

Richard Misrach
On Landscape and Meaning
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This book adds to Aperture's 'workshop' series, which provides introductions to aspects of photography from the perspective of a single practitioner and an overview of their practice. It is generously illustrated with Misrach's images and it invites attention. The book is structured chronologically by a series of subheadings rather than thematic chapters. Misrach takes us from his social documentary of the people and streets of Berkley (*Telegraph 3 A.M.* 1974) and then out into the desert, the environment that he has spent the majority of his career photographing.

The chronology steadies and structures the narrative but the headings and themes read as a sequence of insights and anecdotes. Misrach's prose is conversational and, although the journey getting there is interesting, it takes quite a while before any real discussion of place and its representation gets started. A reader attracted to the title of the book will be disappointed at the depth of criticality around landscape and the environment. Our impact on the land and human legacies is the concern of Misrach's life's work, the *Desert Cantos*. These themes are explored, and Misrach brings us to his environmentalist agenda gently. But like similarly celebrated practitioners, Misrach struggles to verbalise his practice and his concerns with a richness that equals his art.

Aspects of the book do effectively convey something of a workshop learning environment, such as Misrach's comparison of similar versions of the same view. But the book comes across more as an artist's talk than a workshop. It certainly provides an accessible entry point for someone wanting to develop an appreciation for documentary landscape photographs, and the slow pace combined with Misrach's joyful and authentic tone will likely win over newcomers and long-term amateurs who can be sceptical of the merits of this genre.