

*Landscapes of Repair: the Role of Photography and
Film in Documenting the Legacy of Modern and
Contemporary Architecture and Public Spaces*



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Landscape visual essays

by Cristina Gastón and Judit Taberna

The three selected projects present distinctly different approaches to the territory, each articulated through a highly personal and contemporary perspective. Through images, landscapes can be documented, interpreted, and defined. These works unfold as visual sequences of landscapes that invite interaction and reflection—mysterious and magical spaces, as well as landscapes in need of repair. The three visual essays are: *Making Temporal Landscapes: A Visual Essay on Snow, Site, and Seeing* by Mattias F. Josefsson; *Where Fireflies Unfold* by Oskar Alvarado; and *The American Dream* by Alicia F. Barranco.

Making Temporal Landscapes: A Visual Essay on Snow, Site, and Seeing by Mattias F. Josefsson establishes visual relationships between landscape, perception, and our own presence within a place. Josefsson examines the transformation of the Norwegian territory with the arrival of snow, showing how the site is altered and how this change can be employed within the pedagogy of landscape design. Through site-based actions and the use of photography, he presents a series in which the collective body relates to and interacts with the environment, providing a sense of human scale through performative actions. The images, produced in 2025 with first-year students from the architecture and landscape degree programs, during a four-day workshop, document the students' proposals in the snow, generating new spaces and new ways of seeing and understanding the territory. Photography is used as a tool to observe the site from a two-dimensional perspective and to better comprehend the relationship between the environment and its inhabitants. The sequence is documented in black and white, with low contrast due to the absence of sunlight and the presence of fog; in most of the images, the boundary between ground and sky disappears. The interventions carried out in the snow enable an exploration of different forms, subtle gestures, and edges, creating new architectures within the landscape that will ultimately vanish with the arrival of the thaw. However, as Josefsson notes, the knowledge gained through this experiential workshop remains embedded in how we see and how we design.

The series **Where Fireflies Unfold by Oskar Alvarado** constitutes a visual narrative of the village of Deleitosa, Spain, approached from a renewed perspective that is isolated from and distinct to that of W. Eugene Smith. Smith's work, published in *Life* magazine on 9 April 1951, presented Deleitosa as a photographic icon of the social and economic backwardness of rural Spanish society. In this visual essay, we perceive the result of six years of work in which Oskar documents the village where many of his ancestors lived and where he himself spent a large part of his summers. His personal and experiential relationship with the place enables

him to develop a photographic series closely connected to his childhood memories. The images evoke a sense of mystery, suggesting more than they explain. They are nocturnal photographs, characterized by very low, carefully directed light that guides the viewer toward the discovery of paths, buildings, corridors, and windows. Through the magical atmosphere generated within the space, the work allows imagination to flow and encourages a careful observation of the different elements that compose the environment. The visual sequence invites reflection and interpretation, prompting viewers to construct their own meanings from the depicted landscapes. In this way, as spectators, we ultimately become part of the photographic work itself.

The American Dream by Alicia F. Barranco presents a highly personal vision of the Holy Hope Cemetery in Tucson, Arizona. Established in the early twentieth century and covering an area of 48 hectares, the cemetery is administered by the Diocese of the State of Arizona. It is divided into two clearly differentiated sectors: the northwestern sector, corresponding to the historical core of the complex, where the remains of Mexican citizens are buried; and the southeastern sector, where the graves for well-off families are located. This social division is clearly legible in the photographs. One part of the cemetery appears carefully maintained and formally structured, where the modular arrangement of concrete gravestones defines the landscape. In contrast, the other sector, referred to as "the place of the forgotten," reveals the passage of time through a neglected landscape, lacking a clear organizational structure in the placement of the graves. Alicia captures this cemetery through her personal perspective, developed from a visit she made in 2022. The images are in color, with a strong contrast shaped by the shadows cast by trees and gravestones. The green of the grass and the orderly arrangement of the headstones stand in stark contrast to the surrounding desert scrub, where crosses of varying sizes, shapes, and materials appear without a defined modular structure, accompanied by brightly colored flowers and painted tombs. The visual sequence reveals a wounded cemetery, a landscape in need of repair, which Alicia presents, in her own words, as a chronicle of its hopelessness.

The narratives that follow invite us to reflect on the ways in which we may influence the landscape, whether through direct, performative interaction with it, by documenting the deterioration caused by the passage of time, or by observing attentively and capturing the essence of the place.