NATURES DESIGN

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CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

CHAPTER ONE

NATURES DESIGN

In this chapter the author will discuss how natures patterns and designs can enhance a photo, whether they be close-ups or panoramas. The author will also discuss techniques and aids that make the taking of these photos easier and also give them a dramatic feel. This includes composition and planning.

To begin with you must realise that there is a vast difference between what you experience when you take the photograph and what the viewer sees when they view it. This is especially true of close-up photos of patterns. You experience the scene with all your senses. You can see what happens around the camera; you hear the sounds, smell the odours and feel the warm sun or cool breezes on your skin. The photograph becomes part of your experiences. And when you look back at the photograph you can't but help reliving and remembering those experiences. But when you present the photo to your viewer they have no way of perceiving the experience or reliving the photo, they cannot see

the majestic scene surrounding the photo. The photo alone therefore has to convey all the excitement and wonder with its first impression otherwise it fails in its task. It is a silent two-dimensional image that must convey a living, vibrant, three-dimensional scene that is, at times, larger than life. To achieve this you have to use all perceptive powers and knowledge of techniques to give the photo the emotion and feeling it requires.

There are different graphic elements which you can use to enhance the photo and of these the line is the most elemental but one of the most effective. It defines edges and boundaries, boundaries of shapes, boundaries between air, land and water. Lines lead your eye into and around the image. The line energizes the photo. The horizon line is a crucial part of everyday life for it orientates a person. And therefore its position is crucial in a photograph. If it is placed at the top of the frame the sky plays a very small part and the foreground will gain importance. The opposite is also true if the line is at the bottom of the frame the sky will be all important. It is for this reason that the

line is almost never placed in the middle of the frame, because the foreground and sky would be competing for attention. The line is also important in that it highlights all the objects which fall along it. Nevertheless too many perfect horizontal or vertical lines can make the photograph repetitive and boring. By breaking a horizontal line with a strong vertical line you can give the photograph a stronger graphic feeling.

The curve is merely a bent line. The curve seems to represent motion and growth. As few lines in nature are straight for very long you tend to find a lot of curves and bends. Because both sound and light are carried on curved waves the curve becomes a symbol for them. In the atmosphere and in liquid waves are created by the slightest disturbance such as a light breeze and the reflections for these waves often form an abstraction of contrasting colours. Liquid patterns, curves and waves seldom stay in place for very long and therefore quick reactions and knowledge of equipment and the effects that the patterns will have are very important if one hopes to do justice to this fascinating aspect of nature. To successfully

photograph large curved shapes you need a good angle of view for composition and side lighting helps to accentuate the edges of the shapes, especially when the curves are bunched together. Curves by themselves are a wealth of subject matter and they are formed in various manners. They can be created by the growth of living things, the twisting and curling of plants are created by different growth rates. Longer surfaces wrap around shorter ones. Curves can be seen in mud (both wet and dry) in stems and leaves, in shells, tree trunks and in horns. Focus is important when photographing the shape of curves, especially when there is much detail that distracts the eye from the emphasis on the curve. It is good to accentuate the curve without showing too much background clutter.

The shapes of waterdrops, the patterns formed by rain falling into water, the design of flowers and seeds, the shape of an egg, the sun and the planet itself are all spheres and circles and they seem to symbolize natures harmony and perfection. Some the most spectacular circles in nature are the sun and the moon and by adding them to a photograph they can drastically

improve the image. Even though the sun and the moon seem huge they often don't look very big in our photos. A long lens is therefore needed to increase their size. Exposure, too, can be very difficult to determine. The circle is a graphic and powerful shape which can even be place in the centre of the frame and work. Another compositional method is to cut parts of the circle out of the frame. This forces the viewer's mind to complete the circle. The same effect can be achieved by overlapping the circles. Besides these shapes and lines that I have discussed there are many others one can use to enhance photographs, these include triangles and squares which are all very graphic and appealing.

Besides being aware of shapes and patterns one also has to be aware of things like texture, colour and size; for each has an important role to play in conveying your ideas across to the viewer. The author believes that the single most important factor in making a top quality photo is light, for if the light is ugly then the most dynamic shape or colour can be made to look bland and boring.

Colour is another of nature's miracles. Daily there are thousands of colours that are forever changing. Our perception of colour evokes emotional responses. Subjects that are not very graphic rely heavily on colours that give them visual impact. Colours also affect our other senses, they make us think of tastes, odours, sounds and feelings. There are three aspects of colour, hue, value and intensity. The hue indicates the name of a pure colour, for example; red, green and blue. Value is the lightness or darkness of a colour. The intensity refers to the saturation. Red is probably the most important colour (studies have revealed that it is often the first colour named as a language develops). It is linked to blood, battle, sex, heat and danger. In photographs, red is aggressive. It seems to push ahead of other colours and makes objects look larger. Although black and white are not spectral colours, used in colour photographs they can carry powerful messages. White is the symbol of purity, innocence and peace, while black, though often evoking negative symbols, can be a rich source of colour in photography. Black backgrounds are often used to accentuate and give

colours a more saturated feel. Saturated colours seem more exciting than ones that are less intense, even though they share the same value.

Another aspect to a photograph that must not be overlooked is the background even when it contains no colours to add contrast. The most powerful way to accentuate a shape or colour is to place it against a dark monochromatic background.

Another major provider of patterns is the weather which is constantly changing. This includes flow and turbulence. The falling of snow and rain can form lines and streaks and the blowing of leaves, branches and the flowing of streams creates blur when captured with a slow shutter speed.

There is more to taking a photograph than just pressing the shutter. It starts with researching; you must first find out as much as possible about the subject you are to photograph. Read about it and collect ideas on how to take a photo of it. Get an idea on the relationships between your subject and its surrounding,

the best season and time of day as well as the best viewpoints to take it from. When you see a subject that interests you you must start to pre-visualize the end result before you start taking the photograph. Start to decide what lens to use and how much depth of field you will need and this will save both time and effort. But be prepared for the unexpected, while you are photographing be prepared to keep an open mind and to shoot lots of film as it is one of the cheaper aspects of photography. Try various exposures, views, compositions and keep on experimenting for its only through experimentation that you will find out what effect various exposures, shutter speeds and compositions have on the subject matter. Making mistakes is also an important part of photography for it teaches you humility and greater care as well as what not to do the next time. By using lots of film you will also determine what techniques and subject matter you like the most and which ones work the best.

But all the experimenting means nothing if you do not see where you went wrong and see how you achieved certain effects. You do this by analysing the photos

after they have been processed. Each one must be carefully inspected and ruthlessly edited if it does not uphold a high standard. This is very difficult as it can lead to self-doubt and questioning. But this is without a doubt one of the most important aspects of photography and if you can do this successfully it will go a long way to promoting you and your photography.

CHAPTER TWO

EQUIPMENT

Today there is so much photographic equipment of various shapes and sizes on the market that it is often very difficult to decide on what to use. There are three main formats to choose from. They are the 35 millimeter(mm) format, medium format (six by six centimeters and six by seven centimeters are examples) and large format (four by five inches or eight by ten inches), format being the size of the film negative.

There are also special-purpose cameras available to the photographer. The one special-purpose camera of interest to the landscape photographer is the panoramic camera which scans the scene from one side to the other by pivoting the lens. The film is located on a curved plane, then exposed through a slit, which sweeps across it just in front of the emulsion and opposite the lens. Most of these cameras use 35 mm film but give you a negative that is 60 mm long x 24 mm high (the normal negative size being 35 mm x 24 mm). They use wide angle lenses which scan through 180 degrees. The picture's

proportions are interesting and dramatic, results helpfully exaggerate depth and distances.

In compiling his portfolio the author used cameras from all the formats. The author's 35 mm camera is a Canon A1. It is a good quality multi-mode camera which is capable of handling most situations. An excellent through-the-lens light metering system, reliability, ease of use and portability are the 35 mm's main advantage over the other formats. The large range of available lenses is also very useful. The medium format camera that the author uses is the Bronica EC which is an oldish camera that can take both six by six centimeter and six by four-and-a-half centimeter backs. The large films size means that the quality is better without sacrificing too much portability. Another big advantage of this camera is its interchangeable backs. This means that you only need one camera body to be able to make exposures on different types of film. The biggest drawback is that it has no through-the-lens light meter, which makes handling a lot more cumbersome. The large format camera that the author uses is the Sinar four by five viewcamera. This camera, due to its size, makes the need to preplan a shoot essential. The fact that the film is very expensive and must be used sparingly means that there is a need to eliminate mistakes.

Cameras are not the only equipment that a landscape photographer needs and finds helpful. With large format and most medium format cameras there is a need for a hand-held lightmeter as these cameras do not have through-the-lens metering. A good tripod is also a very important piece of equipment, this is due to the fact that a lot of landscape photography is done at dawn or dusk when the light levels are low. To obtain the greatest depth-of-field (which is the distance between the nearest and furtherest part of the subject which is acceptably sharp in focus) possible, you need to use small aperture settings. This means that the shutter speed is slow which can cause camera shake if a tripod is not used. A tripod is also used for close-up photography or during the day when a slower shutter speed is needed to create a specific effect. Filters are a useful creative tool to have with you altering and enhancing the image (the author discusses filters in a later chapter).

Portable flash equipment is also very useful for bringing out detail in dark subjects thereby decreasing (sometimes also used to increase) contrast in the subject, making the image visually more pleasing. Flash can also be used to create something unnatural in a natural surrounding, for example, lighting up a shadow side of an object.

