

COMMON GROUND
FINDING MY WAY BACK

BY STEVI MCNEILL



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"A LANDSCAPE IS BEAUTIFUL WHEN IT HAS BEEN OR CAN BE THE SCENE OF SIGNIFICANT EXPERIENCE IN SELF AWARENESS AND EVENTUAL SELF-KNOWLEDGE."

- JOHN BRINCKERHOFF JACKSON, DISCOVERING THE VERNACULAR LANDSCAPE

PROJECT STATEMENT

I moved back to America somewhat unexpectedly in 2007. I came back to Colorado expecting to be here for a few months and take that time to reconnect with family, explore the vast land and all it had to offer, then return to the U.K. That was twelve years ago. Since then, I have travelled most of the west coast and the Rocky mountains. The vast wilderness beckons to be explored and experienced. With Common Ground, I intend to portray a reflective investigation of these explorations and experiences.

The themes of land, land management, community and access inform my project. In the Critical Review of Practice, I will describe how my Final Project has evolved and developed concerning these central themes.

IMAGES



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 4

Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11



Figure 12



Figure 13



Figure 14



Figure 15



Figure 16



Figure 17



Figure 18



Figure 19



Figure 20



Figure 21



Figure 22



Figure 23



Figure 24



Figure 25

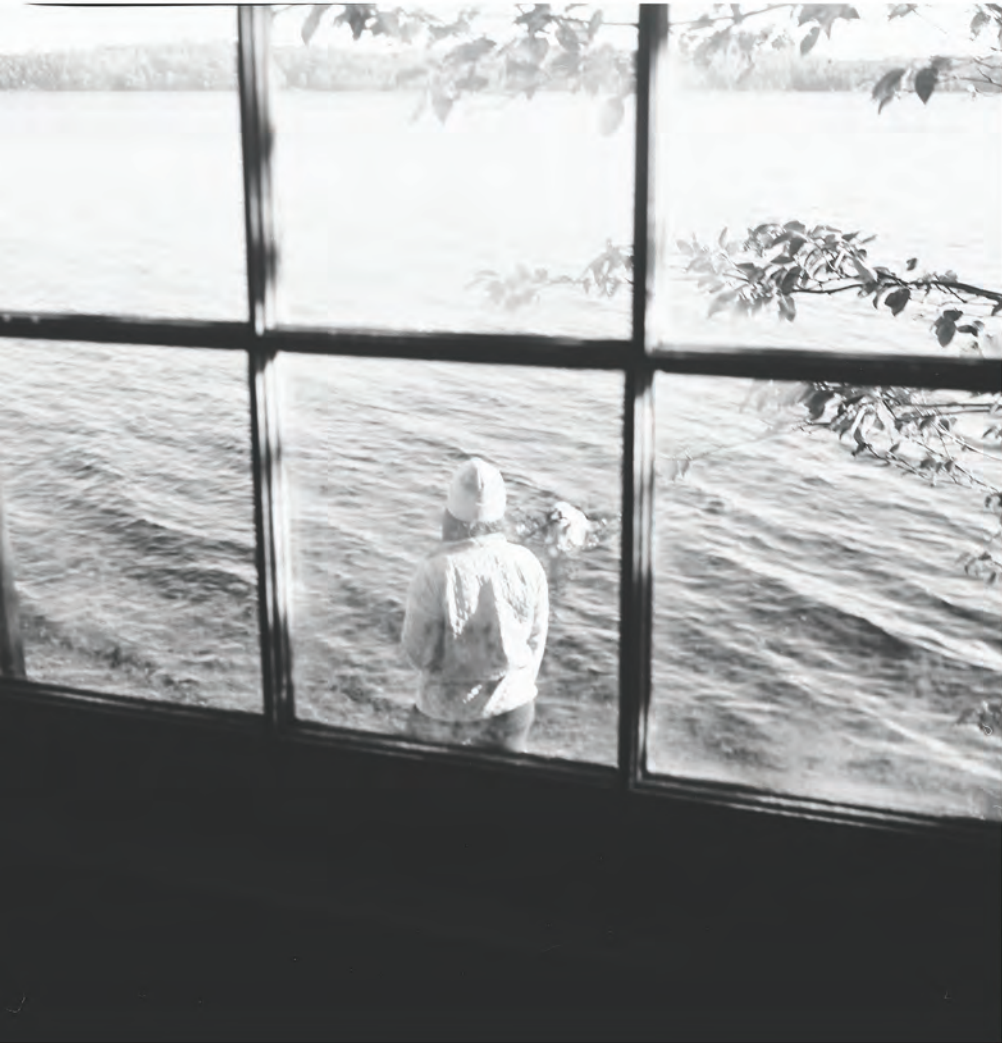


Figure 26



Figure 27



Figure 28



Figure 29



Figure 30



Figure 31



Figure 32

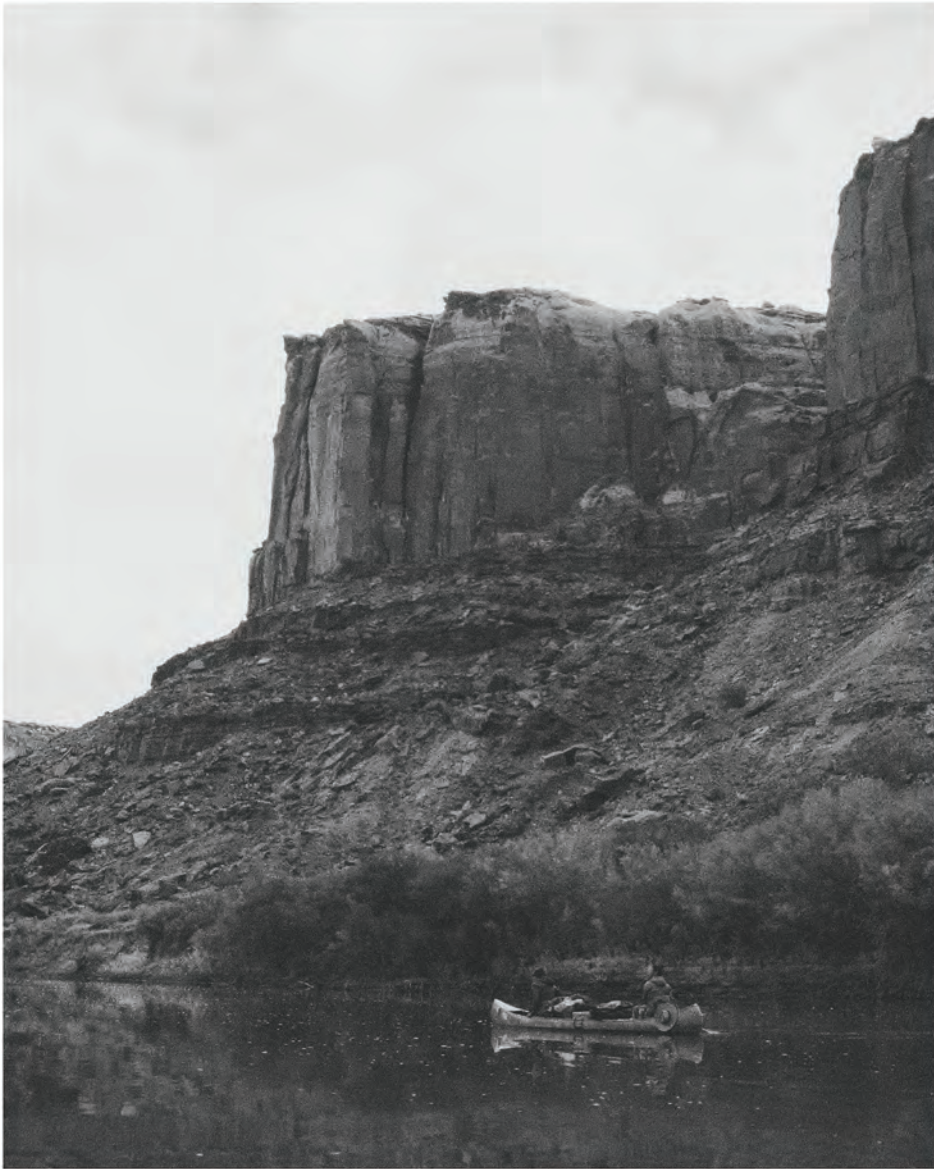


Figure 33



Figure 34



Figure 35



Figure 36



Figure 37



Figure 38



Figure 39



Figure 40



Figure 41



Figure 42



Figure 43



Figure 44



Figure 45



Figure 46



Figure 47



Figure 48

THE BOOK



figure 49

Printed By Artifact Uprising :
100% PCW White with matte finish 100% recycled
Cover Stock: Mohawk Superfine Eggshell 120lb

