

Jon Scott Anderson

re-setting places: the books

My photographic work forms a narrative of how we see and understand place. The character of grass, stones, and vines are reflected with changing clarities of light and detail as the visibility of the landscape opens and closes with the seasons. The resulting series called *re-setting places: the books* are close, quiet studies on the nature of vision, memory and the transience of things.

The project is divided into “books” of subjects that have evolved over the 5 years of gathering this body of work. The books of grass, vines, stones, etc. were not pre-conceived categories but are the result of going out and bringing back images from a particular location. Through this process of re-seeing have come ever-changing readings of place.

My work is connected to a long lineage of landscape-based work. With Classical Chinese painting’s aesthetics that balance the polarities of near and far and empty and full as essential to a vision of the world, and with how the Japanese garden constructs and re-sets elements poised between the natural and the composed.

My process of adjoining multiple shots to create a singular image has existed since the inception of photography through combination printing and superimposition, and is today aligned with current digital strategies. However my approach shares its’ language with my experience in filmmaking — where the interpretation of a space is composed of a series of multiple focal lengths and angles cut together to form a filmic understanding of time and location. Like in a film, the cuts between the images I combine to re-set a place are not apparent. One accepts its language because it speaks to how we experience a place as a montage of views and remembrances.

The scroll-like panoramic dimensions of the earlier images in the series engage the viewer over time as the eye frames and tracks across the visual narrative of the image. The newer work changes the emphasis of the viewing experience — from physically traversing their 8-10 foot lengths to a singular point of view. They have become less about the frame as they have evolved to questioning the landscape form itself — by eliminating the horizon, manipulating elements of up & down orientation, and adding drawn layers which repeat and echo its linear and planar characteristics both found in the photographic image and created.

Each image is realized by working it much like a painting so as the iconic character of the photographic subject of grass, vine, etc. lessens they become more about a response to the pattern languages found in the landscape. Each image or page in the “books” builds a narrative that share the two defining characteristics of written Classical Chinese poetry¹, graphic form and empty grammar. Read together like kanji characters in a poem, each image re-describes a place where all things rise and pass away with the seasons. They speak with the formal gesture of a calligraphy character while engaging the viewer in a dialectic between presence and absence.

1.
Classical Chinese Poetry, An Anthology, David Hinton, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, NY, 2008, Introduction, p.xxi.