Today we are fortunate and privileged to have such a variety of lenses available to us; everything from a fisheye to a super telephoto lens. Every photographer has his own choice of favourite lenses depending on his own style of photography. At this stage the author is experimenting with as many lenses as he possibly can to find out for himself what each lens is capable of. (When the author discusses his work in a later chapter he will include a section on the lenses used with the different photographs).

As with almost all the other photographic equipment there is a huge variety of films available form manufacturers all over the world, for example Kodak (America), Ilford (England), Agfa (Germany) and Fuji (Japan). The use of a type of film is once again a personal choice, but what you do find is that a large number of professional photographers, be they studio, fashion or landscape photographers, use colour transparency film (for example Fujichrome or Kodachrome). Many of them have their own reasons for this, but the general reason is that photographs reproduced for printing purposes from colour transparencies are of a higher quality than those produced from colour negative film. There are a few factors preventing the author from using transparency

film for his portfolio. The main reason is that the author has to exhibit his work at the end of the year in order to obtain his diploma and he has to hand in photos on average every two weeks which have to be prints. This means that the transparencies would have to be Cibachromed (positive colour prints from colour transparencies), something that is financially beyond the reach of the average student in South Africa. As a result the author uses Fujicolor print film for colour photographs and Ilford black and white film. The author finds that Fujicolor film reproduces colours accurately and vibrantly. For black and white work Ilford FP4 is the film that the author mainly uses as it produces prints of high quality.

Each photographer also builds up a collection of non-photographic equipment to suit his or her own personal needs, for example, scissors, matches, masking tape, rope or string, protective clothing, a knife and spirit level. The building up of this type of equipment comes with experience and the more experienced the photographer usually the more unusual the personal equipment he or she will have. They may even develop or invent equipment to suit themselves.

CHAPTER THREE

FILTERS IN LANDSCAPES

"A filter is an auxiliary optical system. Placed generally in front of the lens it can modify the real image being recorded. Some filters change colours or shades, others have novel physical effects on the image geometry. But a filter can also be any transparent or reflecting medium, like an old mirror or for example a cut glass ashtray. It is up to you to recognise or look for effects ..." (Jean Coquin, Cokin Creative filter system, p 2).

Whether or not to use a filter is a dilemma that confronts every photographer at one time or another, for it can be that filter that makes or breaks the photograph. Photographers around the world are divided on this question. There are those who swear by the use of filters, and others who claim filters, being artificial, give the final image an unreal and artificial look. The author disagrees with the latter viewpoint due to the fact that each time one uses a lens other than the standard lens or your alter your exposure slightly from the correct exposure you are altering the image and therefore it is no longer totally real. Film also

reproduces colours differently, so that you never or seldom get an image that matches the original subject. Therefore if a filter is used correctly and with discretion it can enhance the photograph, but one has to be very careful not to over use filters, especially if they are destined for the commercial market.

A good basic rule when learning to use filters is to apply them conservatively, starting with the minimum filtration needed to achieve the desired effect. While learning to use filters it is also recommended that several exposures of the same subject with different filters and light-meter readings be made. This enables you to see the various effects that can be achieved with different filters.

When using filters in landscape photography there are a few conditions one has to keep in mind:

1. The sun gives redder light early and late in the day. Clear blue sky is very strong in blue, violet and ultra-violet, especially at high altitudes. Filters can either be used to enhance or reduce these factors.

2. A clear blue sky gives colder (bluer) light than a hazy or partially cloudy sky in which haze or clouds that filter and scatter the sun light.

3. The light on an overcast day is about the same colour temperature (between 5 500 and 6 000 Kelvins) as the light from sun and clear sky.

4. Shadows luminated by an open sky alone are colder (bluer) when the sky is clear than when it is misty, partly cloudy or overcast.

Filters may be needed to reduce the amount of blue light in the atmosphere if this effect is desired. The opposite can also be obtained and blue light can be added to the photograph by means of filters.

There are many different types of filters available on the market today with various manufacturers producing their own series of filters. A few of the more well known manufacturers are Kodak, Cokin and Hoya. It is advisable to find the system of filters that suits one the most and then stay with that system so that one knows what effect the filter will give you. This will avoid a lot of guess work and undesirable effects. The filter system that the author uses is the Cokin system. It was

created by the French photographer Jean Coquin. It is from this system that the author will take examples of filters that he uses the most often and describe the effects they have.

The most important filter that the author uses is the Linear Polarizer which the author uses with both colour and black and white photos. In black and white photography the polarizer improves contrast by darkening a blue sky without having too much effect on the landscape, in colour photography it saturizes the colours making them more vivid and intense while in both colour and black and white it removes reflections from non-metallic surfaces. A very useful filter indeed.

Other filters that are useful to the author in black and white photography are the red, yellow, green and blue filters. They lighten the tones of their own colours and those close to them on the colour spectrum while darkening the colours on the opposite spectrum. An example of this is the red filter that makes a blue sky appear black on a monochromatic print while making red objects appear lighter. The yellow filter has much the same effect but to a lesser degree. The blue filter, which is used to cut through haze and darken reds in black and white photography, can also used in colour

photography as a colour conversion filter. This means that you can use daylight film with 3 400 tungsten artificial lighting and achieve natural results when a Cokin 80A colour conversion filter is used in front of the lens.

Other filters that the author sometimes uses in colour photography are the graduated filters. These are available in various colours which include red, mauve and grey. Neutral density filters can also be used to reduce the light if you wish to use a larger aperture while keeping a slowish shutter speed. The only filters that the author uses constantly are the Skylight 1A and UV filters which he leaves on the lenses at all times. They have more than one purpose; one is to protect the lens from scratches and dirt and the other is to suppress the ultra-violet rays found in the atmosphere. This adds warmth to the photographs as it reduces the blue light.

Filters are a very useful creative tool which may be used to create weird and wonderful effects. But along with all the advantages they bring to photography they also have a few disadvantages. The main disadvantage being because lenses are designed without filters you find that when you add on filters to the front of the lens there will be a loss of quality in the image. This loss of

quality is not always noticeable with the naked eye when using the best lenses available. Another problem caused by filters and one which effects the photographer to a greater degree is the loss of light entering the lens. This means the photographer must use a larger aperture or a slower shutter speed to adjust the exposure; the other alternative is to use a tripod, which is not always practical. (The tripod is an extra piece of equipment that has to be taken with and this may be a disadvantage when one has to walk vast distances to take your photograph). Some filters for example, the red filter makes it very difficult to focus, especially when used in low light. You therefore have to give careful consideration when using the filters. Filters should be used to enhance an already good image and not to salvage a lost cause.

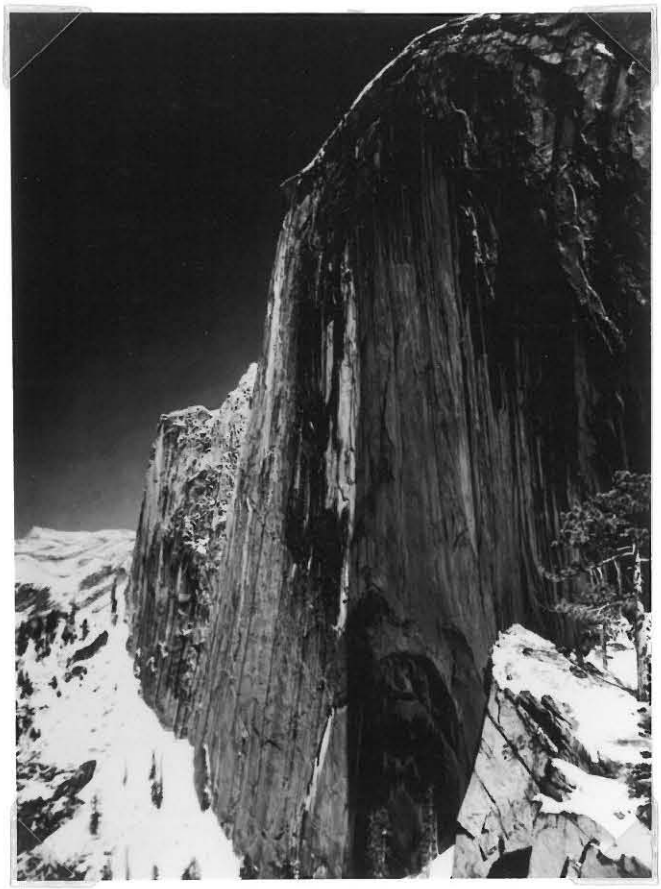

Fig. 1

Ansel Adams. Monolith - The face of the half dome, California 1927

Taken from: Booth, P Master Photographers p. 11

As early as 1927 when Ansel Adams took the photograph of the Monolith (figure 1) filters where important. Adams had only two glass plates left by the time he reached this location. The first photograph was exposed with an ordinary yellow K2 filter (standard filter at the time). On the second exposure he used a deep red filter. The

sky in the first image was rather bland with no depth and no strength in the shadows. Changing the filters is what made the difference. This is an excellent example of the use of filters in black and white photography by one of the masters of landscape photography.

CHAPTER FOUR

DOES IT PAY?

Is there a market for landscape photography? And can one make a living from their photographs? These are two question that the author has asked himself during his final year of his National Diploma.

It is true to say that all branches of photography in South Africa lag behind the rest of the first world which means in turn that the fees that photographers receive are also less than those in other countries. This is especially true in this time of recession in South Africa that we are experiencing.

But having said this there is still money available to the good landscape photographer for a landscape photo has more than one use. An important consideration in planning your photograph must be purpose of the photograph.

