

# The Museum of Modern Art

50th Anniversary



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NO. 20

## ADVANCE FACT SHEET

- EXHIBITION:** AMERICAN LANDSCAPE
- DATES:** The Museum of Modern Art, New York  
July 9-September 27, 1981
- SPONSOR:** Springs Mills, Inc.  
This exhibition is part of the Springs Mills Series  
on the Art of Photography
- DIRECTOR:** John Szarkowski, Director of the Department of Photography,  
The Museum of Modern Art
- CONTENTS:** AMERICAN LANDSCAPE, an exhibition of approximately 55  
photographs taken between the 1860s and the present,  
will explore the changing concept and definition of  
the natural site.

The landscape in painting, a relatively modern concept which developed late in the 18th century, celebrated a new sense of cordial intent between man and nature. Landscapes expressed the perception that the force of wilderness had been tamed a little, that it was less terrifying and had become a subject available to the lyric sensibility. In 19th century America this was a hard point to make. If America had little landscape art, it was because it had little landscape, as defined above. America had wilderness which, especially in the West, was extraordinarily inhospitable to the traditional concept of pastoral beauty.

Mr. Szarkowski contends that for the photographer, the problem was even more difficult than it was for the painter, because the photographer was limited to what was in fact there.

The problem, he says, was not solved, but redefined, by men who were not artists in the traditional sense. The photographer-as-explorer was a "new kind of picture maker: part scientist, part reporter and part artist." As a group, their work, Szarkowski has written, "was the beginning of a continuing, inventive, indigenous

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tradition, a tradition motivated by the desire to explore and understand the natural site." AMERICAN LANDSCAPE will include the survey photographs of Timothy O'Sullivan, the aesthetic statements of the pictorialist and Photo-Secession movements by, among others, Edward Steichen and Alvin Langdon Coburn, and the contemporary, interpretive works of Robert Adams, and William Clift. Each of the photographers represented in the exhibition has attempted to define what the earth is like and has presented new discoveries concerning the structure, the beauty, and the meaning of our habitat.

**TRAVEL:**

Upon its closing at The Museum of Modern Art on September 27, 1981, AMERICAN LANDSCAPE will travel to the following: the Worcester Art Museum in Worcester, Massachusetts (November 24, 1981 - January 3, 1982); Akron Art Institute in Akron, Ohio (January 23 - March 7, 1982); Edwin A. Ulrich Museum of Art at Wichita State University in Wichita, Kansas (March 31 - May 9, 1982); the Gibbes Art Gallery in Charleston, South Carolina (July 1 - August 15, 1982); San Antonio Museum of Art in San Antonio, Texas (September 10 - November 7, 1982) and the Chicago Public Library, Chicago, Illinois (November 29, 1982 - January 9, 1983).

**PUBLICATION:**

A catalog, underwritten by Springs Mills, Inc., will be published in conjunction with the exhibition. It will include the 54 photographs from AMERICAN LANDSCAPE and an introductory essay by John Szarkowski. The book will be published by The Museum of Modern Art and distributed by the New York Graphic Society. Clothbound, \$14.95; paperbound, \$7.95 (prices tentative).

**PRESS PREVIEW:**

Wednesday, July 8, 1981, 3:00 P.M. - 6:00 P.M.

**PUBLIC OPENING:**

Thursday, July 9, 1981

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For further information, please contact Luisa Kreisberg, Director (212) 956-2648, or Sharon Zane, Associate Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, NY 10019

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