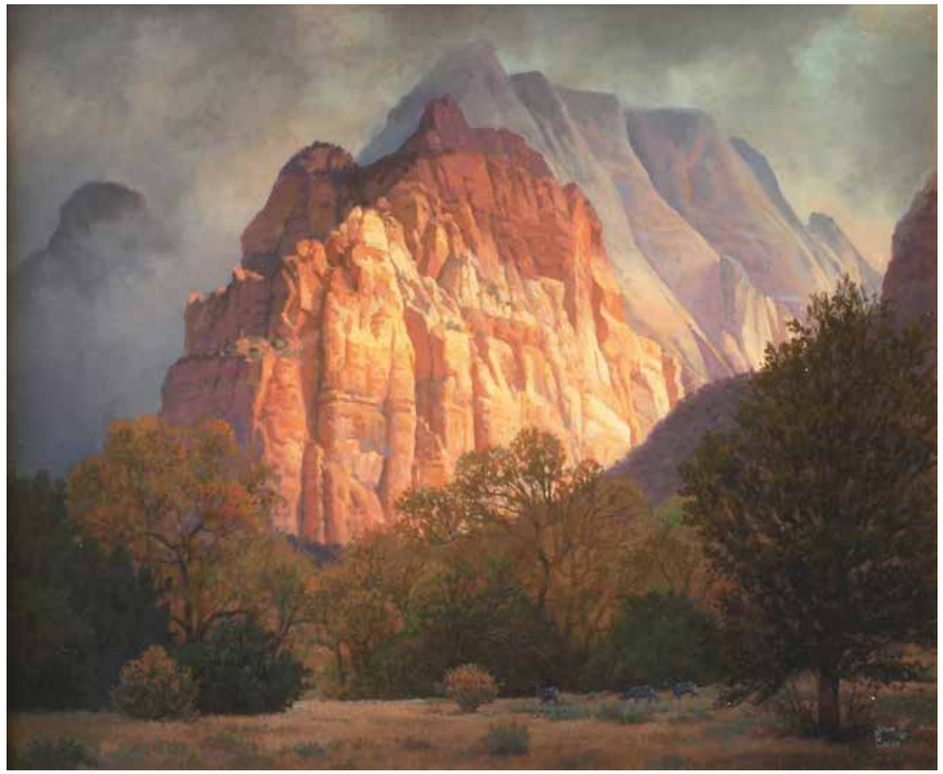
(Sojourns

SUMMER 2013: ART AND INSPIRATION

This Immense Prodigality of Color



A few years ago, while traveling in Europe, I found myself on a streetcar in Linz, Austria, seated next to an Austrian man who seemed very interested in talking to me. He had quickly deduced that I was American and he wanted to ask me a question. He opened a leather pouch and from it extracted a multi-folded piece of glossy paper. Slowly and carefully he unfolded the page until it lay open, bright and beautiful, before us. It was a page torn from a magazine, a vivid color image of a familiar southern Utah scene. The man's eyes flashed up from the image and locked on mine as he asked in heavily accented English, "Have you ever been there?"

"Yes," I answered. "Many times."

This Austrian, who himself lived in one of the most scenically magnificent countries on Earth, then said, "I can hardly believe such a place exists." I assured him that it did. With tears glistening in his eyes, he said, "I'm going there someday."

John Cogan.
In the Morning Light,
2012. Acrylic on
canvas, 20 x 24.

Cody DeLong.
Zion Light Show,
2012, oil on canvas,
18 x 24.

Images of the Colorado Plateau have been circulating the world for more than a century now. The desire to experience firsthand what is initially viewed on paper, on canvas, or on the screen, lures millions of people to these majestic places every year. They come from across America and every part of the world. They want to see in person what the artist has beckoned them to see.

Artists and their art have played a central role in the history of the national parks and monuments of the Colorado Plateau. It was art that opened the eyes of America, and the world, to the splendor of these peaks, plateaus, and canyons, and to the need to preserve them. After scenic wildlands began to be designated as national monuments and national parks in the early twentieth century, images of them continued to entice travelers to what had been, only a few years earlier, some of the most remote places in America. Today, national park archives contain the work of many legendary artists who helped change the course of history. And many of those parks continue to celebrate their legacy of art through various programs and events.

In the summer of 1903, Frederick S. Dellenbaugh returned to the canyon country of the Colorado Plateau. From 1871–73, he had accompanied John Wesley Powell on his second expedition of the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon. The young and talented explorer was appointed expedition artist and assistant topographer on the trip that introduced him to the Colorado Plateau. He returned to the East with a deep and abiding fascination for canyon country, yet it would be three decades before he returned. At one point during that interim he studied painting in Europe. When he returned in the spring of 1903, he made his way to Zion Canyon and stayed on the property of O. D. Gifford, the Mormon bishop of Springdale, Utah. During his visit he took numerous photographs, made many sketches, and kept a detailed journal of his visit.