It may be used for documentary purposes. The documentary photographs, like the documentary video, aim is mainly to

inform. Almost as soon as photography was invented it was used to document places of scenic or historic interest. Because the photographers only wanted to provide accurate and objective information, their style was often straightforward with few creative techniques. But that has changed today, there are excellent magazines and books such as National Geographic and GEO in which you get good artistic documentary photographs. The improvement of cameras, optics and film have also contributed to the improvement of these photographs. In recent times documentary landscapes have played an important role in social and political debates. They are also constantly used to promote environmental causes.

Landscape photographs can also be used for illustrative purposes. In documentary photography the picture is first and foremost; it may or may not be accompanied by words. Whereas in illustrative photography the photo is often secondary serving to illustrate the text. The photo is often taken to meet a specific need. It may be used to illustrate a book on history or fiction or it can be used in brochures and posters. These photographs are usually highly subjective and distort the real scene, often making the place appear more appealing than in reality. This is done with the aid of filters, shooting at sunrise or sunset and only selecting a small part of

the whole scene. The difficulty facing the illustrative photographer is that we are bombarded daily by images in magazines, advertising, billboards, books and television and to get the audience to notice a specific photo or series of photos they have to be of a very high standard.

The third use for landscape photography is artistic/creative; they can be used for display in homes, offices and public buildings. The photos used for display are often originally used for other purposes such a documentary. Photographs these days have become a useful tool for the interior decorator and more and more photos are being commissioned for this specific purpose. The are some processing laboratories and professional photographers who are building up extensive libraries either to sell individually or to reproduce as high quality posters.

Another important role for the landscape photograph are the audio-visual shows which are used for promotional, educational and entertainment purposes. The shows in which they can be used may range from conservational to commercial. These shows are often used to attract tourists. With multi-media and computers these shows often make a huge impact on their audience and are used extensively these days to promote a place or idea.

To get back to the question of whether one can make a living from landscape photography or not. There are few opportunities for straight landscape photographers in South Africa and as such you have to be a more versatile photographer to earn an adequate income. But one does not only have to look for opportunities inside the Republic, there are many opportunities for a good and dedicated landscape photographer in other countries and the fees generated from these assignments can be very rewarding. There are many successful and well respected magazines which use landscape photography extensively, National Geographic and Traveller being two well known and respected publications. South African publications include Getaway and SA Panorama. Besides magazines there are also books (that are known as coffee-table books) which cover the subject and many well known South African photographers have had their work published, two being Obie Oberholzer and Herman Potgieter.

So the question does it pay really depends on you, if you are prepared for hard work and long hours and you have the drive you can make it pay and pay well.

CHAPTER FIVE

MASTERS PAST AND PRESENT

Photography being a very subjective subject like all visual arts, has produced a wide variety of styles and techniques. Because everyone has his own likes and dislikes you often find people disagreeing with each other about someones work. Work which you might consider a master-piece might not be liked very much by another person. Despite all this there are those photographers that stand out from the rest, and in landscape photography a name that immediately comes to mind is Ansel Adams. He is perhaps the most revered living photographer. In this chapter the author will discuss him and illustrate some of his work along with other more modern photographers. These include Freeman Patterson, Harald Sund and Steven C Wilson. There is a vast difference between the works of Adams and Patterson. Adams worked with large format cameras in black and white and concentrated on vast areas of the landscape, while Patterson's work is in colour on 35 mm and he tends to concentrate on a smaller piece of the landscape thus relying on the graphic designs of the earth. The author believes it is important to obtain ideas from many

ideas from many different directions and people as possible. This is why the author is influenced by both these vastly different styles and photographers among the many others, some who study with him.

ANSEL ADAMS

Not only a photographer, he is a musician, conservationist and scientist. This learned man was born in 1902 and planned to make a career in music. At the age of 14 he received a number one box Browny camera; this was to change his life. He also from a very young age became obsessed with the beauty of the American landscape. At the age of 28 and after the publication of his successful book Taas Pueblo, he decided to give up music and concentrate full time on photography. In 1932 he helped found the influential Group f64 whose members included Edward Weston and Imogen Cunningham. Adams is a firm believer in discipline and that each stage of the technique must be mastered, and that developing and printing are no less important than the choice of subject and of exposure. Because of his deep understanding of musical theory, he adapted the language of sound to explain the subtle variations of light. From this discovery of the similarities between these physical phenomena he developed (in the 1930's) his famous Zone System to try to devise a standard procedure for exposure and development that would give consistent negative quality. He also expanded his theoretical ideas into

teaching and writing a series of textbooks. Until today he remains committed to the cause of environmental protection. He remains the grand old man of American photography; a genius who has been established as one of the greatest artists of the 20th century.

Fig. 2

Ansel Adams. Moon Rise

Taken from: Adams, A Examples. The making of 40 photographs p. 41

Fig. 3

Ansel Adams. Aspens

Taken from: Adams, A Examples. The making of 40 photographs p. 63

Fig. 4

Ansel Adams. Clearing winter storm

Taken from: Adams, A Examples. The making of 40 photographs p. 103

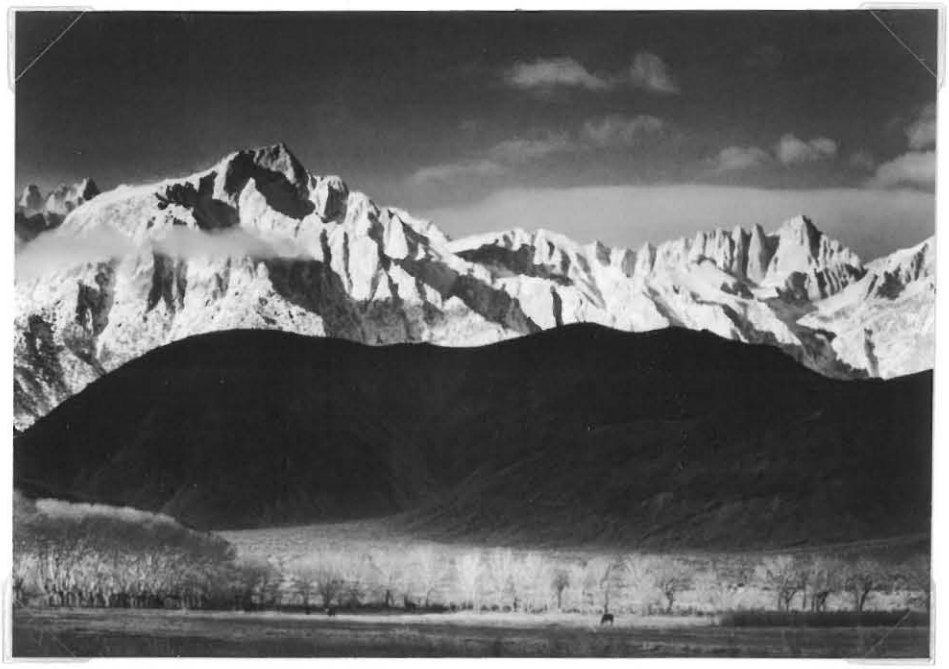

Fig. 5

Ansel Adams. Winter Sunrise

Taken from: Adams, A Examples. The making of 40 photographs p. 163

FREEMAN PATTERSON

"The rising sun makes no sound. As day breaks on the great sand sea in Africa's Namib Desert, there begins a symphony of the purest silence I've ever heard. The notes are played out in hues, as the rising sun plays its soft tunes over the early morning dunes". (Patterson, F Portraits of Earth p.8).

Born in Canada, Freeman Patterson is an internationally renowned photographer. He travels extensively to lecture and take photographs. He has also received many awards and honours, among which he has been made a fellow of the Photographic Society of America, and an Honorary fellow of the Photographic Society of Southern Africa. He has a deep love of nature which is shown through his photographs and his writing. He is particularly interested in the earth's natural designs, its shapes, its lines and its textures, as well as the importance of light and colour. He uses two 35mm cameras; one fitted with a short zoom (28-70 mm focal length) and the other with a longer zoom (70-210 mm focal length). Both lenses have warming up filters and a polarizer filter. He also has a lens extender for long-distance shots which converts his 70-210 mm lens

into a 140-420 mm lens. Like most landscape photographers a large percentage of his photos are taken at sunrise and at sunset.

