

Uncommon Places in the Democratic Forest



Main St., Greenville, TN, Wm. Eggleston



Natural Bridge, NY, 1974, Stephen Shore

"I was in Oxford, Mississippi for a few days and I was driving out to Holly Springs on a back road, stopping here and there. It was the time of year when the landscape wasn't yet green. I left the car and walked into the dead leaves off the road. It was on of those occasions when there was no picture there. It seemed like nothing, but of course there was something for someone out there. I started forcing myself to take pictures of the earth, where it had been eroded thirty or forty feet from the road. There were a few weeds. I began to realize that soon I was taking some pretty good pictures, so I went further into the woods and up a little hill, and got well into an entire roll of film.

"Later when I was having dinner with some friends, writers from around Oxford or maybe at the bar of the Holiday Inn, someone said, 'What have you been photographing here today, Eggleston?'

'Well I've been photographing democratically,' I replied.

— Wm. Eggleston, from *The Democratic Forest*

"I wanted to be visually aware as I went through the day. I started photographing everyone I met, every meal, every toilet, every bed I slept in, the streets I walked on, the towns I visited."

— Stephen Shore, from *Uncommon Places*

ASSIGNMENT

Considering the work of Stephen Shore and William Eggleston, create a group of landscape photographs that reflect the contemporary landscape – your landscape, your time. Shore, a careful formalist using precise framing and focusing on the buildings, intersections, parking lots of 1970s America and Eggleston, a shoot-from-the-hip 35mm photographer who considered everything he encountered as potential subject matter, are artists who extended the vocabulary of landscape and the language of photography. By photographing everything from their breakfasts and motel rooms to common parking lots, suburban streets, and the subtle beauty of the roadside landscape, they created a new American photography, a new way of photographing the landscape.

Look at their work carefully, read the interview with Shore and the short essay by Eggleston, and begin to sketch out your own thoughts about your landscape, whatever that is. What is it you see all the time that often evades most people's scrutiny due to its "commonness." What makes a the common "uncommon" and what landscapes to you think reflect Eggleston's idea of "democratic." Re-view the two photographers' work and begin to envision your own version of these two seminal works.

Shoot at least **two rolls** of color film and make at least **five finished ink-jet prints** from the series.

Due: November 13