The New
EXPEDITIONARY
Photographer
FOREWORD

The Museum is pleased to present “The New Expeditionary Photographers” as a demonstration of what we consider an important part of the photography of our time.

The collaboration of Edwin J. Deighton, Assistant Director and Curator of the Museum’s collection, Carol Bresley, Professor of Art and the History of Photography, and John Burris, owner of Portfolio Gallery, in curating this exhibition has been a challenging and enriching experience. Our special thanks is extended to the artists who participated and made this exhibition possible. We applaud their art and offer it to you for your thoughtful consideration.

Thomas R. Toperzer
Director/Chief Curator

October 21, 1989
through
January 14, 1990

University of Oklahoma
Museum of Art
THE FABULOUS VOYAGE

A confluence of factors in the 19th Century popularized travel images as soon as they became available as daguerreotypes and, somewhat later, as prints made from as many as twenty negatives. As photography, archeology and natural history were used as entertainment and information for newly educated middleclass. Prior to the photograph, woodcuts and engravings of travel images with authoritative text claimed the literal experience. These continued to be used and established a climate of credibility for the armchair traveler without the rigorous and expense of making the actual voyage. Travel images were purchasable knowledge of the exotic. No place was too remote for the intrepid photographer. Before 1845, the cradles of Western civilization, Greece and the Holy Land, had been documented, as well as North America, Europe, North Africa, Asia, Egypt and India. Before 1860 Francis Frith documented the Nile. Hand-drawn maps, first published in 1841, was a "symbol of travel" for the masses. That is in the power of the most accomplished artist to transfer to his canvass. The idea of the recreative literal photographic image was at first considered an odd concept, but when it was finally accepted, hundreds of thousands of travel images were made for stereo viewers and albums.

The depictions of both foreign places and people followed pictorial conventions of the time. Landscape as a genre in painting, and not as a setting or backdrop for other events, was popularized by such painters as Turner and Constable in England, and by Thomas Cole, George Caleb Bingham, Fitz Hugh Lane and other "American" painters in the United States. This in turn established a precedent for landscape as a suitable subject in art, including the photographic image.

Most early photographic examples of landscape and architectural views were presented in a straightforward, no-nonsense, direct approach to the familiar subject matter such as Roman ruins or the pyramids. These formal qualities were partially due to the technical limitations of early photographic processes but significantly re-enforced the ideas of Europe meta-physical idealism and American transcendentalism. Both movements viewed humanity and every particle of the natural world as infused with spirituality. Nature was viewed as a great teacher and most often humanity was portrayed pictorially in harmony with or in contradistinction to the natural world. As in painting, landscape photographers many of who had backgrounds in the fine arts chose the landscapes as if the art of the camera was to be an art form itself. The point of view of the exhibition images is clear in some cases and intentionally unacknowledged in others. Kevin Bubriski and Andrew Stout used large format cameras to explore Nepal and Kenya, India, places they have spent many months and repeatedly visited over several years. This familiarity with the people of these places has enabled them to interact, intimate, almost sweetly quality to their formal portraits. The images of Rosalind Solomon, Sally Gall and Walter Ser Identifying and photographing various regional characteristics of the subject is important. The identity of the photographer's sense of which is the very reason for the creative enterprise. No style or technique is new. The artists/photographers, visually sophisticated, each possesses their own work and unique aesthetic vision. The time honored method of image-making serves as the excellent opportunity to get more out of what is said. The image has added to a romantic composite that is fraught with sensuality and emotional shading.

This group of artists has another striking distinction from the 19th Century photographers—five of the artists are women. Even though women were part of early photography's illustrious history, social and cultural limitations did not allow them to go far from the protective circle of their homes. For example, Julia Margaret Cameron's imagery of the goddesses and maidens published on her husband's tea plantation, are striking examples of photographic distance, especially when compared with her "en"-nobled" portraits of friends and family. Kate Corcoran actually lived among the Hopi Indians making images of them between 1905 and 1912. She beheld them and learned their difficult language in order to make her intimate views of their lives and culture. Women making images anywhere other than the studio and close to home were truly the exception. The five women photographers in this exhibit have photographed in India, Peru, China, the Amazon, and Egypt. If they worked within limitations, this is not evident in their images.

As one goes through this exhibit the viewer will find photographs that tell a story, place and others that these artists have worked. This is further enhanced by the refined formal elements of the images and the careful printing. And finally, one is aware of the heightened sensibility, that crucial amalgam of subject and means, which makes a worthy photograph.