Fig. 6

Freeman Patterson. Untitled

Taken from: Portraits of earth p. 17

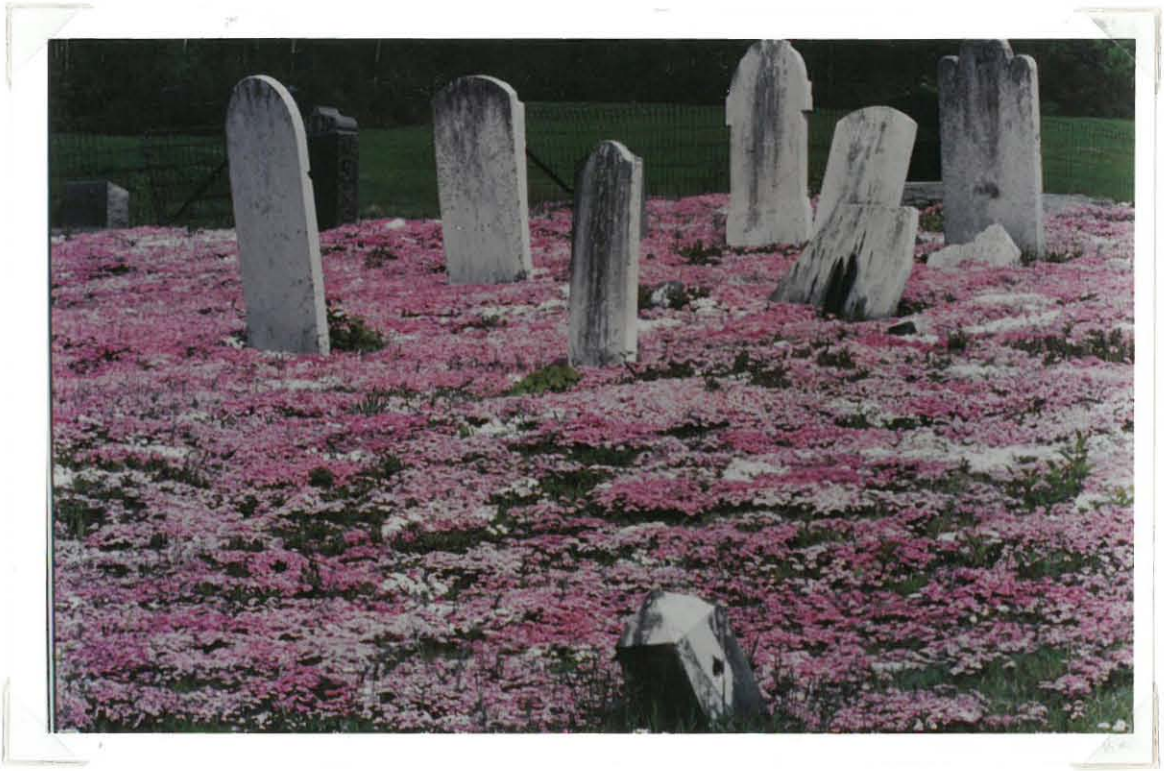

Fig. 7

Freeman Patterson. Untitled

Taken from: Portraits of earth p. 35

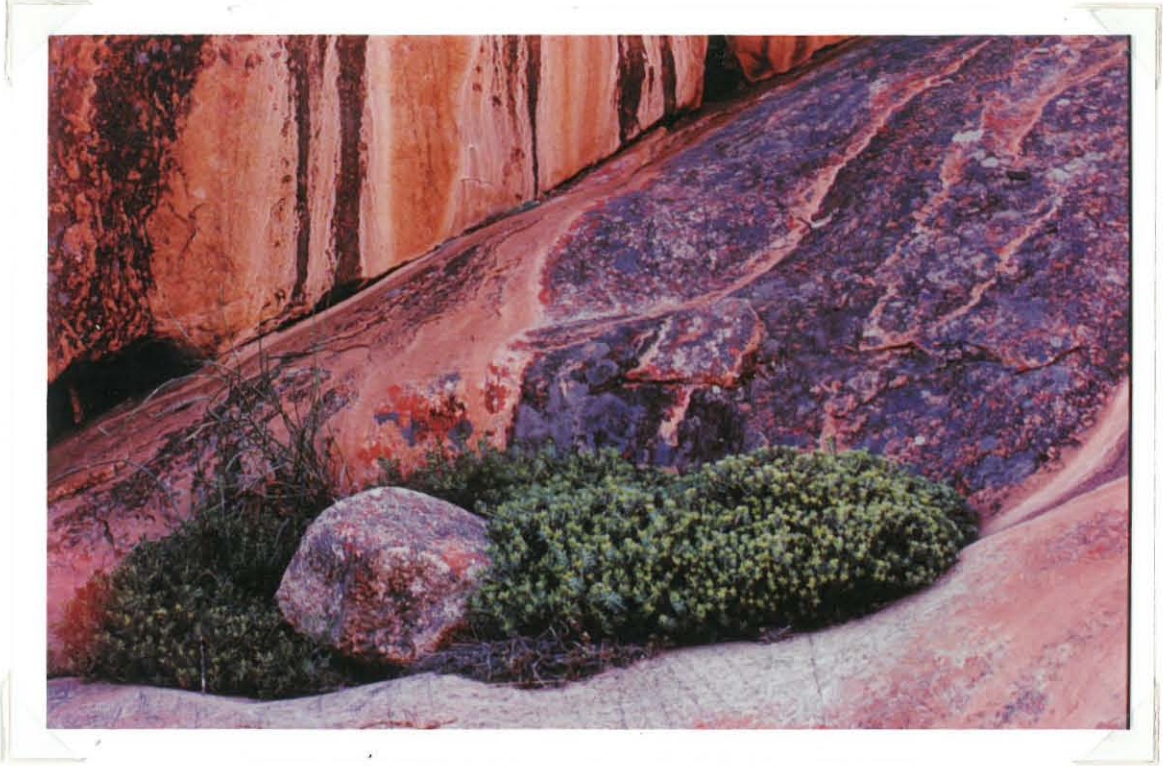

Fig. 8

Freeman Patterson. Untitled

Taken from: Portraits of earth p. 102

Fig. 9

Freeman Patterson. Untitled

Taken from: Portraits of earth p. 154

HARALD SUND

Harald Sund's photographs are often dramatic with a touch of the theatre. Though he is known for his nature and travel photographs, he is a successful commercial photographer. Sund is another photographer who has a deep love of nature and it is this love of nature that led him to photography. He works only in colour as he no longer has time for monochromatic darkroom work. The camera he uses is a Canon F1 (35 mm) with his favourite film being Kodachrome 64 ASA film. He also enjoys using wide-angle lenses, and his favourite light is the light just before dawn and dusk. When he scouts a location he is always thinking about how the location would look under different light and weather conditions, and what would be the best point of view, lens, aperture and so on. He says: "For every visual problem there is a visual solution".

Fig. 10

Harald Sund. Mono Lake, California

Taken from: Earnest, D Landscape photography p. 19

Fig. 11

Harald Sund. Mount St. Helens, Washington

Taken from: Earnest, D Landscape photography p.19

Fig. 12

Harald Sund. Canon Beach, Oregon

Taken from: Earnest, D Landscape photography p. 29

STEVEN C WILSON

The way animals, plants, and people live in a wilderness environment is often the subject of a Steven C Wilson photograph. The sea and its creatures have enthralled Wilson since he was young. He works mainly for organisations such as the National Geographic Society. Wilson often spends long periods in the field. He uses 35mm cameras with a wide range of lenses. He also uses mirrors, both flat and concave to supplement direct sunlight and he has a Pentax Spotmeter to check contrast. Wilson is as much a scientist as he is a photographer and his main aim as a scientist is to capture or film information about the relationship between living creatures and their environments. He calls himself a "habitat photographer". He takes photos in all seasons and at whatever time of day. He prefers colour film to black and white as it saves him time and trouble. His love of his subject matter borders on religion and to him the landscape is a constantly changing, living environment.

Fig. 13

Steven C. Wilson. Willow Trees, Akun Island, Aleutian Islands

Taken from: Earnest, D Landscape photography p.117

Fig. 14

Steven C. Wilson. Child's Grave Abandoned Village Kashega, Aleutian Islands

Taken from: Earnest, D Landscape photography p.126

Fig. 15

Steven C. Wilson. Red Wing Blackbird, North Dakota

Taken from: Earnest, D Landscape photography p. 127

CHAPTER SIX

THE AUTHOR'S PORTFOLIO OF PHOTOGRAPHS

At this stage of the author's photograpic career he is still experimenting with various styles and techniques and trying as many differnt subjects as possible. The subject that the author finds particularly interesting is water, whether it be a river, waterfall or the sea. This fascination stems from the fact that although water is one of natures strongest forces (it can and often does untold damage) its course can be diverted by your hand or even a small object. It is also constantly changing and is never the same. As with most of the photographers that the author has discussed in the previous chapter, he prefers to take photographers at sunrise and sunset, it is at sunset that most of the photographs that are in his portfolio have been taken. The light at sunset gives the most bland subject matter a magical quality.

FIGURE 16

This photograph was taken about an hour after the sun had set. The author was experimenting with double exposures. In the first exposure, which was eight seconds at f8, the author exposed for the sky and the road. The road was lit by the car's headlights. Because the headlights are of a lower colour temperature than daylight the road recorded as a yellowish red on the daylight film (Fujicolor 100 ASA). This adds to the overall red feeling of the photograph. In the second exposure, which was eight seconds at f22, the car drove down the road leaving a trail of red tail-lights. The texture in the road was brought out by the low angle of the car's lights. The lines of the road, the fence and the car's tail-lights all lead your eye into the photograph and towards the sky, which is a deep, saturated red. It is the intensity of the colours that turn this usually bland piece of dirt road into something special. For this photograph the author used his Bronica EC camera with a 50 mm lens and a six-by-four-and-a-half centimeter back. Of the half-dozen exposures the author made that evening this was the one that worked the best.

