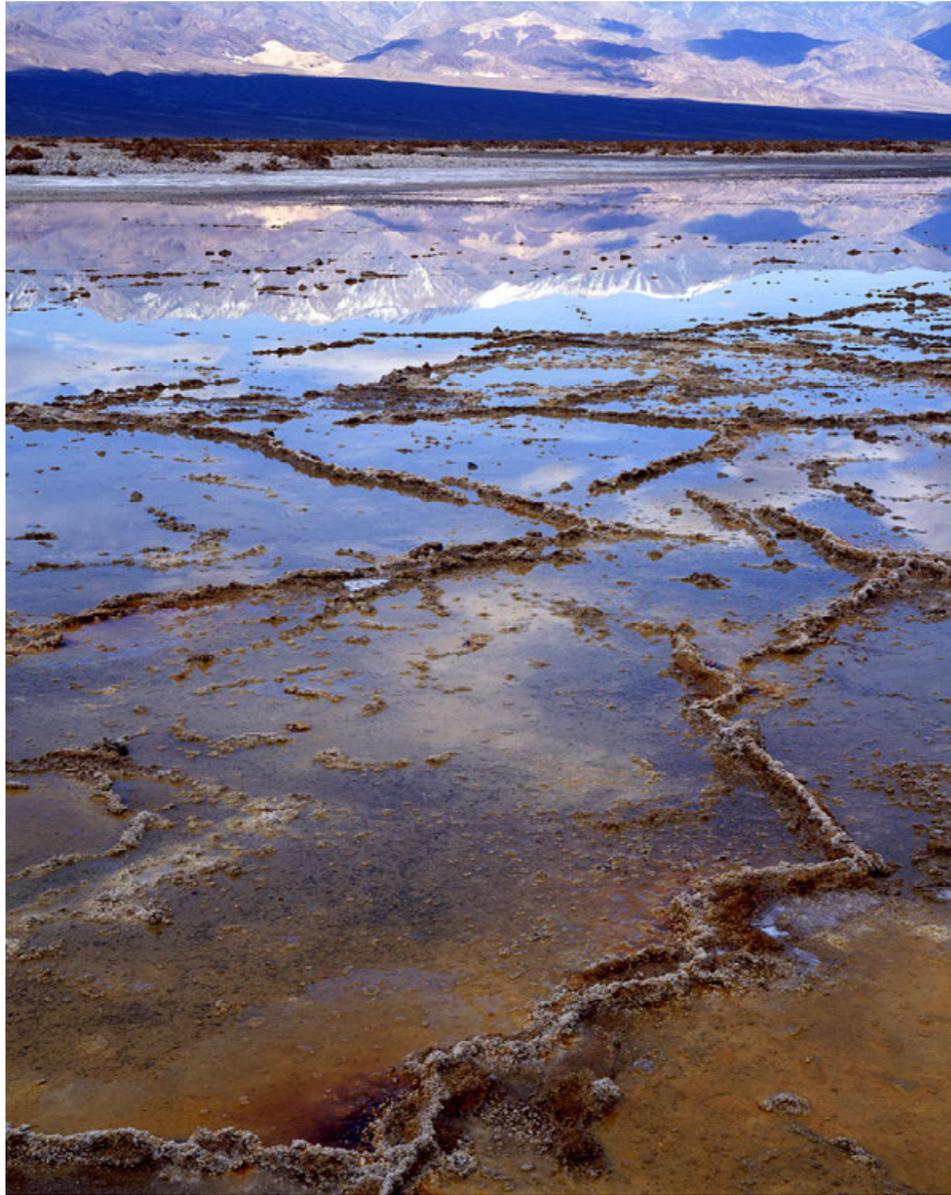
It's a testament written
in imperceptible
movements over time.



Sunset Narrows, Colorado River, Grand Canyon, Arizona



Saguaro, Ocotillo, Acacia, Larrea, Sonoran Desert, Arizona



Salt Pans, Bad Water Lake, Panamint Mountains, Death Valley, California



Salt Lake Playa, Sagebrush Desert, Great Basin, Nevada

Gordon Magill

Roaming the Great Basin

The bus from Carson to Bishop slows, stops
I look out easterly toward the Great Basin
snow-slaked bleak in winter's white light
somewhere out there California ends and Nevada begins
stepping out I cross the highway onto national forest land
heave my pack across a steel gate
now free to roam for three days

My map shows canyons, gorges, ravines
wrinkling the land like elephant hide
but sagebrush and snow disguise
the entrances to these underworlds
these basements of basaltic crust
spewed out eons ago in volcanic spasms
burying some lost mountain range

I nearly tumble into the ravines appearing
suddenly beneath my boots; descending I'm lost
amid tufa caves, volcanic honeycombs;
eerie presence of the old ones—left on ledges, in crevices—
here they sought shelter for centuries
from winter storms, drought, withering heat
their drawings, markings, hallucinations everywhere
on black canyon walls and boulders

I don't see a soul for three days
no time out here, only silence, freedom
nights camped among fantastic wind-carved tufa sculptures
coyote calls shrill and high;
the galaxy's arms above embrace me
I sleep fitfully, waking to hoof beats
a herd of wild mustangs thunder by
manes flying, whinnying, gone in a mist of frozen breath



Iceplant, Magdalena Island, Pacific Ocean, Baja California Sur, Mexico



Twilight, Northern Pacific Coast Range, Crescent City, California



Angel Peaks Badlands, San Juan River Basin, New Mexico



Lion Rock Tinaja, Glenn Springs Draw, Big Bend, Texas



Ancient Ones Petroglyphs, San Juan River Basin, Utah

Gloria Amescua

Leaving Our Mark

On nights of cold stars, smoke swirling,
we told stories of our beginnings

...how Mother Earth shuddered her spine,
awakened from her bed of water, birth pangs
exploding shoulders of stone and boulders,
springs and rivers cleaved from her backbone.

...how we rose from her belly into the fourth world.

...how the gods gifted us the great sun, sister moon,
and stars to travel by, swift clouds and life-rain;
gifted us antelope, bison and water fowl,
piñon nuts, grass seeds and yucca.

Spirits, we praise you.

We carve sandstone with sharpened stone or bone,
point by point, to please the gods that
strengthen us, protect us, lead us to the fifth world.

Spirits, we honor you.

