



*re-setting a place: creek line* 2007 24' x 94" ED 7, archival pigment print

Dana Self. *Look Closer*, The Pitch, December 20, 2007, pg. 26.

Two centuries ago, English poet William Wordsworth lamented that, in our petty pursuit of material gain, the natural world's beauty was too often lost to us. Though Kansas City filmmaker Jon Scott Anderson uses a high-tech medium, his work evokes Wordsworth's still-relevant complaint:

*The world is too much with us; late and soon  
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;  
Little we see in Nature that is ours;  
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!*

Anderson recognizes nature's beauty by rebuilding it — or, in his terms, “re-setting” it. By manipulating images in a digital format, he constructs giant photographs that seem to celebrate the natural world while disrupting our relationship to it. The parlor trick can be dizzying, yet it works because of Anderson's deft handling.

All of the six images in this Dolphin exhibition come from a series titled *re-setting a place*. Anderson took the photographs on an 80-acre plot of land south of Kansas City. Over time, repeat visits to the site revealed the character of the place and its living abundance. Influenced by Japanese garden design, Anderson borrows from the Shinto tradition of marking sacred spots with ropes — but instead of ropes, he uses the photographic frame to mark the sacred boundaries. And then he proves those boundaries malleable.

*re-setting a place: pond* is one of the most disconcerting pieces. More than 9 feet wide, it's an eerie image of the titular body of water — a wide ribbon of phosphorescent green that's almost unidentifiable except for a sliver of land in the upper-right corner. At first glance, the work looks like a superwide landscape shot. But Anderson builds his works from bits and pieces of many images, giving them an uncanny, unreal sense; closer scrutiny reveals his manipulations, if you know what to look for.

Anderson's experience as a filmmaker emerges in these photographs. Partly because of their extreme width, we can sense the camera arcing across the shot. And through his rearrangements of the scene — his recutting of it — each photograph becomes its own little quiet and extremely slow-moving film.

Anderson's “re-setting” is most obvious and unsettling in *re-setting a place: creek line*. It's another wide image, almost 8 feet, of a waterline against a rocky shore. Anderson's tampering — such as placing a feather next to a rock that he has resized and making a waterline look like a horizon — creates a space that is almost unmanageable visually. There's no traditional perspective in an image like this, no natural depth of field, so your eye has no place to land — you keep scanning the image for that natural resting place. It's a weird and agitating sensation.

All of the images feel like this except for *re-setting a place: vines #6*, with a vinelike branch and thin tree trunks against a leafy background. Because it has this background, along with a foreground and a middle ground, it reads as a landscape. Maybe it's been manipulated, maybe not.