Carol Bresley

THE NEW-AGE DOCUMENTARIES

Most of us would agree that we live in an age of titles. We realize that it's easier and more efficient if we use exact definitions to describe what we do. We recognize the need for categories. That which cannot be identified as classical, is being to daisies, is neo-classical. What comes after modern is post-modern. This is certainly true of the art historian, it gives him a framework, as it were, from which to view developing movements and sort out influences and more importantly, place artists in their own peculiar place in time.

In the early planning stages of the exhibition for which this catalog was produced, I found myself intrigued by the title, "The New-Expeditionary Photograph." Attempting to define it, I went back to beginnings. Textbooks on the history of the medium quote Paul Outerbridge who defines his photographs and what he calls the "photographers who call themselves "expeditionaries" who used the newly discovered cameras to explore the world. An interesting book entitled Africa Then Photographs 1840-1918, Nicolas Monta states, "at first, travel and exploration photography seems to have been directed by amateurs: painters, writers, men of science (archaeologists, anthropologists, geographers, botanists)"
**THE FABULOUS VOYAGE**

A confluence of factors in the 19th Century popularized travel images as soon as they become available as daguerreotypes and, somewhat later, as prints in travel books. The medium of travel photography, archeology and natural history were used as entertainment and information and newly-educated middleclass. Prior to the photograph, woodcuts and engravings of travel images with authoritative text claimed the literal experience. These continued to be used and established a climate of credibility for the armchair visitor without the rigor and expense of making the actual voyage. Travel images were purchasable knowledge of the exotic. No place was too remote for the inexplicable photographer. Before 1845, the cradles of Western civilization, Greece and the Holy Land, had been documented, as well as North America, Europe, North Africa, Asia, Egypt and India. Before 1860 Francis Frith documented the Nile described his work as "the history of the place that is in the power of the most accomplished artist to transfer to his canvases." The idea of the reproductive literal photographic image was at first considered an odd concept, but when it was finally accepted, hundreds of thousands of travel images were made for stereo viewers and albums.

The depictions of both foreign places and people followed pictorial conventions of the day. Landscape as a genre in painting, and not as a setting or backdrop for other events, was popularized by such painters as Turner and Constable in England, and by Thomas Cole, George Caleb Bingham, Fitz Hugh Lane and other "vagabond" painters in America. This in turn established a precedent for landscape as a suitable subject for photographers, even in the 19th Century. Most early photographic examples of landscape and architectural views were presented in a straightforward manner. They emphasized the familiar subject matter such as Roman ruins or the pyramids. These formal qualities were partially due to the technical limitations of early photographic processes but significantly re-enforced the ideas of European meta-physical idealism and American transcendentalism. Both movements viewed humanity and every particle of the natural world as infused with spirituality. Nature was viewed as a great teacher; most often humanity was presented pictorially in relationship to the natural world. In painting, landscape photographers many of whom had backgrounds in the fine arts chose the same subjects in the same manner, reflecting the theme of the earthly Paradise.

Similarly, fragmented exotic peoples followed Western models. The photographic medium could not record action; consequently, ethnographic images appear stiff and formal. They were sometimes made "attractive" by the addition of costumes, poses, and arcadian studio stage settings which also reflected the conventions of paintings. These gratuitous additions were thought to make the unfamiliar more palatable to the delicate Victorian sensibility. Native Americans, presented as noble and romantic, were a "safety vanishing" people as seen in the photographs of Adam Clark Vroman and Edward S. Curtis. A more straightforward style in presenting clear information can be seen in the images made of Native Americans by such photographers as Timothy O'Sullivan, Jack Hillers and Kate Cory.

Photographs of all kinds informed an eager and audience, and when George Eastman marketed the rollfilm camera in 1888, armchair travelers were off to see and photograph the world for themselves.

**THE FUTURE NOW**

The exhibition, "The New Expeditionary Photographers" exhibits the work of photographers who most closely resemble the 19th Century Photographers in spirit and image. Marilyn Bridges and Jody Forster, Grand scale, recognized landmarks and landscapes, and frameworks of light are joined to the extraordinary viewpoint. Bridges's aerial views of the giant pyramids and the temples of Giza are only changes in point of view from the same subject matter photographed by such 19th Century photographers as Francis Frith and Max-Franco Du Camp. Jody Forster carried eighty pounds of equipment to the 25,800 feet high Mt. Himalcatt to make his huge negatives. The monumental expressions of the images is recorded from human scale which sets up the notion of "getting there" at ways a major aspect of Forster's work.