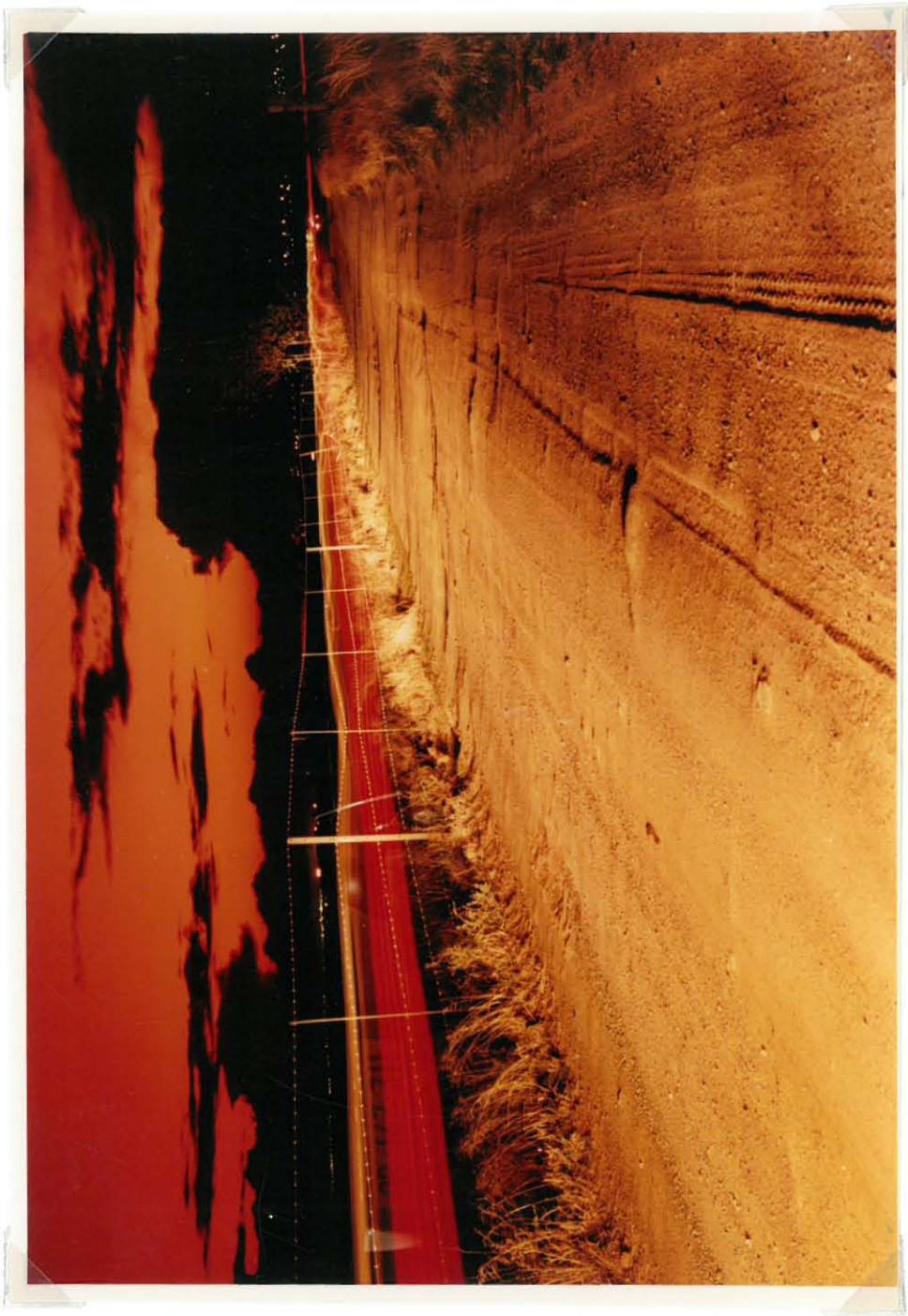

Fig. 16

The Author. Untitled

FIGURE 17

In this photograph the author felt the sky and the yellow grass were not interesting enough on their own. It needed to attract the viewer's attention. The contrast between the dark dirt road and the light gate attracts the viewer's attention. The wide-angle lens used also distorts the size of the gate, giving it a greater impact. The line of the gate then lead the eye to the horizon and the colours of the grass and the sky. It was taken on Fujicolor film using a Canon A1 with a 28 mm lens. A fairly slow shutter speed was used to obtain a small aperture and the largest possible depth-of-field.

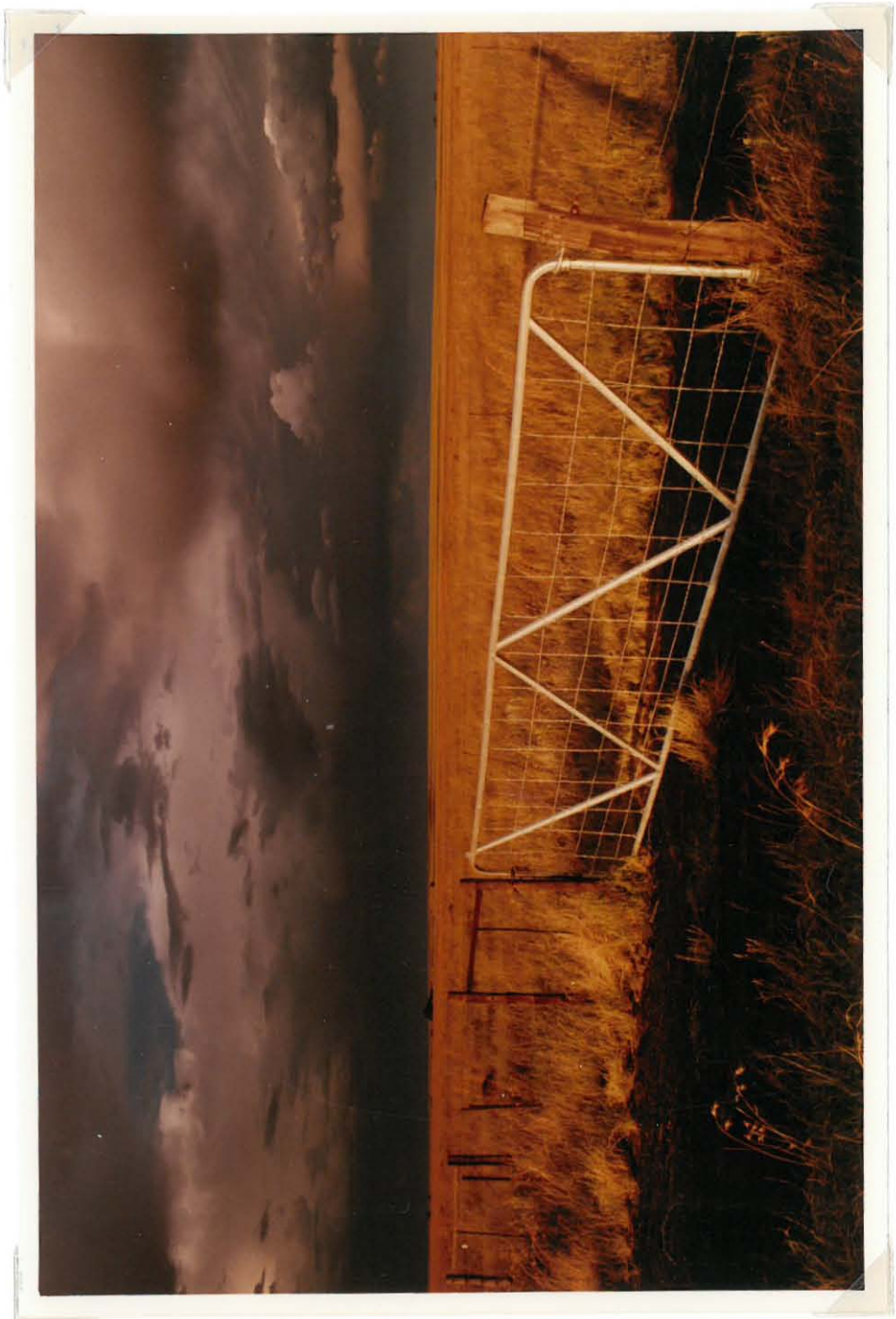

Fig. 17

The Author. Untitled

FIGURE 18 & 19

Of all the photographs in the author's portfolio this was the most dangerous to take. The Sinar four-by-five inch camera had to be taken section by section to the ledge from which the photo was taken. The ledge was about ten metres above from the rocks below and the spray caused by the river made it very slippery, but the author believes it was worth the effort for he visualized the end result while he was taking the photograph. What the author wanted to show was the urgency with which the water tries to reach the bottom. This was done by using a slow shutter speed which caused the flowing water to blur. Because the author was working in a small area and wanted to show as much of the river's flow as possible he used a wide-angle lens. Figure 19 is another example of water shot on black and white film. The reason the author used black and white film for these photos is so that one concentrates on the lines and textures and not on colours.