May our progeny glimpse the mystery
of our lives, short as the buzzing of an insect,
from our mark on Mother Earth.

Spirits, we beseech you.

Scott Wiggerman

Borrowed Earth

Sunlight tiptoes in, and sands sweep across the kiva.
We hear tumbleweeds dance and leap upon the kiva.

The sky is squandered here, and spider webs, invisible.
We breathe in dust, for rain does not weep into the kiva.

These earthen walls soothe, smack of smoke and bones.
Could we find true north from deep within the kiva?

Grains of maize rooted in the chamber's floor.
Ancestors honored: offerings to reap within the kiva.

Long ago, spirits cropped up from this dense dirt.
Rung by rung, the journey: steep, steep, up the kiva.

Overhead, a world of witches, walkers, and powders.
In the earth's belly, safe from their creep into the kiva.

Dreams are palpable here, silent and ancient as pelts.
How long have we been asleep inside the kiva?

Robin Davidson

The Fire Angels

after Rafael Alberti

For millennia they lived in the earth's hollow center
beneath clay and rock, bone and ash,
mothers of a subterranean burning.
Theirs was an exquisite radiance, not sun but sun swallowed,
the interior twinning of light and heat, a kiva

of human longing. In time they lay a ladder of fallen limbs,
notched spruce, against an opening in the earth's surface.
A doorway. Not for themselves, but for others. A reversal
of what we've assumed: Not an ascension of ancestors,
primal myth of a people born from dust, *dar a la luz*,

but an invitation. As angels, they had no aspirations in particular,
just the glowing they stood within, carried,
like blood doubled by gestation, the warmth
palpable, rising. And those above who felt it, followed,
called by fire to stones opening, the light unnameable, sacred.
A descent
with no certainty
of return.



Pueblo Kiva, Pecos National Monument, New Mexico



Radiation Baby, Ground Zero, White Sands, New Mexico

Lee Robinson

Ground Zero

He looks away from the obelisk, towards *us*,
this little boy on his father's back. History
is something he knows nothing of. He squints
in the glare off the desert—*Jornada del Muerto*—
though to him geography is still a mystery. For now
he knows only the father whose voice comforts him,
who carries him. Later there will be the endless “why?”
and answers that never answer. “When you're older,”
the father says, “We'll talk about it,” but they never do.
One day he'll google “Trinity,” find Father, Son
and Holy Ghost; then scrolling more, the words
he's looking for: plutonium implosion fission,
and some formulas he'll never understand, though
his teacher says that science never lies.
But it's the photos that stop him—the survivors, and
on a wall, the shadow of those incinerated in the blast.
The dead in piles, their organs boiled,
their charcoaled bones. The smiles of the men
who dropped the bomb they named “Little Boy.”

Sandi Stromberg

Nuclear Alchemy

The treacherous *Jornada del Muerto*,
Path of the Dead, spreads white sands before him,
a young man who loves the quiet cleanliness

of the desert. The quiet cleanliness of the desert
desecrated, he drives an abandoned road—
potholes, stubby poles, sagging wires—

with a key. A key for the padlocked gate
stamped “Property of the U.S. Government,”
multiple languages, skulls and crossbones.

Skulls and crossbones hiding the Trinity Site,
man’s great insult to the Earth.
The Earth scarred by heat, cratered—

as seen from space, a lake jade green half a mile
wide. A lake jade green, the afterbirth
of a man-made fireball, a mushroom cloud,

sand sucked into its mouth, heated to 1470 Celsius.
Heated to 1470 Celsius in seven minutes,
an alchemical mixture of sand, weapon tower,

bomb, liquefied and rained down.
Liquefied and rained down as new substance,
bright by day, dull by night—trinitite.

Trinitite. The virgin green glass the young man
has come to harvest at the first Ground Zero, to return
for burial at Los Alamos, site of conception.



Trinitite Hand, Trinity Atomic Bomb Site, White Sands, New Mexico



Endangered Rio Grande Silvery Minnows, New Mexico

Jerry Winakur

it's the river not the fish

how did it come to this?
silvery minnow in a glass
bowl stunned
you who once breathed through
two thousand miles of wild water
you who swam through time
timing your spawn to the pulse
of San Juan snowmelt
pure and clear and cold

it's the river not the fish

they say while building thousand
gallon pools concrete raceways
enticing you to spawn
to hatch to send eggs downstream
but to where?
that river: Rio Grande Rio Bravo del Norte
no longer fierce no longer great
dammed diverted channelized drought-starved
now sucked dry

it's the river not the fish

and we're all endangered
as overseers devise
scheme spend hundreds of millions
only to document your demise
and the rivulets creep
through river sand
reach nowhere
disappear in the Trans-Pecos dust
where you once swam free.



Still Pool, Catfish Falls, Rio Pecos, New Mexico



El Paso, Rio Grande Valley, Juarez, Monte Cristo Rey, Texas-Mexico

Sarah Cortez

In Slanted Rays

White tufts, purpled
heads, a dusk sliding
into nothing.

I shouldn't have come
here, Gene. Too much
of you in evening's clear death.

You said
you wouldn't go
before the kids
were grown
and gone. You said
so many things.

Not even
stars will walk
with me
anymore.

Not even
a stroll
across
fine-powdered grit
warm as a womb.



Heliotrope, Pecos River Valley Gypsum Dunes, Monahans, Texas



Camels, We Were Here First, Fort Davis, Texas

John Milkereit

Monologue of the Creamed Camel

How shall I not love the humans, nomads
that snap-shutter the Western Cordillera with a third eye?
They say the world is peeling off like whatever wallpaper is.
All I know is their sprawl is dead center

now in the grasslands. They dig for their brushes
and cigarettes to honor us, riding with noble abandon,
not so sharp-edged. We appear ready to hump
in two directions without groan.

Why would God allow them to follow us?
We love bearing their loads in transport
forty million years later since our ancestors
were bored in South Dakota like rabbits.

Could our Creator in her tipped joyfulness
match this grace as we ponder the Marfa Lights?
You will never capture my face so well as the guard hair,
the fat-laden bumps, and the serene proudness, headed

for the corners of earth's splendor.

