

Theme: Colour and Detail

Stephen Shore has recorded commonplace situations in rich, strong colour in a series of carefully composed photographs. The work of Martin Parr and the later work of William Eggleston show a similar interest in colour and detail.



Stephen Shore - Pueblo Bonito, New Mexico June, 1972, C-print, 5" x 7.5"

This image is part of a series of pictures entitled *American Surfaces*. The series is a photographic version of a road movie, and in that tradition it has at times a downbeat mood: its director/protagonist is often drawn to the bleak and the mundane. Frequently nothing seems to be happening, or something wholly unremarkable has been recorded. And yet there is tremendous beauty here—beauty found where it's least expected—as well as humor and pathos. *American Surfaces* is a meditation on what it means to be in the world, on what it means to point a camera in one direction rather than another, and no matter what is being recorded its subject is always photography itself.

Stephen Shore - Granite, Oklahoma, July 1972, C-print, 5" x 7.5"

Alongside William Eggleston, Shore is one of the central figures in 1970s color photography, an artist who built upon some of the best of those itinerant, restless photographers who came before him, from Walker Evans to Robert Frank and Garry Winogrand. Shore is also a pioneer who would exert considerable influence on younger photographers in the 1980s and 1990s, including such well-known artists as Andreas Gursky and Thomas Struth.





Stephen Shore - Church and Second Streets, Easton, Pennsylvania, June 20, 1974

Text from Thomas Weski, in Stephen Shore: Photographs, 1973-1993

Expeditions to Explored Areas

"[Stephen Shore and William Eggleston] are inseparable from the recognition of color photography as a legitimate medium of artistic expression. Long into the 1970s, the view of Walker Evans, the American photographer of the 1920s and 1930s, that "color photography is vulgar," was still considered axiomatic. Serious photography was only executed in black and white: color photography, expensive to use and with prints that were unstable when exposed to light, was left to the applied, commercial side of photography, to advertising and journalism. We now know that Evans, who propounded this doctrine, had worked intensively in color himself long before, but had not been satisfied with the results except in a very few cases. Works that Shore had produced in his early years, and which had made him a well-known figure in the USA, were published together for the first time in the 1982 monograph *Uncommon Places*. During the 1970s, Shore made several trips across North America. The results of these photographic expeditions into areas already explored were color photos of American landscapes and cityscapes. The images of street corners, movie theaters, gas stations, cars, baseball players, and pancakes appear to be completely normal. At first glance, one thinks, "that's what it looks like," and it is precisely this formulation of the stereotypes associated with America that is one of the strengths of Stephen Shore's photos."

Stephen Shore - U.S. Route 10, Post Falls, Idaho, August 25, 1974

"Until I was twenty-three I lived mostly in a few square miles in Manhattan. In 1972 I set out with a friend for Amarillo, Texas. I didn't drive, so my first view of America was framed by the passenger's window. It was a shock. I would be in a flat nowhere place of the earth, and every now and then I would walk outside or be driving down a road and the light would hit something and for a few minutes the place would be transformed. Color film is wonderful because it shows not only the intensity but the color of light. There is so much variation in light between noon one day and the next, between ten in the morning and two in the afternoon. A picture happens when something inside connects, an experience that changes as the photographer does. When the picture is there, I set out the 8x10 camera, walk around it, get behind it, put the hood over my head, perhaps move it over a foot, walk in front, fiddle with the lens, the aperture, the shutter speed. I enjoy the camera. Beyond that it is difficult to explain the process of photographing except by analogy:

The trout streams where I flyfish are cold and clear and rich in the minerals that promote the growth of stream life. As I wade a stream I think wordlessly of where to cast the fly. Sometimes a difference of inches is the difference between catching a fish and not. When the fly I've cast is on the water my attention is riveted to it. I've found through experience that whenever--or so it seems--my attention wanders or I look away then surely a fish will rise to the fly and I will be too late setting the hook. I watch the fly calmly and attentively so that when the fish strikes--I strike. Then the line tightens, the playing of the fish begins, and time stands still. Fishing, like photography, is an art that calls forth intelligence, concentration, and delicacy."

Stephen Shore, 1982



Stephen Shore - Presidio, Texas, February 21, 1975

Stephen Shore - Sutter Street and Crestline Road, Fort Worth, Texas, June 3, 1976





Stephen Shore - Jackson, Wyoming, September 2, 1979

Martin Parr - from Common Sense 1995-1999

Parr's grandfather encouraged his early interest in photography, and he studied at the Manchester School of Art. In the early 1980s, Parr produced a series of photographs of New Brighton, a run-down seaside resort outside Liverpool. The gaudy and sometimes grotesque imagery of these works seemed to reflect the spirit of Thatcher's Britain, while echoing the tradition of tacky seaside postcards.

More recently, Parr has addressed themes of consumerism, mass tourism and globalisation with a distinctive wit and sense of irony. In *Common Sense* (1995-9), he uses bright colours and exaggerated close-ups to explore the excesses of contemporary capitalism. Motifs such as heads, hats, hands, food and dogs are repeated throughout, creating a snatched catalogue of our all too familiar shortcomings.



Martin Parr - from Common Sense 1995-1999

Martin Parr - Dakar (red and white dress), 2001



Martin Parr - Dakar (yellow dress), 2001

Martin Parr - Essex Girls (newsprint suit), 2005



Martin Parr - Essex Girls (girls in pink), 2005

Martin Parr - Reines de la Nuit (diamond necklace), 1999



Martin Parr - Pomellato Series, 2001

William Eggleston - New Orleans, 1980s

"I am afraid that there are more people than I can imagine who can go no further than appreciating a picture that is a rectangle with an object in the middle of it, which they can identify. They don't care what is around the object as long as nothing interferes with the object itself, right in the centre. Even after the lessons of Winogrand and Friedlander, they don't get it. They respect their work because they are told by respectable institutions that they are important artists, but what they really want to see is a picture with a figure or an object in the middle of it. They want something obvious. The blindness is apparent when someone lets slip the word 'snapshot'. Ignorance can always be covered by 'snapshot'. The word has never had any meaning. I am at war with the obvious."

William Eggleston



William Eggleston - Untitled, 1980s

William Eggleston - Memphis, Tennessee, 1989



William Eggleston - Scott, Mississippi, 1993