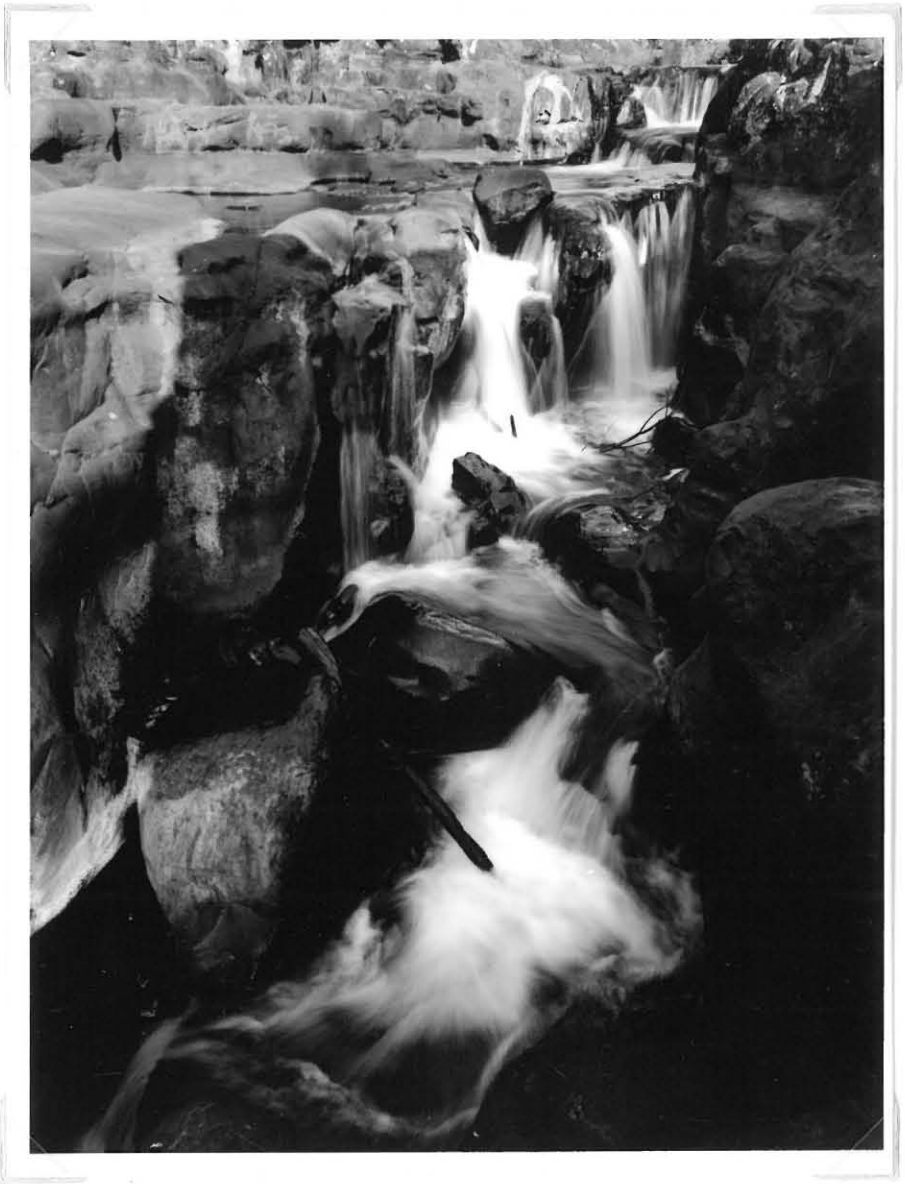

Fig. 18

The Author. Untitled

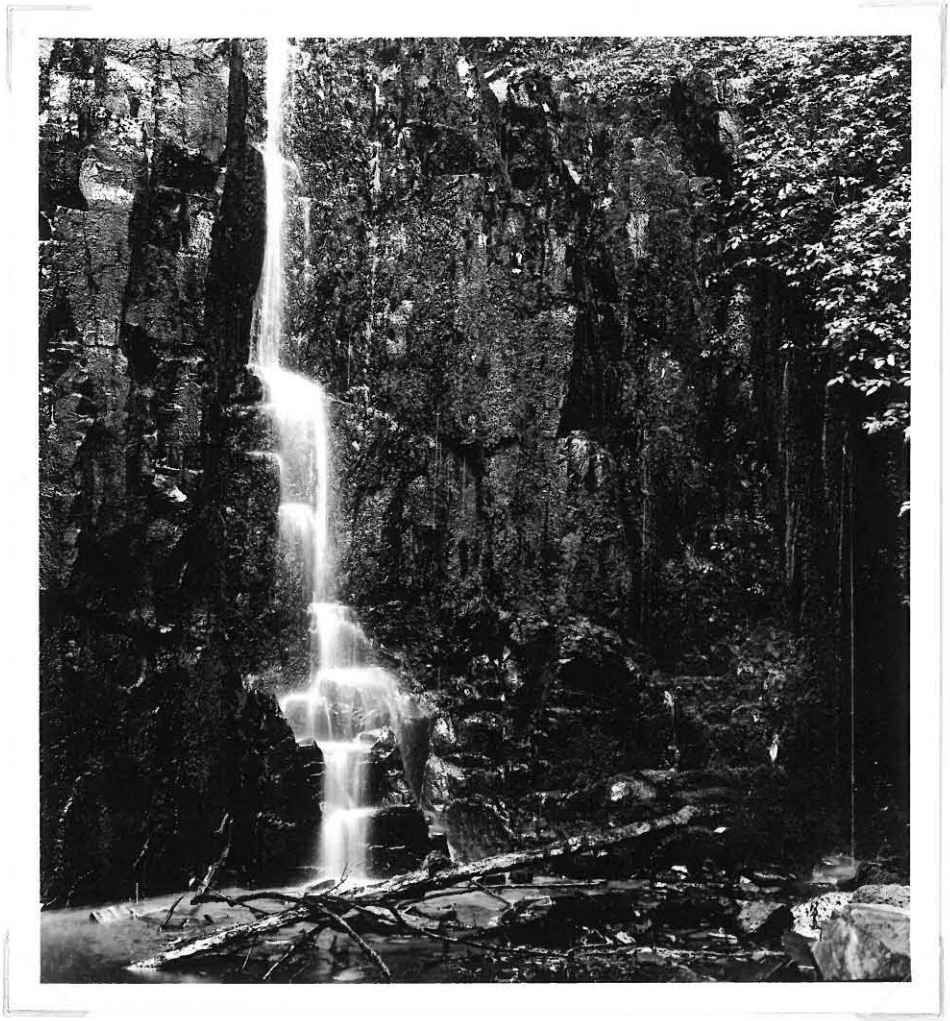

Fig. 19

The Author. Untitled

FIGURE 20

The author originally intended to print this photograph as a colour photograph, but when it was printed its colours were unsaturated and dull. He then decided to print it on black and white paper and hand tint it. As it was a colour negative the black and white print lacked a bit of contrast; this is what the author needed for hand tinting. The photograph was tinted with photographic dyes, and as it is the author's first attempt at hand colouring the results are pleasing to the author. The rock pool's colour is not quite what the author wanted as he would liked to have it darker. It is a technique that the author hopes to use more often in the future not only for landscape photography. This is a good example of how one has to keep an open mind to other options and experiment. Just because a photograph does not work one way it does not mean it cannot be used in a different manner.

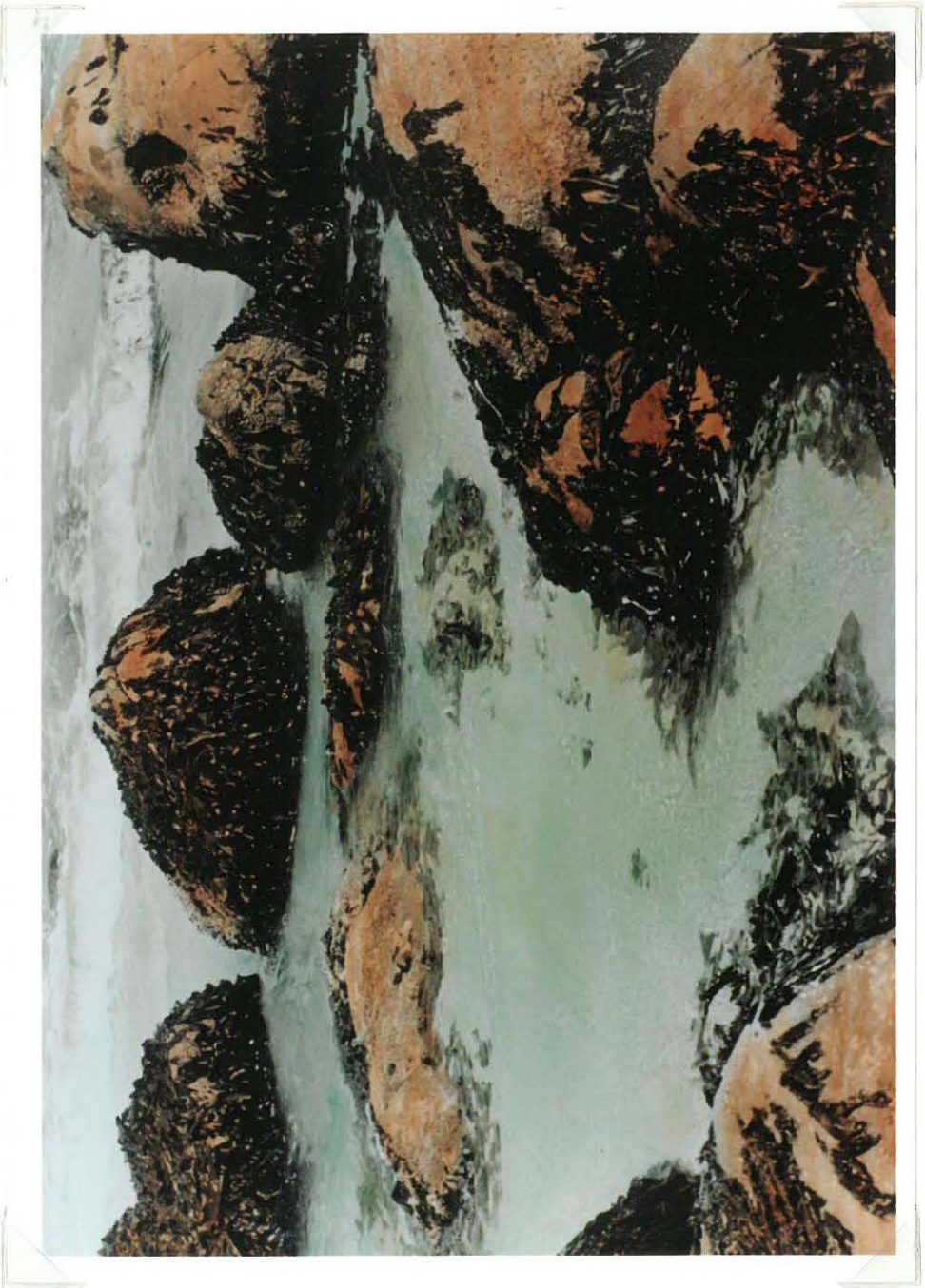

Fig. 20

The Author. Untitled

FIGURE 21 & 22

Photography does not end after you have pressed the shutter release. The film still has to be processed and printed. If this is not done well then even the best photograph can turn out very mediocre. Figure 21 is a good example of a scene that has been enhanced during the printing stage. The photograph was taken with a Canon A1 camera on Fujicolor Reala film, and a 28 mm lens was used. The wide-angle lens was used to make the canal appear longer than it really is. A polarizer filter was used to darken the sky, and the sky was further darkend in the darkroom by burning in. This gives the photograph the extra element it needed to make more of an impact. It also shows how a fairly unimpressive scene given new meaning by a bit of creative printing. But the darkroom is not the only place where special effects and techniques can be applied. The camera can also be used for this purpose and Figure 22 is a good example; the author put a moon into the otherwise vacant sky by means of double exposure. The deep red light of the last sunlight gives the otherwise cold and dead concrete a new colour that brings it to life.