Rebecca Spears

Two Companions, Ten Miles into the New World

I know you in repose so well,
your head against the car window,
the road of sleep rutted as you
rise to the surface and sink again,
the Van Horn Mountains backgrounding
and pillowing your silhouette.
The high desert near Lobo
is an unknown world, and I, explorer,
drive our V-6 prairie schooner
through it, not fearlessly. Even
our car trembles in the crosswinds
like the shell houses and the chaparral.
Up ahead, a creature, not Centaur or Pegasus,
but an Equus of two heads, perhaps

two minds, perhaps the last
mythical animal of a myth not yet told.
A red beast with black mane, a beauty
whose dark eyes look east and west at once,
either enchanting the winds with its gaze
or about to catch fire with a silky nod.
When you wake, my companion,
how will I tell you of what I've seen?
Tell me what story you would believe
when I describe the creature.
The desert is full of illusions
and I am a fool or I am wise. Looking across
the stony soil, I have reached
the edge of what I know or can say.

Sasha West

Janus

I

Imagine one of them turns
the other's flank and torso:
over the long brown earth
she runs her chin down
is made. Imagine she has
curled in the dirt, to see
empty out to bone. With each
body better, becomes aware
that her muscles form
never see. Knowing this
something being held still

II

I had asked for what was
time. The horses remain
has fallen. And if the world
track this range's long line
of a compass, pointing.
but a bird migrates, a camera
shifts and tumbles, pushing
We are your witness to how
bodies echo over ice that
wild goats, fields that feed
against this horse's flank.

to move her head along
her square cheek, tender nose
of the horse's body. Imagine
the spine to feel how a horse
studied yet another, legs
its skin fall down to carcass,
layer she understands her own
of how her legs lift in gallop,
systems under her skin she'll
makes standing a kind of pleasure:
that inside shifts and tumbles.

living, so I could put my body inside
though the town around them
peels off as wallpaper and it was opaque,
down, as if it is the spine, or the needle
A horse couldn't run the whole range,
can track it all. The muscle of earth
up, here: peaks, here: hills and scrub.
land is made and changes. Our
feeds the flowers, grass that feeds
the horse's gaze. Put your hand
Let the sun and earth cross into you.



Horse Heads Crossing, Lobo Valley, Texas



Adobe Ruins of Johnson Ranch, Rio Grande Valley, Big Bend, Texas

Mary Wemple

Going No Where Slowly

Open sky, no dust, no smudge.
A row of pillars stand—
walls dissolved into tan dirt.

We are all that remains
of how their hands pressed bricks—
lifted them to each row.

The wind softly pushes us.
Each day we fall back in line
with the ground.

You can't capture us.
We are already gone.

David Meischen

Hope Chest

Sometimes wind blew a woman loose from
what bound her, the presence, the voices of kin,
the thread of reason unraveling inside words
such as husband, daughter, son, though silence
was the tipping point, inside these walls before
they crumbled, sudden stillness deadening
as a dome of unspun cotton, the quiet condensing.

And she knew what was coming. The signs
were all around her, dust and keen and slither,
creatures made to thrive here, no need of rain
or green, fang marks on the child she found
dead beside a garden hoe, one more empty space
inside her, no remedy but a graveside prayer,
the wedding dress inside her hope chest. She cut
the yellowed satin into squares, paired them
with faded blue—a quilted coverlet to soothe
her where she ached—no comfort in her walls,
edges gone to dust and crumble, a scorpion
stealing out of the chinks—the arcing tail,
the stinger like a wand. She turned away,
dry as the dust sifting her days, silence
so sharp it scraped against her bones.

She heard a voice then, a terrible certainty
rumbling from the center of a terrible calm.
Dust to dust. It was the tempter speaking,
the tempter come to goad her: that her own words,
the few she could muster—her words, her breath—
were nothing. Her grave a rubble. Her name
erased. Even the walls here would not last.

Connie Williams

A Visit to the Marfa Lights

The first night a jagged blue West Texas horizon: dancing desert heat waves before a roadside amphitheater of granite stone of the cordillera borrowed from backbone of distant bare-blue mountains, road rocks making room for one another, like ancient pyramid puzzles cradling tourists, i-cameras flashing at a growing darkness, the prairie's hand holding finger prints of prickly pear perched above desert scrub and silver bluestem grasses of dry yellows and turquoise greens, noisy visitor's voices vocalizing against a coolness of an imagined wind, the prairie stillness echoing creaking ancient binoculars mounted on metal pedestals, view of ravines between the plateau's lavender horizons...

Twilight shuts the valley floor, ah! I see random car lights in the distance, beyond the Juniper, thousand-year-old shinnery rhizomes, slanting shadows sweeping the view for a missing Yucca, i-flashes obscure the image. It's only a pulling unit on a paraffin-paralyzed well. Mountain blues graze the sky emitting the exceptional aqua haze. It's only...

The second night, a weekday. This... is different, anticipating tourist traffic we go prepared for nothing. As that is what Marfa is on a weekday, nothing, nothing to be found, beyond this photograph of acres of grassland connecting range to range, no one knows where anything is, there are no signs or directions, most establishments boarded up, Andy Warhol promises peek from behind falling down decaying buildings and enclosed patios...

I sit down on a bench near a tourist, quiet, silent. No i-cameras tonight. My heart beat the only thing I hear. Suddenly, "There," he points. "Those balls of light!"



Marfa Lights Grasslands, Davis Mountains, Texas



Burro Bluff, Rio Grande Lower Canyons, Texas-Mexico

Larry D. Thomas

Burro Bluff

In this land so stark,
desolate and inhospitable
the Apaches called it
“the place of no return,”
the screams

of peregrine falcons
cascade down
the one thousand-foot
precipice, piercing
as the high C ululations

of grieving goddesses.
The Rio Grande,
naked to the unrelenting
scourges of sunlight, shadow,
slithers through the canyon

like a dull green viper,
half-dead yet bulging
with sacs of gold venom.
Here and there,
plants twist

from the sheer
rock face
like prayers
wrenched from the souls
of the damned.

Cindy Huyser

Accordion Song

After so long a time, some
would imagine there could be no memory
of the taste of decaying larvae,
sense of sea-pulse inside my test—
though my dreams are full of tide
and salt and a swerving
that now seems dizzying.

Some have looked at me
and called me well-behaved,
though once I was radiant
sea-drunk millions. Call me
silt bed has-been, centuries'
compound calculus. Coral
and foram, mollusk, I passed
the way of the algae I ate, I shed
my animal husks.

