

Project Description/Introduction

Photographs & Essays:

IN the second grade, while waiting for my mother to pick me up from St. Patrick's elementary school in Corpus Christi, Texas, I buried a penny, deep along the edge of a sidewalk. It had something to do with not forgetting and all the questions that surface during childhood. Today, the coin still buried, still waiting in the dark on the side of the aging pathway. Abraham Lincoln was on one side, on the other, "*E. Pluribus Unum*", *Out of many, One*". My fingerprint on the buried penny was a topographical map, but it offered no clear guidance on how to live.

Every photograph holds a secret. The twenty-three series of photographs in this collection were made between 1983-2001 and the essays were written in 2024-2025. Photographs specialize in time travel, moving from now to then. The language of "looking" goes deeper than surfaces.

The twenty-three series of photographs and essays are diverse in subject matter. *Siberia, Russia – Labrador, Newfoundland – A Desert in Texas – Cattle Auction in San Antonio – A Rainforest in Hawaii – Kurdish War in Iraq*. There are also conceptional photographic series including: – *In Between – Words & Images – Saints – Against the Glass – Unplanned & Unforeseen* – and *Not so Powerful*.

What connects these series is less about geography or foreign travel and more about wanting to understand individuals, communities and places, ideas and realities unlike my own. Randomness and intentionality stroll hand in hand.

Over a three-year period during the late 1980s, I wrote letters to four photographers I deeply admired: "*Can I visit with you about your work and about the nature of photography?*" Everyone wrote back saying, "YES". I met Ray Metzker in New York City. He told me as a directive, "*Don't be careful*". I met Corlotta Corpron in Denton, Texas – she said, "*When you fall in love with something, it is all you see. I fell in love with light*". I met Manuel Alvarez Bravo twice in Mexico City. He told me, "*Photograph what you care about.*" I met Frederick Sommer, Prescott, Arizona in the middle of a heavy snowstorm. He wondered out loud, "*Think about verbs, not nouns.*" The attached body of work, *Photographs & Essays* carries these imperatives as an echo or a whisper.

Photography is not just about *Photographs*. These photographic series are also about what is experienced, imagined, learned and remembered inside and outside the borders of the photograph. How does anyone photograph the serious remoteness of landscapes or the emotional longing many feel and share? Surprise and mood rearrange understanding. Care attaches weight and gravity. Experience is often amplified and wraps its arms around a moment. Perception and anticipation rise like bread and is rarely limited to what is directly in front of us. The act of photographing is also the act of *Not Forgetting*. In the middle of the night, in the darkroom with a soft orange glow of the safelight, photographs resting in running water are owners of their own light.

Working as a photographer has always been about setting an idea or question or attention into motion to discover what photographs – experiences - revelations might emerge from that hopeful endeavor. Waiting is just as important as looking. Like rain-water swirling down a valley, where will it end up? “*Light and dark*” are invitations to critical thinking. “*A flash of light*” in our peripheral vision is an exclamation mark. Longing, fragility and reciprocity are symbols in the same way as satisfaction or delight. Every person, every place is a map to somewhere else.

I am attaching a link to the 23 series of *Photographs & Essays*.

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Note:

I used photographic film, processed and printed in my darkroom. Most of the photographs were made using a large format 8x10” or 5x7” View Cameras.

My four long-term Photography & Audio exhibitions (not a part of submitted Photographic Series & Essays) have traveled to over 130 cities around the country. See michaelnye.org

The Traveling Exhibition, *My Heart Is Not Blind* - is also a book published by Trinity University Press. 2020