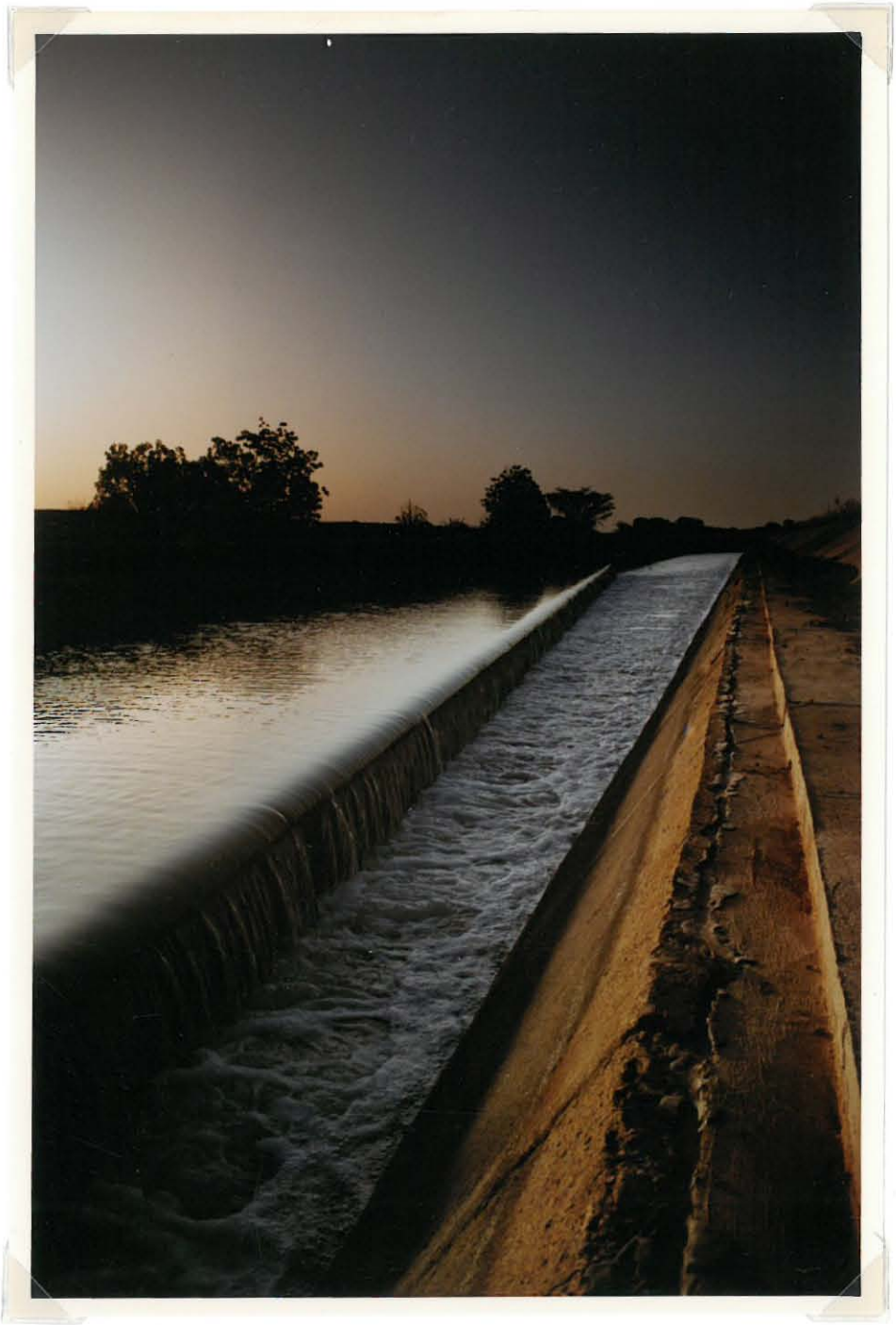

Fig. 21

The Author. Untitled

Fig. 22

The Author. Untitled

FIGURE 23

The only cityscape in the author's portfolio was taken in Durban about half-and-hour after sunset and the last rays were lighting up the sky. Water is once again a major part of the photograph. It is a straight forward photograph taken with the Canon A1. The photograph uses curves extensively to lead the eye into and then around the photograph from left to right and back again. The strong vertical lines of the light poles prevent the curved lines from becoming repetitive and boring.

Fig. 23

The Author. Untitled

FIGURE 24

The previous photo had a lot of graphic elements to lead the eye around it but this photo does not have very strong graphic elements, so therefore it must rely entirely on colour to give it impact. The only line present in this photograph is the horizon line which is placed at the bottom of the frame, this gives the sky and its colours a far greater importance. The moon fills up a small section of what would be a very empty sky, it also gives the viewer something to focus on. The solid straight line of the horizon is broken by the trees which grow perpendicular to it.

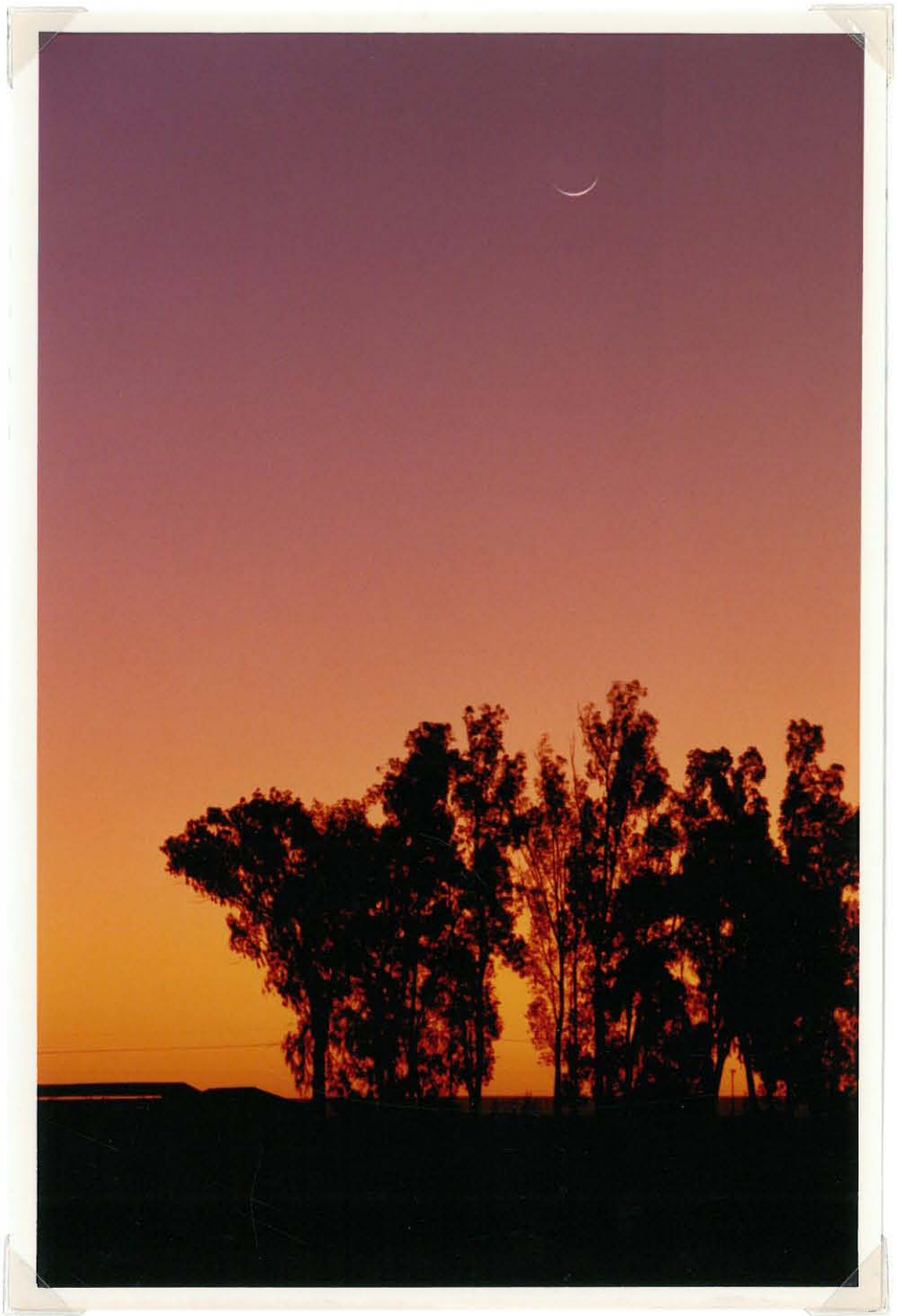

Fig. 24

The Author. Untitled

FIGURE 25

Water is once again the main element in this photograph and the curves that it takes leads the eye into the photo and to the top of it. The author took the photograph to try and show that, though man-made objects often destroys natures beauty, they too can look good if viewed close enough and from different perspectives. The straight lines of the reflections is in sharp contrast to the sweeping curves of the canal. It was taken like most of the author's photographs with a wide-angle lens. This is for two reasons; firstly to get the whole reflection in and secondly to show as much of the curve as possible. The author uses a wide-angle lens as much as possible so that he can get close to and become involved with the landscape, he finds that with longer focal length lens one tends to stand back and become detacted from your subject.