On the back of the body
I was becoming, I was borne up,
I was carried, I grafted
my bones with air. Hinge
dissolved into hinge, limb
into limb.

It is true my face wears the accordion song
of unimaginable pressure. But do not pity me.
There is solace in this dislocation:
I have learned even stone
can bend and survive.



Folded Seabed, Sierra Madre Oriental, Tamaulipas, Mexico



Agaves, Karst Limestone Erosion, Sierra Madre Oriental, Tamaulipas, Mexico

Mike Alexander

Reposado

Forget what you've heard tell
of lilacs bred in cruelty.
Agaves emigrate from guilty
saw-tooth hearts, divine
a tear a day of rainfall,
enough for the few.

Limestone roadside shrine
breaks the thirst.
Abandoned cantinas brew
in each green vein, indigenous
ichor, tipped with scorpion's
determination, full to burst.

Sharon Klander

Passage

Morning shares little light after
its storm. From all directions, dove call.

A pot, forgotten overnight, steeps
bitter tea, a cold rust. Pour it

anyway, drink it, read the leaves.
Nothing must be wasted.

Stringed sandalwood beads lie
in a bowl—lift and fist them

for fragrance, knead them as if they could
lead as clearly as a brush of moss down

the glazed mahogany pines off the porch.
The air is wet, urgent, hard

to breathe. The last metastasis, in the lung
you had left, gave us a week

in a numbered room. A mask cradled
your nose with easier air, pushed your mouth

closed. Waste nothing. Your organs shut along
a compassed route, marking time.

More quiet than desert heat is the machine switched
off, the pulled sheet, an inscaped grief.



Dry Pines, Rio Conchos, Sierra Madre Occidental, Chihuahua, Mexico



Lichen, Pine Needles, Sierra Madre Occidental, Chihuahua, Mexico

Judith Youngers

Interwoven

Guardian Spirit of the Tarahumara,
thank you for this corridor bed,
aged, crunchy orange-brown needles,
newly crosshatched with viridian; tufted
with curly lichen, vibrant ground cover,
pine-perfumed weave of resilience.

This mat, layered with calloused
Tarahumara soles, trodden by panther paw,
reverberates with imperial drumming of
woodpecker, swoops of golden eagle feather,
warp and woof of remembrance.

Who lingers in these spongy clumps of green,
stippled with red floret jewels? Mountain
moth antennae tickle your spirit cheek,
awaken you to matins—cooing above,
lush cushion beneath, weave of cool forest.

You become sponge, soaking primordial ooze
into membrane memory, set tincture
of rotting logs to brew with moss of ages,
spoor of jaguar; sip a microbial cocktail
of Sierra Madre, an infused weave to revive.

The indigenous weaving of sanctuary catches
lime/red flashes of thick-billed parrot as
you beckon Quetzelcoatl, weaver of dreams.
You strap on winged huaraches, rise to run
again and claim the honor of your people.

Carolyn Tourney Florek

What Is Seen

Listening first for the opening day
we see before us the forest in mist;
the fallen moss-covered tree, the vine
running red, alive with green.

No one is present in this scene,
except once the artist, now imagined,
walking through the forest,
then stopping before this dead tree.

How difficult it is to choose
what is beautiful in something long dead.
It is the artist who sees in the scarlet
runner and reaching dead limbs,

Something more than death overgrown,
a part of something greater, the tree transformed
by lichen and moss, mist and vine, all
together become more beautiful with time.

Elina Petrova

Cordillera Runner

El Norte, El Sur... Everyone strives for a better life.
Hiking is for rich kids. Driving in a convertible
through *Sierra Madre Oriental*, while drinking Mezcal
to our songs, is a different kind of problem.
Every road leads to a mountain. Every mountain
leads to a song, even if no hope remains in the ravine.
After Santiago passed *la frontera*, the kids and I
divided chores, grew corn not for sale, grew silent.
He sent us money. But in my dreams I saw him
turning into a man who smiles only with his lips.
When he returned, he stood—quiet for an hour—
hugging us, before he ate, told us stories. Santiago
learned to be a guide who talks without a dictionary
about the heart of agave, the wingspan of the peregrine
falcon and *Nahuatl* roots of the word *ōcēlōt*.
When tourists drink Mezcal, recording his drivél
about cloud forests, he even throws an occasional
feathered serpent, but his eyes smile no more.
And, here's his last poem in their tongue:

*Where do you run, scarlet runner?
For whom are you legume at misty Sierra Madre?
Your petals lure like the lips of pin-up girls,
your purple beans are toxic in hasty sacrilege,
hearty when cooked with some chorizo.
Your vines snake over a pine-oak branch, over
several feet of silence to a mountain creek.
Some call you Scarlet Emperor.
Born in an empire, that's what the wise do—
run from its heartless heart to secluded ridges,
breathe to the eruption of their own blossom.
Emperors of the content backbone of nothing:
volcanic boulders, cloud forests of Tamaulipas.*



Scarlet Runner Flowers, Lichen, Fog, Sierra Madre Oriental, Tamaulipas, Mexico



Stanhopea Orchids, Cloud Forest, Sierra Madre Oriental, Tamaulipas, Mexico



Oak, Fig, Fern, Cactus, Cloud Forest, Sierra Madre Occidental, Chiapas, Mexico



Rio Moctezuma, Sierra Madre Oriental, Querétaro, Mexico

Vanessa Zimmer-Powell

Aquí

You can't take me from this river—
her calm dark, her slumber sun.
I slip into conversation with Yaqui trout,
follow the undulation of their bodies,
hide with them under dense riparian green.
This is a place where I need to be greedy,
invite no other,
gather my senses at the courtesy of fish.
Here, upon her boulder island, I rest naked,
balanced between branch and shadow.



Monkey Ear Acacias, Dry Tropical Forest, Sierra Madre Occidental, Chiapas, Mexico



Paper Seeds, Leaves, Cicada, Sierra Madre Occidental, Chiapas, Mexico

Lucy Griffith

Mijas

I am la Sierra Madre,
mother of mountains.

I crack canyons,
sprout rivers—
and swallow them.

I make weather,
and I can stop weather.
Cloud forests, and

waterless mesas, woven with rock.
I tuck gold, silver, amber
beneath my skin.