Maria Kelson

Above: A rabbit painted by the Italian street artist called 2501, part of the Painted Desert project.

A favorite installation by jetsonorama, located just north of the community of Gap on the east side of State Route 89.

Walls get a bad rap in contemporary self-help lingo. We are exhorted to tear down our inner walls and not to wall others out. But Chip Thomas (also known as jetsonorama in his role as intallation artist) loves walls. Courts them like a suitor. Sometimes he's a rogue Romeo, stealing off to be with an enticing edifice in the moonlit hours. Other times he's a gentleman caller in full daylight, politely asking people about "getting walls from them." A physician of twenty-six years in the Navajo nation, Chip is also a devoted practitioner of street art. He pastes photomurals on all kinds of vertical surfaces on the Navajo reservation: single-wide trailers, gas storage tanks, roadside stands, and gas stations. Chip's muraling began with a desire to explore art's potential to heal communities. What is a doc's first impulse if not this?

Chip has named his mural project *Big*. The artwork it encompasses primarily consists of enlarged photographs adhered to a variety of publicly visible surfaces. Photographs he has made over his twenty-five years on the reservation are the source of the initial images. Many of his photomurals depict living tribal elders: tribal youth and elders in action: laughing, drinking water, making fry bread. He wants to "elevate the positive side of reservation life."

He notes that in his work as a physician, "there's an effort to help people realize their maximum potential by helping them be healthy." Equating physiological balance with beauty, he sees the practice of human healthcare as supporting a foundation of Navajo cosmology. This idea is expressed as "walking in beauty" in the prayer that ends with the repetition of the phrase, "In beauty it is finished." He says, "I am attempting to restore people to balance in the clinic," and his work with art has an identical aim. "When something unexpected and beautiful comes [into view], it leaves people feeling better."

The pasting of beautiful images over structures can easily be read as a metaphor

FOR ALL ITS AWESOME NATURAL BEAUTY, the Colorado Plateau evokes a different association for Japanese Americans of a certain age. For them this was a place of hardship and exile, the site of many of the concentration camps where Japanese Americans were interned for the duration of World War II.

Their ordeal began on February 19,1942, just eleven weeks after Imperial Japan bombed Pearl Harbor. It was then that President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, giving the U.S. Army the authority to remove anyone it deemed necessary from so-called military areas. The entire West Coast of America was declared off limits to people of Japanese ancestry. At the time, 90 percent of all ethnic Japanese in the continental United States lived on the West Coast; two-thirds were American citizens.

The haste with which the Army's Western Defense Command carried out these orders meant that uprooted evacuees were forced to live in horse stalls at racetracks, livestock pavilions and fairgrounds until more permanent facilities could be built. What was promised to be only for a few weeks in these "assembly centers" turned into months due to the search for underutilized land accessible by rail line, but away from populated areas. The most likely spots were so remote that roads and infrastructure had to be built before construction could even begin.

Evacuation notice

Ethnic Japanese learned of their forcible evacuation from the West Coast through notices posted on public buildings and telephone poles. This notice gives evacuees one week to settle their affairs and turn themselves in, bringing only what they could carry.

Heart Mountain
Artist unknown
Paint and wood plank,
25 x 11.25 x 1.75
Heart Mountain, Wyoming

Tarpaper-covered barracks stood in the shadow of the limestone-capped Heart Mountain in northern Wyoming. The artist depicted the scene in bas relief.

All color photos of artifacts are by Terry Heffernan, ©Terry Heffernan.

WESTERN DEFENSE COMMAND AND FOURTH ARMY
WARTIME CIVIL CONTROL ADMINISTRATION
Presidio of San Francisco, California
May 3, 1942

INSTRUCTIONS TO ALL PERSONS OF JAPANESE ANCESTRY

Living in the Following Area:

All of that portion of the County of Alameda, State of California, within the boundary beginning at the point where the southerly limits of the City of Oakland meet San Francisco Bay; thence easterly and following the southerly limits of said city to U. S. Highway No. 50; thence southerly and easterly on said Highway No. 50 to its intersection with California State Highway No. 21; thence southerly on said Highway No. 21 to its intersection, at or near Warm Springs, with California State Highway No. 17; thence southerly on said Highway No. 17 to the Alameda-Santa Clara County line; thence westerly and following said county line to San Francisco Bay; thence northerly, and following the shoreline of San Francisco Bay to the point of beginning.

Pursuant to the provisions of Civilian Exclusion Order No. 34, this Headquarters, dated May 3, 1942, all persons of Japanese ancestry, both alien and non-alien, will be evacuated from the above area by 12 o'clock noon, P. W. T., Saturday, May 9, 1942.

