

Test of Wall Luke)
3-63.

FREDERICK SOMMER

The parents of Frederick Sommer were German and Swiss and he was born in Angri, Italy, in 1905. When he was eight years old the family moved to Brazil and Frederick Sommer lived in Rio de Janeiro until 1925, the year of his first trip to the United States. Two years later he received (from Dornell University) his Master's Degree in landscape architecture and from 1927 through 1930 practiced landscape architecture and city planning in Rio de Janeiro. In 1928 he married Frances Watson and the years 1930/31 were passed in Italy, Switzerland and France. ~~In 1931~~ ^{in 1931} He moved to Arizona where he has lived most of the time since and where he still resides. ~~He~~ ^{During} 1957 and 1958 he taught photography at The Institute of Design of The Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago and he was there again this year, conducting a course for five weeks during the absence of Aaron Siskind.

In this life has been accumulated a rich, varied fund of experience and reflection, the testimonial of which is before us in these photographs. An esthetic revolution has been lived through - not merely learned about - and this has brought to the sincerity and truth, so admirably projected by each print, a rare and compelling force. This has exerted a salutary influence on the large, yet widely scattered, number of poetic photographers whose work has become so notable today. One does not meet the work of Frederick Sommer in the publications of expensive and common success; it does not exist to be exhibited and publicized, yet its life has always been certain, to grow stronger and more permanent each year. This discoverer and interpreter has the valuable and seldom encountered ability for looking both inside and outside himself and with it the infallible means for stating what he sees and feels. His finished work creates within us a rare and special experience, never precious and esoteric, but available and capable of

being shared by anyone.

The conscientiousness and care with which these prints are made have become legendary among all those who know Frederick Sommer and his work. Here is technical mastery which is so integrated and natural that it puts to shame the innumerable attempts of which brilliance and virtuosity are the only aims. The esthetic experience which the photographer has lived through (and not "gained" indirectly or too late) thus receives its most fitting and essential complement and these incomparable prints are salient landmarks in new realms which photography has entered.

A survey monograph of Frederick Sommer's work, with many handsome reproductions, has recently been published by Aperture. Copies of this may be purchased at the Museum Store.