My backbone knuckles your horizon.

Meet my daughters,
a cordillera of wide cheekbones.
Their shoulders echo the ridges

that carve their lives.
Lined up like my foothills,
small to large—

such cariño in their leaning,
fervent in their identity.
Shy, soft, warm, bold.

Snug up, mijas, close
beneath the corded braid of my heart.



Village Girlfriends, Sierra Madre Occidental, Chiapas, Mexico

Photographer's Biography

Jim Bones was 15 years old when the family got a Brownie 8mm camera. It was Christmas 1958, just before the Air Force moved them cross-country from Virginia to Vandenberg Air Force Base in California, where his father would continue serving as an officer. That trip marked the birth of a photographer, with a special interest in capturing scenes of mountains, deserts, oceans, and missiles. By the time Jim entered the University of Texas, Austin, in 1962, he had already lived in Florida, Texas, California, Maryland, and Virginia.

At the university, his interests became as migratory as his future life would become, from aerospace engineering to physics to geology before finding a home in the fine arts. He also became a teaching assistant to Russell Lee, noted depression-era Farm Security Administration documentary photographer. Encouraged by Lee, Jim began a lifelong love affair with 4x5 inch format cameras.

In 1970, Jim received a Corporation for Public Broadcasting Career Fellowship at KERA-TV in Dallas, to produce environmental films and nature poems incorporating large-format images and motion picture film. From 1972 to 1973, as a Texas Institute of Letters Dobie-Paisano Fellow, Jim was the first photographer and artist to spend a year at the former J. Frank Dobie Ranch, near Austin. The photographs from his residency were published in 1975 as *Texas Heartland: A Hill Country Year*, with text by John Graves.

Jim worked in Tesuque, New Mexico from 1975 to 1978, as a dye transfer printing assistant to premier large-format color nature photographer Eliot Porter. His continuing career as a freelance photographer and writer developed from these experiences.

Jim Bones' other books include *Texas Earth Surfaces* (1970), *Texas Wild* (1976), *Texas West of the Pecos* (1981), *Rio Grande, Mountains to the Sea* (1985), *Texas, Images of the Landscape* (1986), *Seeds of Change: The Living Treasure* (1994), *The Smithsonian Guides to Natural America: The South-Central States* (1996), and *A Long View Southwest* (2012). Fifty years of Jim's work in the Big Bend were featured in Texas Parks and Wildlife Magazine, April 2015, and in the 2016 Big Bend National Park Calendar, for the 100th Anniversary year of the National Park Service.

In 1994, Jim began conducting workshops and teaching about seedball use for Living Art Landscape Rehabilitation, a technique he learned from Masanobu Fukuoka, author of *A One-Straw Revolution*, while on assignment in Japan. His online video, *The Seedball Story*, has been viewed more than 121,000 times and copied around the world. In the video he challenges the viewer: "Ask yourself, whose heart have you touched today, and whose eyes have you opened, and to what? To truth and beauty, I trust. Life is art. The rest is just artifact."

Poets' Biographies

Mike Alexander started out in New York City. After relocating to Houston, he ran the Mausoleum readings for six years at what is now Avant Garden, in the Montrose area. His work has appeared in various decadent magazines, chapbooks, and poetry websites. His first full-length collection, *Retrograde*, appeared in 2013. Over the years he has been a featured poet at the Houston Poetry Fest, a contributing editor for *lyric poetry review*, a board member for Mutabilis Press, a member of Public Poetry's first selection committee. At present he is coordinating a small reading soirée called Poetry FIX, at FIX Coffeebar.

Gloria Amescua, a CantoMundo fellow and Hedgebrook alumna, is the author of the poetry chapbooks, *Windchimes* and *What Remains*. A workshop presenter, she has also been published in a variety of journals and anthologies, including *di-verse-city*, *Kweli Journal*, *Generations*, *Texas Poetry Calendar*, *Acentos Review*, *Pilgrimage*, *Bearing the Mask: Southwestern Persona Poems*, *Entre Guadalupe y Malinche*, and *The Crafty Poet II*. She won the Austin Poetry Society and Christina Sergeyevna Awards. Her poem "Chanclas, Find Our Ground" was the artist's choice for *Rattle's* March 2017 Ekphrastic Challenge. She has also received the 2016 New Voices Award Honor for her picture book manuscript in verse, *Luz Jiménez, No Ordinary Girl*.

Jenny Browne is the 2017 Texas State Poet Laureate. The author of three collections of poems, *At Once*, *The Second Reason*, and *Dear Stranger*, she is currently a professor of English at Trinity University where she teaches courses in creative writing, women and gender studies, and environmental literature. She has received the Cecil Hemley Memorial Award from the Poetry Society of America, a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship, and two fellowships from the Writers' League of Texas. Her poems and essays have appeared in numerous publications, including *American Poetry Review*, *Boston Review*, *Oxford American*, *The New York Times*, and *Tin House*. She lives in downtown San Antonio with her husband, photographer Scott Martin, and their daughters, Lyda and Harriet.

Stan Crawford is an attorney and poet who lives in the Heights in Houston, Texas, with his wife Dawn and their menagerie of pets. His poems have been published in a number of journals and anthologies, including *The Comstock Review*, *Poet Lore*, *Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review*, *Water-Stone Review*, and *Illya's Honey*. His poetry collection, *Resisting Gravity* (Lamar University Literary Press), was a Finalist for the Bob Bush Memorial Award for First Book of Poetry in 2017.

Sarah Cortez, Councilor of the Texas Institute of Letters, has poems, essays, book reviews, and short stories published in journals, e.g., *Texas Monthly*, *Rattle*, *The Sun*, *Pennsylvania English*, *Louisiana Literature*, *The Midwest Quarterly*, and *Southwestern American Literature*. She placed as a finalist for Writers' League of Texas, Los Angeles Book Festival, and PEN Southwest Poetry; she won a PEN Texas Poetry Award. Her anthologies have won the Southwest Book Award, International Latino Book Awards (ILBA), Border Region Librarians Assn. Award, Press Women of Texas Editing Award, and Skipping Stones International Honor Award. Her recent anthology, *Vanishing Points: Poems and Photographs of Texas Roadside Memorials*, won Southwest Book of the Year, ILBA, Press Women of Texas Award, and First Prize in Editing from the National Federation of Press Women.

