



IN MEMORIAM

Joseph Maurice Deal
Professor of Art
UC Riverside
1947 – 2010

Joe Deal was born in Topeka Kansas in 1947. He received his bachelor's degree in fine arts at the Kansas City Art Institute in 1970. He received his master's degree in 1974 and his mater of fine arts degree in 1978 from the University of New Mexico.

Deal began working at the George Eastman House International Museum of Photography in Rochester, NY, in 1970. Emeritus Professor Edward R. Beardsley, who was then divisional dean of Fine Arts at UCR at the time, met Deal at the Eastman House and saw in him an ideal candidate to establish a focused program in photographic practice for the Department of Art at UC Riverside.

Joe Deal came to UCR in 1977 to establish a photographic curriculum for the Department of Art and where he, along with Ed Beardsly, was the initial driving force in the establishment of the University of California, Riverside/ California Museum of Photography. Deal was Associate Dean of the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences from 1987-89. During this time he was instrumental in supporting new hires in the department and facilitating its expansion in the photographic and moving- image arts. Deal had a significant impact on shaping and expanding the Art Department, which, to this day, is renowned for its emphasis in the area of photography. His impact as an educator is immeasurable and can be charted by the number of prominent photographers who studied with him, identify his work as seminal to their own practice and have gone on to careers as exhibiting artists and educators as a direct extension of his legacy.

In 1989 Deal left UCR to be closer to his daughter Meredith in Saint Louis and where he was appointed the Dean of the Art School at Washington University. In 1999 he became the provost of the Rhode Island School of Design and where he also continued to teach photography. He lived in Providence until his death.

In 1975, 18 of Joe Deals photographs were included in an exhibition curated by William Jenkins at the George Eastman House titled New Topographics: Photographs of a Man- Altered Landscape. At the time, Deal was director of exhibitions at the Eastman House and he played an important role in conceptualizing and designing the exhibition.

In subsequent years this exhibition, focusing on an objective approach that turned away from a romantic, fictive, and pictorial approach to the landscape, became identified as a significant turning point in photography. Recently the exhibition has been restaged with an international tour of major museums and with a new and extended catalog. New Topographics influenced multiple generations of image- makers, re-oriented photographic discourse in the 20th century and remains one of the most provocative and impactful bodies of work produced in contemporary art.

In Riverside Joe Deal continued this approach to landscape documenting and exploring the intersection of man and the earth. He produced several major bodies of work perhaps the most notable being The Fault Zone, which traced the landscape of the San Andreas Fault and brought a geological reference in relation to the material facts of the present and added an existential tone to the enterprise. Deal had an approach to

photographing the landscape that accepted the landscape as a material fact of the present. A landscape where man's presence is an inescapable fact of one's experience. His work favored a more abstract and material interest, often explored from an elevated vantage point.

The New Yorker in the June 2010 issue succinctly identified that Deal, along with "Robert Adams, Stephen Shore and Lewis Baltz spent the 1970s practicing a distinct sort of landscape photography that combined a documentarian's clear-eyed sobriety with an artist's aesthetic discipline. In Deal's pictures, scrubby, exuberant brushland morphs into great tracts of riven dirt, studded with houses and prickly with fences. The images tell an ominous and chilling story about suburban sprawl in California. But there is a sly wit to the photos. The domesticated lawns — so well tamed that they look like carpets — are pockmarked with hardy little weeds. Deal depicts the destruction of the natural landscape but recognizes its indomitability as well."

In the last several years Deal had returned to photographing the landscape with his series West and West, Reimagining the Great Plains. The images are direct and without affectation. They are stunning meditations on the beauty and simplicity of being in a locational and specific space with its infinite horizon and patterns of grass, rolling hills, and sky. A meditation facilitated by a master's understanding of the vocabulary of his medium and the manner in which visual experience is notated through lens and material. Deal is sorely missed and most fondly recalled. His legacy here at UCR is palpable, deep and vibrant. He is remembered as a man of grace, wisdom and inventiveness whose photographic legacy is multifaceted and far-reaching.

Additional References

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Duffy, Robert. "Joe Deal broke ground in photography, led academically", St. Louis Beacon, June 20, 2010. (<http://www.stlbeacon.org/content/view/103212/482/>)

Robert Mann Gallery (<http://www.robertmann.com/exhibitions/2003/deal/press.html>)

Professor Charles Long, Department of Art, Chair
Professor Erika Suderburg, Department of Art
Professor John Divola, Department of Art