No Japanese person living in the above area will be permitted to change residence after 12 o'clock noon, P. W. T., Sunday, May 3, 1942, without obtaining special permission from the representative of the Commanding General, Northern California Sector, at the Civil Control Station located at:

920 - "C" Street,
Hayward, California.

Such permits will only be granted for the purpose of uniting members of a family, or in cases of grave emergency.

The Civil Control Station is equipped to assist the Japanese population affected by this evacuation in the following ways:

1. Give advice and instructions on the evacuation.
2. Provide services with respect to the management, leasing, sale, storage or other disposition of most kinds of property, such as real estate, business and professional equipment, household goods, boats, automobiles and livestock.
3. Provide temporary residence elsewhere for all Japanese in family groups.
4. Transport persons and a limited amount of clothing and equipment to their new residence.

The Following Instructions Must Be Observed:

1. A responsible member of each family, preferably the head of the family, or the person in whose name most of the property is held, and each individual living alone, will report to the Civil Control Station to receive further instructions. This must be done between 8:00 A. M. and 5:00 P. M. on Monday, May 4, 1942, or between 8:00 A. M. and 5:00 P. M. on Tuesday, May 5, 1942.
2. Evacuees must carry with them on departure for the Assembly Center, the following property:
   (a) Bedding and linens (no mattress) for each member of the family;
   (b) Toilet articles for each member of the family;
   (c) Extra clothing for each member of the family;
   (d) Sufficient knives, forks, spoons, plates, bowls and cups for each member of the family;
   (e) Essential personal effects for each member of the family.

All items carried will be securely packaged, tied and plainly marked with the name of the owner and numbered in accordance with instructions obtained at the Civil Control Station. The size and number of packages is limited to that which can be carried by the individual or family group.

3. No pets of any kind will be permitted.
4. No personal items and no household goods will be shipped to the Assembly Center.
5. The United States Government through its agencies will provide for the storage, at the sole risk of the owner, of the more substantial household items, such as iceboxes, washing machines, pianos and other heavy furniture. Cooking utensils and other small items will be accepted for storage if crated, packed and plainly marked with the name and address of the owner. Only one name and address will be used by a given family.
6. Each family, and individual living alone, will be furnished transportation to the Assembly Center or will be authorized to travel by private automobile in a supervised group. All instructions pertaining to the movement will be obtained at the Civil Control Station.

Go to the Civil Control Station between the hours of 8:00 A. M. and 5:00 P. M., Monday, May 4, 1942, or between the hours of 8:00 A. M. and 5:00 P. M., Tuesday, May 5, 1942, to receive further instructions.

J. L. DeWITT
Lieutenant General, U. S. Army
Commanding

SEE CIVILIAN EXCLUSION ORDER NO. 34.

Letters from Gunnar

FOLLOWING THE SWEDISH PROPENSITY for adventure and exploration, watercolor artist Gunnar Widforss left his home in Stockholm in 1904 on a lifelong journey in search of beautiful landscapes to paint. Like many expatriate Swedish artists of his generation he eventually came to the United States, in January 1921, where he entered into what would be the most creative and productive period of his career. He left behind the exciting, yet traditional, milieu of early twentieth-century Stockholm where Albert Einstein had received the Nobel Prize for physics that year. He arrived in Los Angeles, a thoroughly modern city luxuriating in the radiant southern California sun and vibrant with the energy of Hollywood and the Jazz Age. Two years after he stepped from the train at Union Station he would make his first trip to the Southwest and his first paintings of Zion Canyon and Grand Canyon, two of the subjects for which he is best known. Throughout his lifetime of travel Widforss was a prodigious correspondent. The letters he wrote to his family and friends reveal his fascination and frustration with the challenging subjects he painted, as well as his very critical view of his own work.

As he refined his style and technique in Europe during his early career, Widforss also established an approach to his work that would serve him well throughout his life. Widforss recognized that by staying and working in popular tourist destinations he would have ready access to clients seeking mementos of their trips. He, too, was naturally attracted to beautiful and dramatic landscapes and they constitute the greatest volume of his body of work. Between 1904 and 1920, he lived and worked in such popular tourist locations as France's Côte d'Azur, the Tyrolean Alps in Austria and Italy, Lake Lucerne in Switzerland,

Facing: Gunnar Widforss. *Angel's Landing, Zion,* 1923. Watercolor on board, 17½ x 14. Courtesy private collector. Above: Widforss at Grand Canyon. GRCA 67907

Picturing the Land

Don Stinson

Charles Sheeler (1883–1965). *Conversation—Earth and Sky,* 1940. Oil on canvas. Courtesy Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, Texas.