David E. Cowen is the author of three books of poetry: *Sixth and Adams* (PW Press, 2001), *The Madness of Empty Spaces* (Weasel Press, 2014), and *The Seven Yards of Sorrow* (Weasel Press, 2016), the latter two were named to the Bram Stoker Preliminary Ballot for their respective years of publication. He has published poems, fiction, and nonfiction in journals in the United States, Great Britain, and Australia, and was editor of the Horror Writers Association's *Poetry Showcase Vols. III and IV*. He is the current president and a lifetime member of the Gulf Coast Poets in Texas.

Carolyn Dahl was the grand prize winner in the 2015 national ekphrastic poetry competition ARTlines2 and a finalist in Public Poetry's Work-themed contest in 2017. She has been published in various literary magazines, such as *Copper Nickel*, *Rock & Sling*, *Hawai'i Review*, *Plainsongs*, and twenty-five anthologies (most recently in *Texas Weather* and *Poetry Box: Music*). Also an artist, she is the author of the fabric dyeing and painting books *Transforming Fabric 1 & 2*, the nature printing/essay book *Natural Impressions*, and co-author of *The Painted Door Opened: Art and Poetry* (www.carolyndahlstudio.com).

Robin Davidson is author of two poem chapbooks, *Kneeling in the Dojo* (Finishing Line Press) and *City that Ripens on the Tree of the World* (Calypso Editions), and a full collection, *Luminous Other* (Ashland Poetry Press), as well as recipient of the Ashland Poetry Press's 2012 Richard Snyder Memorial Publication Prize. She is co-translator with Ewa Nowakowska of *The New Century: Poems from the Polish of Ewa Lipska* (Northwestern University Press), and is the recipient of, among other awards, a Fulbright professorship at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland, and a National Endowment for the Arts translation fellowship. She was named the 2015-2017 Poet Laureate for the City of Houston and was a finalist for Texas State Poet Laureate in 2017. She is professor of literature and creative writing for the University of Houston-Downtown.

Margo Davis's poems have appeared in *Light: A Journal of Photography & Poetry*, *Wisconsin Review*, *Midwest Quarterly*, *Slipstream*, *Agave Magazine*, *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place*, and several *Texas Poetry Calendars*. Forthcoming poems are to appear in *Civilized Beasts*, *Vine Leaves Literary Journal*, and a Main Street Rag anthology. She thrives on closely observing others, film, photographs, and natural settings.

Kelly Ann Ellis lives, works, and writes in Houston, Texas, where she obtained an M.A. in English Literature from the University of Houston. She is a member of Poets in the Loop and co-founder of HotPoet, which produces events that promote poetry and music in Houston. She has been published in various journals and received awards from Bay Area Writers League and San Gabriel Writers League. She also had two winning poems in Public Poetry's inaugural ARTlines contest in 2012, and her work was showcased in the Museum of Fine Arts Houston. She teaches at Spring Early College Academy and the University of Houston.

Carolyn Tourney Florek is a poet and visual artist who lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico, after living in Houston, Texas, for more than thirty years. Her poetry has been published in *Texas Review*, *Illya's Honey*, and several Houston Poetry Fest anthologies, among other publications. Her poem, "Over Flat Creek," published in the *2018 Texas Poetry Calendar*, was nominated for a Pushcart Prize. She is co-founder with her husband, Bob, of Mutabilis Press. She was artist-in-residence at Bandelier National Monument, fall of 2015. She now divides her time between poetry, painting, gardening, and volunteering with the New Mexico Center for Therapeutic Riding and the Santa Fe National Forest.

Priscilla Frake is the author of *Correspondence*, a book of epistolary poems. She has published poetry in numerous anthologies and in dozens of journals, including *Verse Daily*, *Nimrod*, *The Midwest Quarterly*, *Medical Literary Messenger*, *Carbon Culture Review*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*, *Crack the Spine*, *The Sow's Ear Poetry Review*, and *The New Welsh Review*. Her honors include the Lorene Pouncey Award at the Houston Poetry Festival and a Pushcart nomination. She lives in Sugar Land, Texas, where she is a studio jeweler.

John Gorman lives in Galveston, Texas, and directs the monthly Poets Roundtable critique group. He is a professor emeritus of literature at University of Houston-Clear Lake where he was part of its founding faculty. His poems, gathered in four chapbooks, have appeared in many journals in Texas, nationally, and in Canada. He has been active with First Friday, Houston Poetry Fest, Public Poetry, and other reading series.

Lucy Griffith lives on a ranch beside the Guadalupe River near Comfort, Texas. She's a retired psychologist and happiest on a tractor named Ruby, a muse with 25 horsepower. She has work in *Bearing the Mask: Southwestern Persona Poems* (Dos Gatos Press) and was recently a finalist in Public Poetry's Work-themed contest in 2017. A series of essays, "The View from Rusty Bend," have been published in *The Texas Star*.

Ann Howells has edited *Illya's Honey* for eighteen years, recently going digital: www.IllyasHoney.com, and adding a co-editor. She serves on the board of Dallas Poets Community and has been named a "Distinguished Poet of Dallas" by the city. Her chapbooks are *Black Crow in Flight* (Main Street Rag), *Letters for My Daughter* (Flutter), and *Softly Beating Wings* which won the William D. Barney Memorial Chapbook Contest for 2017 (Blackbead). Her books include *Under a Lone Star*, illustrated by J. Darrell Kirkley (Village Books), and an anthology of Dallas/Fort Worth poets she edited, *Cattlemen & Cadillacs* (Dallas Poets Community). Her work appears widely in small press and university journals; she has four Pushcart nominations.

Cindy Huyser is the author of *Burning Number Five: Power Plant Poems* (co-winner, 2014 Blue Horse Press Poetry Chapbook Contest) and an editor of *Bearing the Mask: Southwestern Persona Poems* (Dos Gatos Press, 2016). Her poetry has been twice nominated for a Pushcart Prize and has recently appeared in *Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review*, *San Pedro River Review*, *Red River Review*, and *Watermelon Isotope* (<https://watermelonisotope.com>).