The artists in "The New Expeditionary Photographers" illustrate several generalizations which were not anticipated by the curators: their views of the exotic provide a reassessment of the views, not as the "curious" eye of the 19th Century, but in the eyes of today's photographers. Some of the artists know what they would find. They trend to photograph people and places without judging them. Marilyn Bridges has certainly the most original and imaginative work. The 19th Century were made from the high moral perspective of Western society; today's image is an attitude, not uniformly reflected today in both national policies and sanitized tours to non-Western destinations. The intertextuality is extensive at all levels, critics and art critics, the exotic is romantic, imparting the photographer's sense of wonder and a romantic vision of a timeless ideal. Ten artists/photographers, visually sophisticated, showed us the viewers new images of places often considered mundane or visually unappealing, making photography a new technical finesse. However, the time honored method of creating a sense of mystery is still a necessary condition to any image. Their art add to a romantic composite that is fraught with sensuality and emotional shadings.

This group of artists has another striking distinction from the 19th Century photographers—five of the artists are women. Even though women were part of early photography's Illustrious history, social and cultural limitations did not allow them to go far from the proper confines of the home. The examples here are Julia Margaret Cameron's images of the nun, Rachel Carson's images of her wife and her daughter, Huxley's images of her husband's tea plantation, are striking examples of photographic distance, especially when compared with her "en-nobled" portraits of friends and family. Kate Cory actually lived among the Hopi Indians making images of them between 1905 and 1912. She beheld them and learned their difficult language in order to make her intimate views of their lives and culture. Women making images anywhere other than the studio and close to home were truly the exception. The five woman photographers in this exhibit have photographed in India, Peru, China, the Amazon, and Egypt. If they worked within limitations, this is not evident in their images.

As one goes through this exhibit the viewer will find penetrating views of the place and the people that place, these artists have worked. This is further enhanced by the refined formal elements of the images and the careful printing. And finally, one is aware of heightened sensibility, that crucial amalgam of subject and means, which makes a worthy photograph.

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**THE NEW-AGE DOCUMENTARIANS**

Most of us would agree that we live in an age of titles. We realize that it's easier and more efficient if we use exact definitions to describe what we do. We recognize the need for categories. That which has been identified as classical, is now to classical. Neo-classical. What comes after modern is post-modern. The new category to be identified is the new-age art historian. It gives him a framework, as it were, from which to view developing movements and sort out influences and more importantly, place artists in their own peculiar place in time.

In the early planning stages of the exhibition for which this catalog was produced, I found myself intrigued by the title, "The New Expeditionary Photographers." Attempting to define it, I went back to beginnings. Textbooks on the history of the medium point out that the first photographers were "explorers" who "discovered" new lands whereas the 19th Century were "expeditions" who used the newly discovered camera to record their findings. It was a very useful book entitled Africa Then: Photographs 1840–1918, Nicolas Morrill states, "At first, travel and exploration photography seems to have been done by amateurs: painters, writers, men of science (archaeologists, anthropologists, geographers, botanists)
THE NEW EXPEDITIONARY PHOTOGRAPHER

The exhibition "The New Expeditionary Photographer" is predicated on the reverence of interest by contemporary photographers in this form of documentary photography. Although not for the identical reasons as their 19th century forebears, 20th century photographers are revisiting many localities, with a fresh vision charged with the attitudes and concerns of our times as the earlier expeditionary photographers were with theirs. Whereas the 19th century photographers were documenting a world new to them from Europe and the United States, the 20th century photographer is refreshing our memories of unique and exotic cultures and places that are slowly being assimilated into the twentieth century.

The 19th century perceived nature as a force that was to be subdued, exploited and forced into the ordered rationality of the age. The 20th century photographer exhibits a more empathetic approach to the subject. Today's concern with the finiteness of the planet and its perishability shows in the work of the photographers. Some have developed a close relationship to their chosen locale and the people, rather than the superior attitude of the 19th century American and European.

The first European and American photographers faced unexplored and untried landscapes. The popular imagery of images from exotic and fantastic areas spurred the photographer to delve into some of the most inaccessible and hostile environments of the world. Truely heroic efforts were commonplace in the pursuit of the unique and unexplored. While contemporary expeditions do not have quite the same hardships to overcome, they nonetheless spare no effort to attain the sought after image that they have journeyed to find in these out ways of the world. By 2000, we are closer to the end of the linear evolution of the planet, raising our awareness to the positive aspects of a relationship with nature and humanity.

