

WILLIAM R. CURRENT

William R. Current was born in Pasadena, California, in 1923. He attended the Art Center School in Los Angeles and his special fields of interest were then - as now - ~~architecture~~ "architecture, archaeological and modern; as well as the myriad aspects of nature." Thus he was led to his long consideration of the American landscape and a photographic treatment of it. For the last twelve years his work has appeared in national magazines, and in 1963 there were exhibitions in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and George Eastman House, Rochester, New York. It was in this same year some of his photographs were shown in The Photographer and the American Landscape, representing nineteen photographers and organized by John Szarkowski at The Museum of Modern Art in New York. During the last two years, on grants of the Helen Wurlitzer Foundation and - more recently - the Simon A. Guggenheim Foundation, he has been working on a book on the Indian ruins of the Southwest. ~~The~~ larger part of the ~~exhibit~~ present exhibition is devoted to a number of these. Another book in progress is on Spanish colonial architecture. After having lived for some time in Santa Fe, he has moved to Carmel, California, where he now lives.

Concerning his work, he has said, "For myself, I have become tired of the otherness of things. I now want to photograph the real fact." All of his work is the proof of success in ~~realizing~~ <sup>carrying out</sup> this admirable intention.

Trees, rivers, rocks, ruins, mountains, are relieved of the loads of symbolism with which thinkers and artists have ~~covered~~ and misrepresented them. They have come into their own again. And William R. Current makes use of a technical mastery of the highest quality, conscientiousness, and

strong discretion, as a foundation to support the magical apparitions of his pictures. ~~Light lies on surfaces~~ In them light lies on surfaces and comes also from beyond. Exposure and printing overpower nothing and here the West presents ~~represents~~ no Wagnerian super-drama to disguise hollowness and superficiality. Without human beings life is represented completely (because we feel this is truth) and is heightened by this photographer's rare passion and perception in his desire to bring to permanence his vision of it.

## KAYENTA REGION

Among the prehistoric Indian ruins in the southwest, the Kayenta sites in northeastern Arizona remain the least accessible, seldom disturbed by the presence of man. The country is extraordinarily wild; inclement weather, quicksand and flash floods, in what is an essentially rugged terrain, have caused an infinite variety of rock formations. Red Sandstone cliffs rise sharply from sand colored stretches of land.

Among the numerous ruins in the area, the most outstanding are Keet Seel, Betatakin, and Inscription House, all three are excellent examples of classic cliff architecture.

Richard Wetherill discovered Keet Seel in 1894. Some years later Betatakin and Inscription House were found by Dean Byron Cummings of the Archaeological Department of the University of Arizona. The year was 1909. The two largest cliff dwellings in the Kayenta region, Keet Seel and Betatakin, were among the last of the great pueblo villages of the entire San Juan area to be occupied. Tree ring dates for Keet Seel range between 1274 and 1284; those for Betatakin span the years 1260 to 1277.



## MESA VERDE

On December 18, 1888 Richard Wetherell and his brother-in-law Charley Mason rode up into the tableland known as Mesa Verde in search of lost cattle. The search for strays was soon forgotten in the excitement of discovery, as unexpectedly the ranchers from nearby Mancos Valley came upon an immense cliff city, built in a niche of sheer escarpment. An architectural complex comprised of towers, storerooms, apartments and ceremonial <sup>rooms</sup> (kivas), indeed a lost citadel, was named on the spot: Cliff ~~City~~ Palace.

The ranchers had discovered the largest of over five hundred prehistoric ruins which are located in the Mesa Verde. Also discovered that day was Spruce Tree House, which they named for a tree growing directly in front of the second largest dwelling.

Mesa Verde is located in the southwestern section of Colorado, a part of the Four Corners region which consists of Utah, Arizona, Colorado, and New Mexico. The mesa is fifteen miles long and eight miles wide... a tableland green with pinon and cedar in an otherwise semi-arid country. The mesa rises to a dramatic height of two thousand feet, crisscrossed with narrow canyons, whose massive cliffs abound in natural caves, interstices which offered the Indian a foundation for some of his greatest architectural achievements.

Perhaps inhabited from as early as 300 A. D., Mesa Verde was abandoned by the Indians by 1300 A. D. Many theories have been offered in explanation for the migration to more southerly locations. It is thought that the drought of 1276-1299 caused the final exodus.

Most of the pueblos are located at high elevations, often six or seven thousand feet above sea level. The rarefied atmosphere produces a quality of light peculiar to the Southwest. One can view mesas quite clearly, fifty miles distant. Spring brings flash floods, turning alluvial soil into awesome beds of quicksand, making the canyons difficult to traverse. Yet the salient forces of nature in the land of pueblos, subside, creating a halcyon country where the silence is broken only occasionally by the call of a bird.

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