Artists drawn to the landscape of the Colorado Plateau have a long history of making images that coincide with, record, comment on, or critique the relationship of the natural environment to great industrial projects. Thomas Moran's Grand Canyon pieces were commissioned by the Santa Fe Railway, and Hoover Dam was documented in photographs by Ben Glaha for the Bureau of Reclamation, Ansel Adams for the National Park Service, and Charles Sheeler for *Fortune* magazine, in his great oil painting *Conversation—Sky and Earth*. Later the construction of Glen Canyon Dam from 1956 to 1963 would excite the environmental and literary interest of New Mexico's Edward Abbey and launch the modern environmental movement. In 1975, in Rochester, New York, William Jenkins created an exhibition featuring nine photographers whose work he labeled *New Topographics: Photographs of a Man-Altered Landscape.* This exhibit is important because the images it contained rewrote the rules of landscape photography. These beautifully printed images were stark depictions of the mundane and "man-altered landscapes."

The images in *New Topographics* were not only of the West, and while some images depicted the industrial and suburban fringe around the edges of the Colorado Plateau, the area is not the central concern of these photographers. Their real subject is what the cultural geographer J. B. Jackson called "the field of perpetual conflict and compromise" where vernacular landscapes are constructed by culture in the contested terrain of North America.

Former Coloradan Robert Adams, perhaps the best known of these photographers today, was the subject of *Robert Adams: Landscapes of Harmony and Dissonance,* a retrospective at the J. Paul Getty Museum, in February 2006. Adams exemplifies the search for a balance of "harmony and discord" in the world as we have made it, which I believe the best of the *New Topographic* photographs find. On the Colorado Plateau, human population has increased sixfold since the turn of the twentieth century and is now outpacing growth in the western U. S. as a whole. Honest and artful depictions of the growing presence of "man-altered" landscape tells us much about how to protect it. They also reflect and shape our perception about how to live responsibly in the presence of the discord we bring.

Even a quick look at the Ansel Adams photograph *The Tetons—Snake River* (1942), invites a comparison to Thomas Moran's oil *Mountain of the Holy Cross* (1875). "Landscape is tension," says British cultural geographer John Wylie. He suggests that the terrain of a place is animated by the contrasts and conflicts within the land.

Tension also animates the study of the archival past and the available past. In Ansel Adams's image, which borrows from both Moran's composition and his concept of a timeless untouched wilderness, a question arises for me. Is his image trapped in imitation of an unreachable, unchanging tradition (the archival past), or does it awaken us to a deeper understanding of the living, evolving, mutable

Thomas Moran. *Mountain of the Holy Cross,* 1875. Oil on canvas, 109 x 90¾. Donated from the collection of Jackie and Gene Autry. Autry National Center, Los Angeles; 91.221.49.

Ansel Adams. *The Tetons—Snake River,* 1942. Silver gelatin print.

Robert Adams. *Burning Oil Sludge North of Denver,* 1973. Gelatin silver print, 6 x 7⅝. ©Robert Adams, courtesy Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco, and Matthew Marks Gallery, New York.

tradition which is the available past? I think Adams awakens the present by reconceiving Moran's invention as a document, testing the reality of the West on that day in 1942 against Moran's art.

Robert Adams's photographs are often mentioned in contrast to the traditions of landscape photography exemplified by Ansel Adams. While nature is an important and compelling presence in the work of Robert Adams, the immediate reaction to a breathtaking photograph such as his *Burning Oil Sludge North of Denver, Colorado* (1973), is likely to be felt as an admonition to do better for the places we love. Documented in the equally rigorous language of Ansel Adams's photographic technique is the message that we have not messed things up too badly. It is reassuring to see that one can take a large format camera into the nation's protected lands and still see something like Moran's painted vision of the Rockies, the Grand Canyon, or Zion.

In a 2010 essay, "Realism in Nature's Parks," authors Sarah Lurie and Daniel Jackson invoke the work of both Ansel Adams and Robert Adams when discussing the Houghton Garden, which was built in Newton, Massachusetts, in 1906 to appear wild. "However jaded and modern we may be," they write, "most of us have a side that is more Ansel Adams than Robert Adams. A side that wants not a deeper reconciliation with the flawed beauty of the world, but an escape into a more perfect world." The tension between the two informs much of the important work being done about or in landscape today.

Paul Jacobsen is an artist from Glenwood Springs, Colorado, who has apprenticed to the western slope realist painter Daniel Sprick. He now lives in Brooklyn and has worked as an artist's assistant to Jeff Koons and Rudolf Stingel. During the spring of 2013 Jacobsen exhibited a new body of work at David B. Smith Gallery in Denver. In works such as *Zion #6* the artist presents the garden obscured by the mechanics of technological vision. Jacobsen's use of Photoshop tools and effects creates a beautiful but distorting filter of lens flares and sunspots between the viewer and an image of nature, in this case,