The 19th century photographers borrowed heavily from the romantic landscape painting of their time to produce picturesque compositions that appealed to the sensibilities of the age. Today's photographer is not necessarily to emote some mythic vision. The photographers in the exhibition present an aura of the romantic, it is due to the subject rather than any compositional effect. The artist strives to present a fresh appreciation, whether it be nature's awesomeness or the life of the individual, the preoccupation of the subject.

Since his 1975 Peace Corps team in Nepal, Kevin Biskaborn has maintained an intense interest and commitment to portraying the changes and influences wrought by the twentieth century upon the people and the culture of his natural environment. His sympathetic and poignent portraits of a devou people seem to transcend the act of a formal pose and transmit the inner strength and character of the sitter. The empathy between the artist and his subject emanates from the elegant lines of his photographs.

Loris Conner's work—executed on three separate assignments to the Peoples' Republic of China, long closed to the west—represents an original approach to the Chinese landscape. While it would have been a simple solution for the artist to emote the indigenous compositional idioms associated with the sino-aesthetic, Conner has invested each of his images with a freshness and spontaneity that is not usually associated with his chosen format, the 7 x 17 inch wooden field camera.

The conceptual format utilized by Conner invites comparison with ancient scroll paintings. While this may be an obvious parallel to draw, Conner pushes her work further. Rather than presenting a symbol of the landscape, she presents reality in all of its fullness, displaying the landscape through the images she has created.

Linda Connor was originally known for her soft to c.s contact prints made with a turn of the century 8 x 10 camera and soft focus lenses belonging to the pictorial school. After exploring her capabilities, which culminated in the publishing of the Solo Series, she obtained a sharp lens and continued to produce images employing printing out paper which she goldlined giving the prints that timeless quality reminiscent of 19th century craft.

Rather than the strict documentation, Connor strives for an intuitive understanding of her subject through the landscape. She shares with the viewer a very profoundly felt emotion gleaned from her interaction with the land. Conner's photographs are not so much an exhibition of her personal perception of her subject. Their composition with her subjects is exemplified in her photographs of the "Petrololith and the Andes, Peru" and the "Sacred House, Peru." The subjects of these photographs exude a magic that seems to have been imparted to them by their original creators centuries before.

Merrily Bridges presents us with a unique viewpoint in her aerial views of ancient monuments. Rather than...
THE NEW EXPEDITIONARY PHOTOGRAPHER

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The 19th century perceived nature as a force that was to be subdued, exploited and forced into the ordered rationality of the age. The 20th century photographer exhibits a more empathetic approach to the subject. Today's concern with the finiteness of the planet and its perpetuity shows in the work of the photographers. It is one of their most significant developments. Often the relationship between the photographer and the people they photograph has developed a close relationship to their chosen locale and the people, rather than the superior attitude of the 19th century British and American.

The first European and American photographers faced unexplored and trackless landscapes. The popular images of these exotic and fantastic areas spurred the photographer to delve into some of the most inaccessible and hostile environments of the world. Truly heroic efforts were commonplace in the pursuit of the unique and unexplored. While contemporary expeditionaries do not have quite the same hardships to overcome, they nonetheless spare no effort to attain the sought after image that they have journeyed to find in these out of the way places. By 2023, photographers are the second inhabitants of the planet, raising our awareness to the positive aspects of a relationship with nature and humanity.

The 19th century photographers borrowed heavily from the romantic landscape painting of their time to produce picturesque compositions that appealed to the sensibilities of the age. Today's photographer is not so much concerned with the formalities of photography in the exhibition present an aura of the romantic, it is due to the subject rather than any composition. The artist strives to present a fresh appreciation, whether it be nature's awesomeness or the life of the indigenous peoples of the world.

Since his 1975 Peace Corps team in Nepal, Kevin Biskaborn has maintained an intense interest and commitment to portraying the changes and influences wrought by the twentieth century upon the people and the culture of his environment.

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The carefully formatted utilized by Conner invites comparison with ancient scroll paintings. While this may be an obvious parallel to draw, Conner pushes her work further. Rather than presenting a symbol of the landscape, she presents reality in all of its fullness and complexity, inviting the viewer to experience through the image the experience she has felt while making the photographs. 

