



International Center of Photography

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media release

Biographical Landscape: The Photography of Stephen Shore, 1969-79



Stephen Shore
U.S. 97, South of Klamath Falls, Oregon, July 21, 1973
© Stephen Shore
Courtesy Aperture Foundation

On view from
May 11 through
September 9, 2007

Media Preview
May 10, 2007
9:30 - 11am

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Stephen Shore emerged in the 1970s as one of the major exponents of color photography, shooting bleak yet lyrical scenes of the North American landscape. Documenting everyday settings and objects, from hotel swimming pools and televisions to parking lots, gas stations, and deserted roads, Shore exhibited an ability to transform commonplace surroundings into compelling works of art. Over 160 images will be on view in the exhibition *Biographical Landscape: The Photography of Stephen Shore, 1969-79* at the International Center of Photography (1133 Avenue of the Americas at 43rd Street) from May 11 through September 9, 2007. The exhibition will draw largely from Shore's career-making series *Uncommon Places* (1973-78) in addition to works from his earlier *American Surfaces* series (1972), and rarely seen black-and-white conceptual work from the late 1960s.

Stephen Shore was something of a prodigy as a photographer. Born in New York City in 1947, Shore learned about and practiced photography from the age of six. At the age of fourteen, his work was bought by Edward Steichen for the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York. From 1965 through 1967, the photographer worked in Andy Warhol's studio, the Factory, a formative experience that allowed Shore to experiment with combining documentary and conceptual styles in the laconic style characteristic of his later images. In 1971, at the age of twenty-four, Shore had a one-person exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the first accorded a living American photographer.

Shore's initial experiment in compiling a series of photographs as a complete work was the project called *American Surfaces* (1972), a sort of visual diary of a trip from New York City to Amarillo, Texas, in the form of thousands of postcard-sized images. From Warhol, Shore got the idea to try to capture nearly every move along a traveler's journey, recording even the most mundane occurrences in everyday life. The *American Surfaces* series documents Shore as a traveler or stranger, noticing locations and objects along the way, including motel beds, street corners, telephone booths, and the meals he ate.

Between 1973 and 1979, Shore continued traveling, making a series of trips driving across North America, documenting the vernacular landscape through his view camera, and taking a more formal approach to photographing than in his earlier work. A number of these images later formed Shore's now-classic book, *Uncommon Places* (first published by Aperture in 1982 and re-published in both 2004 and 2007). These images arouse recollections of experiences, but in an artful, carefully crafted, and calculated manner. By incorporating linear perspective into the composition of his works, Shore defines the focal point of his images, giving the viewer a sense of place and time. The idea of place is further established through his practice of titling images with the names of locations, streets, and hotel room numbers. Shore's use of the large-format camera and innovative color printing has made him one of the most influential photographers to emerge in the last half of the twentieth century, credited with inspiring numerous contemporary photographers.

Aperture, a not-for-profit organization devoted to photography and the visual arts, has organized this traveling exhibition and produced the accompanying publications.



The New York City presentation was organized by the International Center of Photography with support from Altria Group, Inc., Jane Lombard, Pamela and Arthur Sanders, Howard and Patricia Silverstein, and other generous donors.