Sharon Klander holds an M.A. in English from the University of Houston Graduate Creative Writing Program and a Ph.D. in American literature and creative writing from Ohio University. In 1994, she began her full-time teaching of literature, creative writing, and rhetorical analysis at Houston Community College-Central. Her poems have appeared in numerous publications, including *The New Republic* and *New Letters*; one of her poems, a Notable Finalist for Inkwell, was nominated for a Pushcart Prize. Other poems, along with essays on the creative process, are featured in several anthologies, including *The Art and Craft of Poetry*, *The Writing Room: Keys to the Craft of Fiction and Poetry*, and in two Mutabilis Press anthologies, *The Weight of Addition* and *Improbable Worlds*. Her published scholarship concerns poetry by John Haines and Colette Inez.

Gordon Magill has had many careers, including restaurateur, journalist, teacher, exhibit writer, freelance writer, and poet. He has worked for *The Evening Star* and *Washington Post* newspapers, operated wine country restaurants in California, and taught in public schools and at the Institute of American Indian Arts. He has traveled widely in the American West and backpacked in some, if not all, of the ranges of the Western Cordillera. He currently lives in Austin, Texas, and frequently participates in poetry readings there. He is married to Linda Marie, a fabulous poet and artist. His ekphrastic poems draw on experiences in California and Nevada.

Wade Martin is co-editor of the *Texas Poetry Calendar* (Dos Gatos Press) and a 2014 Pushcart Prize nominee (*Illya's Honey*). He is currently pursuing a M.F.A. in poetry at Texas State University. His poems have appeared recently in *Freshwater*, *Bird's Thumb*, and *Sagebrush Review*.

David Meischen has been honored by a Pushcart Prize for his autobiographical essay, "How to Shoot at Someone Who Outdrew You," included in Pushcart Prize XLII. Recipient of the 2017 Kay Cattarulla Award for Best Short Story from the Texas Institute of Letters, he has fiction, nonfiction, or poetry in *Borderlands*, *The Gettysburg Review*, *The Ocotillo Review*, *San Pedro River Review*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *Talking Writing*, and elsewhere. Co-founder and managing editor of Dos Gatos Press, he lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico, with his husband—also his co-publisher and co-editor—Scott Wiggerman.

John Milkereit lives in the Montrose area of Houston, Texas. He is a rotating equipment engineer working at an engineering contracting firm. His poems have appeared in various literary journals, including *San Pedro River Review* and the *Texas Poetry Calendar*. His chapbooks are *Home & Away* and *Paying Admissions* (Pudding House Press, 2010). He completed a low-residency M.F.A. in creative writing at the Rainier Writing Workshop in Tacoma, Washington. His full-length collection of poems, *A Rotating Equipment Engineer Is Never Finished*, was published March, 2015 (Ink Brush Press).

Laura Peña was born and raised in Houston, Texas. She holds a B.A. in English literature and an M.A. in Education. She is a bilingual elementary school teacher. She has been published in *di-vêrsé-city*, *Boundless*, *Houston Poetry Fest anthology*, *The Bayou Review*, *Harbinger Asylum*, *Illya's Honey*, *Red River Review*, and the *Texas Poetry Calendar*. She is a member of Gulf Coast Poets, the Poetry Society of Texas, Academy of American Poets, Writers' League of Texas, and the critique group, Poetry Works Workshops. She organizes Poetry Out of Bounds each year, which is the official kick-off event for Houston Poetry Fest.

Elina Petrova lived in Ukraine and worked in engineering management until 2007. She has many Russian and Ukrainian publication credits, and a book of Russian poems. She now works in a Houston law firm. Her poetry has been published in *Texas Review*, *Texas Poetry Calendars*, *FreeFall* (Canada), *Voices de la Luna*, *Harbinger Asylum*, *Illya's Honey*, *Melancholy Hyperbole*, *Panoply*, the anthologies of the Waco, Houston, and Austin poetry festivals, *Untameable City* (Mutabilis Press), Poetry anthologies of the American Southwest (Dos Gatos Press), and *Selfhood* (India). She is a frequent reader at Rice Gallery's Words & Art. Her first book of poetry in English, *Aching Miracle*, was released in September, 2015.

Lee Robinson's first poetry collection, *Hearsay*, won the 2004 Poets Out Loud Prize from Fordham University Press and the Violet Crown Award from the Writers' League of Texas. She has published poetry, essays, and short stories in many magazines and journals, including *Harper's*, *Crab Orchard Review*, and *Texas Observer*. She has also published two novels, a young adult novel, and a second poetry collection. With her husband, Jerald Winakur, she was the 2009 recipient of Gemini Ink's Literary Excellence Award. She practiced law in Charleston, South Carolina, for over 20 years and now teaches at the Center for Medical Humanities and Ethics, UT Health, San Antonio, Texas.

Nelson Sager is a retired distinguished professor emeritus in English, from Sul Ross State University, where he taught in the Department of Languages and Literature. He resides in Alpine, Texas, with his wife Jane and their black cat "Mr. Cools."

Varsha Saraiya-Shah's poetry collection, VOICES, was published by Finishing Line Press. Her work appears in anthologies and journals such as *Asian Cha*, *Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review*, *Convergence*, *Right Hand Pointing*, *Texas Observer*, and *UT Press*. An eye for life's little wonders energizes her poetry. She is a frequent reader at Rice Gallery's Words & Art. She works in Houston, Texas, and serves on the Mutabilis Press Board. She's an active member of Matwaala South Asian Poets' Diaspora.

Rebecca A. Spears, a poet and essayist living in Texas, is the author of *The Bright Obvious*. Her poems and essays are included in *TriQuarterly*, *Crazyhorse*, *Calyx*, *Verse Daily*, *Birmingham Poetry Review*, *Barrow Street*, *R.kv.ry*, *Nimrod*, *Relief*, *Image*, *Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review*, *Texas Review*, and other journals and anthologies. She has received awards from the Taos Writers Workshop, Vermont Studio Center, and The Writers Colony at Dairy Hollow; she is a recent Pushcart nominee and has been a finalist for the Iowa Review Poetry Award.