Linda Connor was originally known for her soft to c/s contact prints made with a turn of the century 8 x 10 camera and soft focus lens belonging to the pictorialist movement. After exploring its capabilities, which culminated in the publishing of the Solo Series, she obtained a sharp lens and continued to produce images employing printing-out paper which she gold-toned giving the prints that timeless quality reminiscent of 19th century art. Rather than the strict documentation, Connor strives for a intuitive understanding of her subject through the use of the camera. While the shares the same with the view camera a very profoundly felt emotion gleaned from her interaction with the subject. Linda Connor's photographs are a part of the vision that can be seen in them by their original creators before us.
the aerial ground view we have become accustomed to, presents us with the seemingly all-encompassing sight of a soaring bird, allowing us to take in the subject in its entirety. Viewed with the immensity of the ancient's accomplishments, the photograph's ability to truly capture the subject with a greater understanding of the spiritual nature of those sacred places. The images of Greek sanctuaries present us with the whitened bones and civilization that has strongly influenced our culture. As the aerial archeologist, Gall has captured the works of ancient from the Nazca lines of Peru to the sphinxes and pyramids of Egypt. Unlike no other photographer in our time.

Sally Gall's work is reminiscent of the work of Linda Connor, from whom she took a class while in San Francisco in 1977. Gall, like Connor, experimented with soft focus imagery, in Gall's case produced by the Dianma camera. The Dianma, a cheap camera at one time favored by many photographers, through its abberant plastic lens that give the image a romantic combination of out of focus to almost sharp. Enlarging the negative exaggerated these qualities, producing some very pleasing results.

While it is evident from her current work that she has moved on to more sophisticated equipment, Gall has maintained her original vision, presenting us with the same intense atmospheric mystery of her earlier work. Gall's masterful manipulation of her image during the printing process presents us with a new reality of the world that is both surreal and real. In the photograph, the thoughtful, quiet composition is evident. To include or exclude an element in the photograph, what Gall perceives it, then communicates this vision to us. The emotionally charged images of these tropical worlds bring about, at first a euphoric sense of the almost perfect day. Upon closer examination, a sense of unease permeates the frame as if there is an entity in the lush shadows watching while we enjoy the sun drenched landscape.

As a student at California State, Jody Foster stated he wished to go to the Himalayas to photograph the mountains. Foster accomplished his aim in 1984 when he accompanied the American Alpine Club as part of the team assembled to climb Himalchull from the Nepalese side of the Himalayan mountain range. Jody Foster returned again in 1985 to continue his quest for images in one of the planet's most spectacular and awesome examples of the power of the normal forces that shape the landscape.

Foster, one of a very few photographers to trek into these mountains with an 8 x 10 view camera and all of its attendant accessories, has captured his subject in all of its magnitude, capturing the essence of nature at their finest. The light, shadows generated by the mountains, clouds, and vegetation glow in his photographs.

Goodwin Harding, known for his elegantly composed landscape work, has temporarily relocated his family in Crete. The Harding family spent four months living in a small fishing village while he explored the simple, rewarding life of the island's residents. This exercise in intentional cultural disorientation allowed Harding to experience the world in an entirely new manner and rejuvenate his perception of his world.

Rather than the previsualization composition that he was accustomed to, Harding was able to transcend this stricture of his earlier work. Which he felt was stifling his creativity. Doing so, he has provided us with a document of a people that is at times exter- mously isolated and extremely well composed. Spon- sorness is difficult to best accomplish with an 8 x 10 view camera, but Goodwin Harding has succeeded in the elegant platinum prints that represent him in this exhibition.

Rosalind Solomon presents us with a poignant view of the diverse cultures on this planet. Her concern for the condition of the people she encounters through her extensive travels is strongly evident in the photographs that are presented in this exhibition. The intimate view she presents through these images gives us a view of a people that in the latter part of the twentieth century still manage to maintain and practice the ancient traditions, albeit with some intrusion of the times.

Andrew Strout, after a 1974 three month visit to the rather isolated states of Kerala and Karnataka, where he found the people so seemingly untouched by the 20th century, returned in 1984 to document this un-usual condition. During this visit, he discovered a profound change had taken place even since his last visit in a world that has not prior changed. Indeed found this out of the way corner of India.

Strout, in four months, began to reacquaint himself with the culture and none of these changes were as apparent to him as the way the people perceived this land. From being the usual atypical portraits, Strout's photographs capture the intrinsic quality of a people. The subjects of his photographs exhibit a quiet dignity of those completely satisfied with their everyday work. The photographer has succeeded in capturing the character of a people.

Like many before him, Walter Nelson has been se- duced by the qualities inherent in the southwest land- scape. While other locales possess some of the same qualities, no other area possesses them all. The southwest's unique sense of space, light and atmosphere combine to give the region its own inspiring character. It is such that anyone in tune with nature cannot fail to succumb in one degree or another.

