

Seeing I to I: Landscape Photography

from **Idaho**
to **Indiana**

by Alexis Pike and Walt Bistline

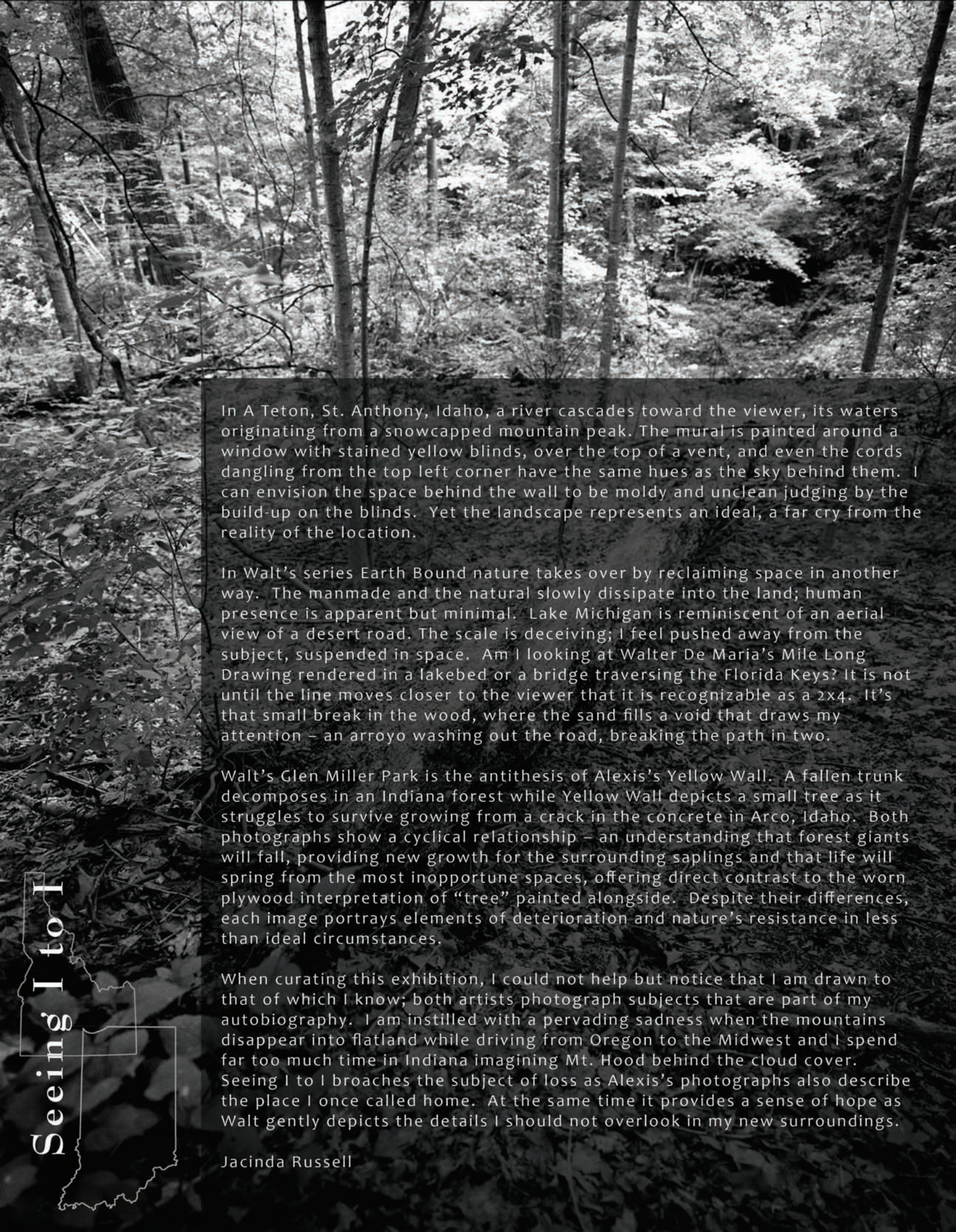


Each artist in Seeing I to I delves into a personal relationship with place. Alexis Pike, based in Bozeman, Montana, photographs where she is from - the Stanley Basin at the foot of the Sawtooth Mountain range. She continually returns to Idaho capturing hand painted murals in various states of decay redefining the mythology of the West in the process. Walt Bistline relocated to Indiana from Houston, Texas and his art thrived once leaving the fourth largest metropolis for the small community of Richmond. He records quiet yet brief accounts when he is struck by human interruption in the land or nature following its course.

Alexis not only lays claim to the land of her origin in the series Claimed: Landscape, but she shows how humanity grasps at an idealized terrain, attempting to imitate the mountains on the horizon on the buildings across the street. In the process, human interaction with this faux scenery takes over: red chairs congregate in conversation in front of a forest and dirty snow piled on the sidewalk replicates the mountain silhouette in the background.

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Seeing I to I



In A Teton, St. Anthony, Idaho, a river cascades toward the viewer, its waters originating from a snowcapped mountain peak. The mural is painted around a window with stained yellow blinds, over the top of a vent, and even the cords dangling from the top left corner have the same hues as the sky behind them. I can envision the space behind the wall to be moldy and unclean judging by the build-up on the blinds. Yet the landscape represents an ideal, a far cry from the reality of the location.

In Walt's series Earth Bound nature takes over by reclaiming space in another way. The manmade and the natural slowly dissipate into the land; human presence is apparent but minimal. Lake Michigan is reminiscent of an aerial view of a desert road. The scale is deceiving; I feel pushed away from the subject, suspended in space. Am I looking at Walter De Maria's Mile Long Drawing rendered in a lakebed or a bridge traversing the Florida Keys? It is not until the line moves closer to the viewer that it is recognizable as a 2x4. It's that small break in the wood, where the sand fills a void that draws my attention – an arroyo washing out the road, breaking the path in two.

Walt's Glen Miller Park is the antithesis of Alexis's Yellow Wall. A fallen trunk decomposes in an Indiana forest while Yellow Wall depicts a small tree as it struggles to survive growing from a crack in the concrete in Arco, Idaho. Both photographs show a cyclical relationship – an understanding that forest giants will fall, providing new growth for the surrounding saplings and that life will spring from the most inopportune spaces, offering direct contrast to the worn plywood interpretation of "tree" painted alongside. Despite their differences, each image portrays elements of deterioration and nature's resistance in less than ideal circumstances.

When curating this exhibition, I could not help but notice that I am drawn to that of which I know; both artists photograph subjects that are part of my autobiography. I am instilled with a pervading sadness when the mountains disappear into flatland while driving from Oregon to the Midwest and I spend far too much time in Indiana imagining Mt. Hood behind the cloud cover. Seeing I to I broaches the subject of loss as Alexis's photographs also describe the place I once called home. At the same time it provides a sense of hope as Walt gently depicts the details I should not overlook in my new surroundings.

Jacinda Russell