Sandi Stromberg has been featured on Houston Public Media's "Voices and Verses" and guest edited Mutabilis Press' most recent anthology, *Untameable City: Poems on the Nature of Houston*, one of 12 books chosen for the Houston Chronicle's 2017 Readers Challenge. She has been a juried poet nine times in the Houston Poetry Fest, and has poems in *Texas Poetry Calendars*, *Colere: A Journal of Cultural Exploration*, Poetry anthologies of the American Southwest (Dos Gatos Press), *Illya's Honey*, *Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review*, *Red River Review*, and anthologies, including *TimeSlice*, *The Weight of Addition*, *Improbable Worlds*, *Crossing Lines (Main Street Rag)*, *Goodbye, Mexico*, *Selfhood (India)*, and the *Texas Weather Anthology*, among others.

Larry D. Thomas, a member of the Texas Institute of Letters and the 2008 Texas Poet Laureate, has published several award-winning collections of poetry including *As If Light Actually Matters: New & Selected Poems*, which received a 2015 Writers' League of Texas Book Awards Finalist citation. He lives in the high Chihuahuan Desert of Far West Texas with his wife and two long-haired Chihuahuas. Among his best friends are the Chihuahuan raven, puma, great horned owl, coyote, javelina, mule deer, gray fox, Texas horned lizard, thick-handed scorpion, black-tailed jackrabbit, diamondback rattlesnake, and blue quail.

Chuck Wemple has written poetry for more than twenty-eight years; served as co-editor of *Spiky Palm*; met his wife Mary at a poetry reading, and is the President of Mutabilis Press. His poetry incorporates themes of mythology, magical realism, and the occasional circus bear. His poem "Some Nights Tiny Furies" placed third in the Austin International Poetry Festival Anthology competition in 2015.

Mary Wemple is a poet, artist, and creator of Words & Art, a reading and workshop series inspired by the art in Houston. She holds degrees in English and studio art from the University of Houston and is currently at work on an M.F.A. in studio art at MICA in Baltimore. Her poetry has been published in *di-vêrsé-city*, *Houston Poetry Fest Anthology*, *Harbinger Asylum*, and her art shown at the Inman Gallery, DiverseWorks, and Lawndale Art Center.

Sasha West's first book, *Failure and I Bury the Body*, won the National Poetry Series and the Texas Institute of Letters First Book of Poetry Award. Her poems have appeared in *The Kenyon Review Online*, *West Branch*, *The Southern Review*, *Copper Nickel*, and elsewhere. Her awards include a Bread Loaf Writers' Conference Fellowship, Rice University's Parks Fellowship, and a Houston Arts Alliance grant. She is on the creative writing faculty at St. Edward's University in Austin, Texas, where she lives with her husband and daughter.

Marilyn Westfall has published poetry, fiction, essays, and interviews over many years, including interviews with three Texas poets laureate in *Lone Star Literary Life*. Her poetry has appeared in various magazines, most recently in *Illya's Honey*, *Mezzo Cammin*, *Pilgrimage*, *Gravel*, *Concho River Review*, *Red River Review*, *Southwestern American Literature*, and *Right Hand Pointing*. It has been anthologized in *Bearing the Mask: Southwestern Persona Poems*.

Allyson Whipple is an M.F.A. candidate in Creative Writing at the University of Texas at El Paso. She is the author of two chapbooks, most recently *Come Into the World Like That* (Five Oaks Press, 2016). She served as co-editor of the *Texas Poetry Calendar* from 2016 to 2018. She teaches writing and yoga in Austin, Texas.

Scott Wiggerman is the author of three books of poetry: *Leaf and Beak: Sonnets, Presence*, and *Vegetables and Other Relationships*; and the editor of several volumes, including *Wingbeats: Exercises & Practice in Poetry*, *Lifting the Sky: Southwestern Haiku & Haiga*, and *Bearing the Mask: Southwestern Persona Poems*. Recent poems have appeared in *A Quiet Courage*, *Ocotillo Review*, *Red Earth Review*, *Switched-on Gutenberg*, and *Chelsea Station*. He is an editor for Dos Gatos Press of Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Connie Lane Williams holds an M.A. in literature from Angelo State. Her awards include Sigma Tau Delta and Texas Association of Creative Writing Teachers. She has been a featured poet or workshop facilitator for Fort Concho Museum Press, Langdon Review, Kelton Conference, AIPF, West Texas Snyder. Her reviews may be found in *Concho River Review*, *mythopoetry*. She is listed in *Quotable Texas Women* (Texas A&M, 2005) and *Beat Texas* (Lamar University Press). She is author of *Dancing Backwards in Texas* (Slough Press) and founder of Forrest Fest, a non-profit, whose mission is to provide working artists a venue and literary opportunities for an underserved rural community. She is an adjunct professor of English and lives in Lamesa, Texas.

Jerald Winakur, a retired geriatrician, is a clinical professor of medicine at UT Health San Antonio where he teaches medical humanities and ethics. His first book, *Memory Lessons: A Doctor's Story*, chronicles his life in medicine and the journey he took with his father who developed Alzheimer's disease. His first volume of poetry, *Human Voices Wake Us*, is published by Kent State University Press in its "Literature and Medicine" series. An avid birder, he lives in the Texas Hill Country where he is attempting to restore the native prairie on his small ranch, looking more and more like a fool's errand in these drought-stricken times.

Judith Youngers, a dangerous logophile, has always been fascinated by words, but educational pieces and curriculum design dominated her writing until three years ago when poetry began to surface in surprising ways. Now, after taking a number of poetry classes to hone her craft and with an ongoing Texas Hill Country writer's support group, she writes in a number of poetic forms via her muse, a small owl named Athena. She favors a weathered Adirondack chair near her secret garden in Comfort, Texas, as a fruitful place for musing and writing when she is not murdering snails or humming haiku with Hank, her cowdog.

Vanessa Zimmer-Powell is a Houston poet and speech-language pathologist. She attended the University of Texas-Austin where she received a B.A. in English, and a B.S. and M.A. in communication sciences and disorders. Since she began publishing her work in 2013, she has published more than 40 poems in various journals and anthologies, including *Ekphrasis*, *Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review*, and *San Pedro River Review*. Her poetry has aired on KTRU, Houston Public Radio, and the Rick Steves radio program. She was the winner of the 2016 Houston Poetry Fest ekphrastic competition, a 2013 Rick Steves haiku award, and received honors at the 2013 Austin Poetry Festival. Her chapbook, *Woman Looks into an Eye*, was published by Dancing Girl Press in the summer of 2017.

Echoes of the Cordillera

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These poets added their voices to *Echoes of the Cordillera*

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