Nelson's photographs in this exhibition convey us of his overpowering concern for and oneness with the landscape in all of its diversity. This is evident in his images of mesa, New Mexico where he pursued the same qualities of space and light that he had encountered in New Mexico. His unerring sense of composition rends an otherwise inhospitable desert a thing of beauty. The photographs portraying the ruins of Mayan settlements in the rainforests of the Yukon give us a document of a civilization past and the disappearing forest. Their beauty is to the subject matter that reaches out to the viewer.

E. J. Deighton

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CHECKLIST

1. Aphaia Temple, Aegina, Greece
   14 1/2" x 18 1/2"

2. Apollo Sanctuary and Ball Court, Del. Pit, Greece
   14 1/2" x 18 1/2"

3. Theatre and Sanctuary of Foreign Gods, Delos, Greece
   14 1/2" x 18 1/2"

4. Ayta Birne, Ria, Greece
   14 1/2" x 18 1/2"

5. Temple of Poseidon, Sounion, Greece
   14 1/2" x 18 1/2"

6. Three Great Pyramids, Giza, Egypt
   14 1/2" x 18 1/2"

7. Pyramid and Ruins, Giza, Egypt
   14 1/2" x 18 1/2"

8. Sphinx, Egypt
   14 1/2" x 18 1/2"

9. Stepped Pyramid, Saggara, Egypt
   14 1/2" x 18 1/2"

10. Pyramid in the Sand, Saggara, Egypt
    14 1/2" x 18 1/2"

Photographs courtesy of Felicia C. Murray, Photographer's Representative, New York, New York.

MARILYN BRIDGES
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lar and awesome examples of the power of the natural forces that shape the landscape.

Like Foster, one of a very few photographers to trek into these mountains with an 8 x 10 view camera and all of its attendant accessories, has captured his subject in all of its magnificence to this day. The photographs portraying the raptures of Mayan settle-
ments in the rain forests of the Yucatan give us a document of a civilization and the disappearing forest. The photographs show a subject matter that reaches out to the viewer.

Chekeout:

1. **APHA TEMPLE, AEGINA, GREECE**
   14 1/8 x 18 1/2

2. **APOLLO SANCTUARY AND BALL COURT, DEL.
   PIR, GREECE**
   14 1/8 x 18 1/2

3. **THEATRE AND SANCTUARY OF FOREIGN
   GODS, DELON, GREECE**
   14 1/8 x 18 1/2

4. **AYA IRINE, REA, GREECE**
   14 1/8 x 18 1/2

5. **TEMPLE OF POSEIDON, SOUNION, GREECE**
   14 1/8 x 18 1/2

6. **THREE GREAT PYRAMIDS, GIZA, EGYPT**
   14 1/8 x 18 1/2

7. **PYRAMID AND RUINS, GIZA, EGYPT**
   14 1/8 x 18 1/2

8. **SPIRITS, EGYPT**
   14 1/8 x 18 1/2

9. **STABBED PYRAMID, SAGGARA, EGYPT**
   14 1/8 x 18 1/2

10. **PYRAMID IN THE SAND, SAGGARA, EGYPT**
    14 1/8 x 18 1/2

Photographs courtesy of Felicia C. Murray, Photographer's}
Representative, New York, New York.

E. J. Dethong

Marilyn Bridges

"When I photograph, my focus is seldom confined
solely to concrete subject matter, but rather to the
concrete as well as illusive matter, which is light itself.
White flying, I watch and wait for the perfect light of the
day. Often the light dictates to me the angle at which
I will bank the aircraft and capture both the positive
and negative structure of my image.

"The shadow which is depicted as dark negative
space at times flips to the positive because of the
strength of its form. This creates more weight within
the frame and a melodic balance between the con-
crete and the illusive. The use of dynamic lighting,
sharp contrasts between light and shadow, adds a
multi-dimensional quality to the work, allowing the
viewer to be drawn into the photograph—as if going
beyond the real to the more real.

"I usually photograph from a low altitude and at
an angle somewhere between vertical and low oblique. I
lift the camera at a slight downward angle as the plane
banks the subject for the viewer. This position enables
me to cheat reality and bend the light.

"By consciously maneuvering the aircraft in such
a way as to place light and shadow in relationship to
material forms. I control the shapes and patterns with
in the photograph. By maintaining the relationship
between tone, shape and texture, the gesture evoked
by the symbolic nature of the subject is reinforced.
If all this works, then the photograph is alive and mean-
ingful and not merely a record of the charted
landscape."