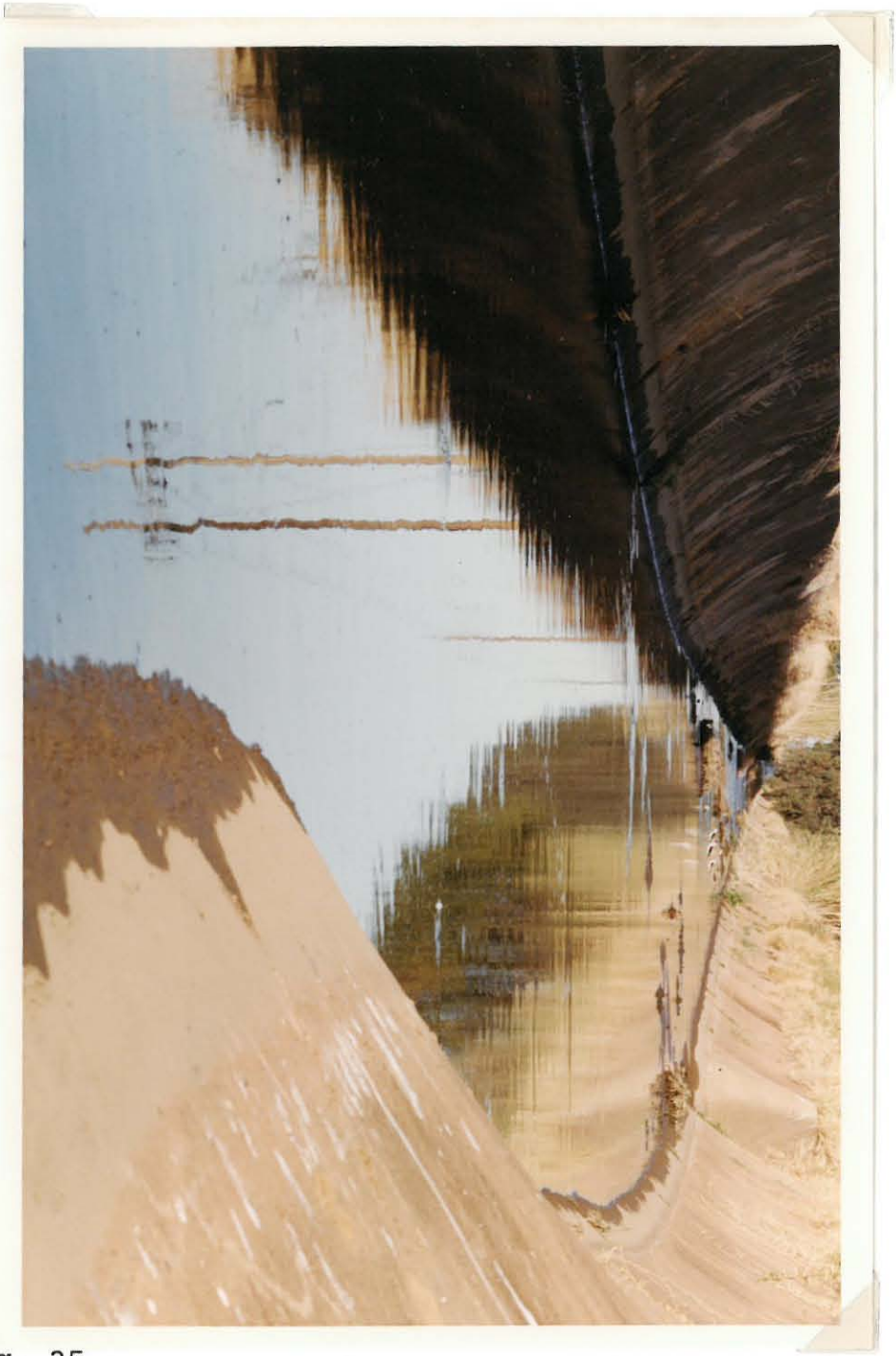

Fig. 25

The Author. Untitled

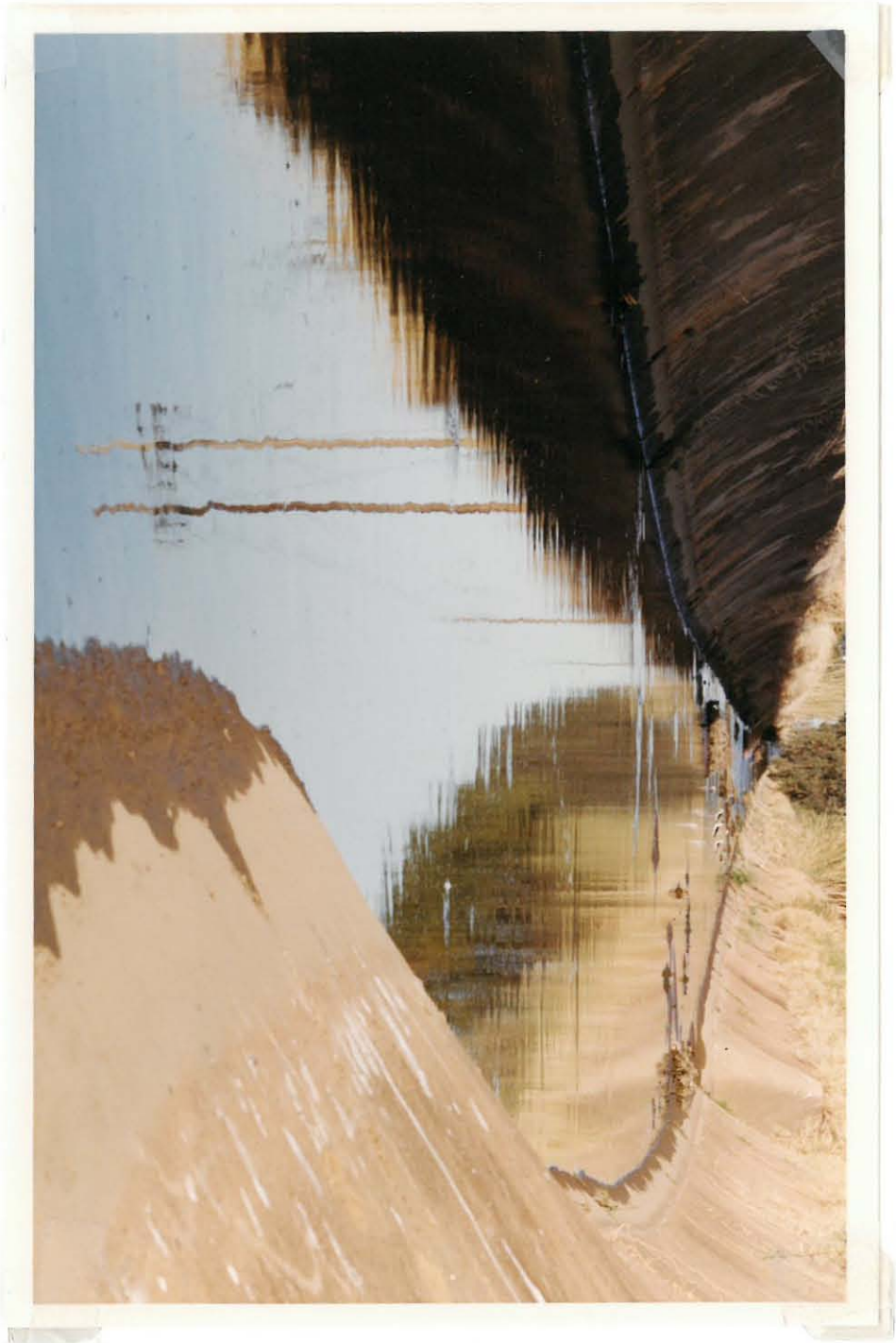

Fig. 25

The Author. Untitled

FIGURE 26

This is another photograph taken with a wide-angle lens. The white road was originally to be the only subject in the photograph. But after trying various angles it did not make a very interesting image on its own. So the author found a dark patch next to the road which is in sharp contrast to the whiteness of the road. The rock next to the fence posts and the tree pull your eye away from the road and lets it wander around the rest of the photograph. The road remains a main element in the photograph but it is no longer the only element and this adds to the interest of the photograph.

Fig. 26

The Author. Untitled

FIGURE 27

The author took this photograph on his Canon A1 camera with the 70 - 210 mm zoom lens. The lens was set at the focal length of about 170 mm, the reason for this is that even though the forest is dense he wanted to make it seem impregnable. It has become a wall of textures. The longer focal length also reduces the distance between the rocks in the foreground and the tree behind them. The two elements are joined by the curved water line. The author prefers contrasting black and white photographs as they seem to have more visual impact to him.

Fig. 27

The Author. Untitled

CONCULSION

Although the landscape is one of the oldest photographic subjects, it is not the most commercially viable subject, but this does not reduce its importance for it increases peoples awareness of the world around them. The number of pure landscape photographers is far fewer than other commercial branches of photography. Those that do devote their lives to landscape photography do so not for commercial gain but for the love of nature.

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