www.stevimcneill.com/common-ground-the-book.



figure 50

PRINTS



LABYRINTH CANYON

Memories from a time spent in Labyrinth Canyon, Utah.

These days will be treasured by all of us that floated the river for five days, and now I am happy to share some of these memories with you.

3 images in the gallery



AFTERNOON SWIM // LUNCH
ON THE SANDBAR
from \$102.90



NEW LANDS // LABYRINTH
CANYON
from \$102.90



FLOATIN' THE GREEN
from \$102.90

figure 51

The Printshop. Selected prints can be viewed and purchased.

dustgrits.pic-time.com/art

WEB PRESENCE

St/ve

MA Coursework // Work in
Progress
Common Ground // Finding My
Way Back

About
Prints
Dust + Grit
Instagram

SHOW THUMBNAILS



figure 52

Website : stevimcneill.com

The gallery page is designed to be a virtual gallery to display images Common Ground. This allows for a wider reach, as it provides the ability to reach viewers from around the world.



LANDINGS ■ 2020

27TH JULY - 3RD AUGUST 2020
 CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY | FALMOUTH FLEXIBLE
 LANDINGS . SPACE #LANDINGS2020



figure 53
 On my website, You will also find navigation to prints from the project that are for sale, Instagram where the viewer can see more of how the work was created, and other comical and personal projects.

figure 54
 Landings Group
 Exhibition
www.landings.space/

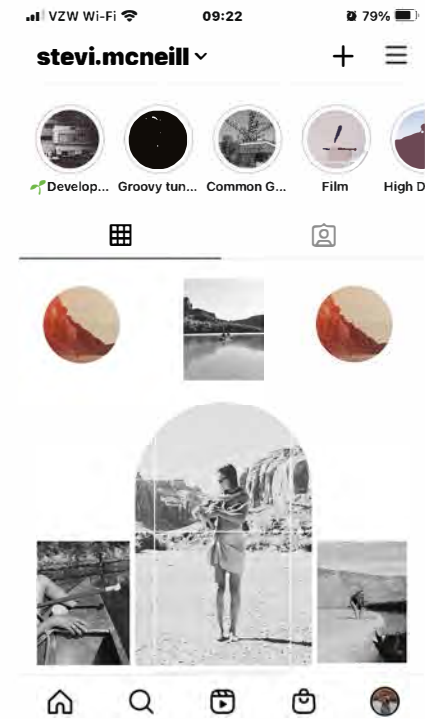


Figure 55
 Instagram. I have been able to share the journey of this project with my followers. In my highlights, you will find my experimentations, book editing and overall project development. This as also led me to make new connections, has been a tool to interact with my audience directly.

www.instagram.com/stevi.mcneill/

FEED BACK / REVIEWS

Rebecca Stumpf // Photographer //
www.rebeccastumpf.com/about

I think your project has such a wonderful feel to it. It has both a haunting emptiness and a warm welcoming feel to it (I imagine similar to what you experience going between the UK and the US). Each image, as ghostly as they feel, beckons me and calls to possess me in that place and make me feel at home and welcomed. The flow of the project from the empty landscapes to simple structures to habitable structures to the introduction of humans in the images, speaks to your search for finding your place in the US nicely. But what I love is how the project, with the inclusion of humans at the end, brings us full circle to the landscapes, that now suddenly feel less empty. Love the inclusion of color midway through. How great those turned out with that expired film! AND, I also loved the water leaked film! Happy accidents are the best.

**Lauren Masterson // Co-Founder of The Portland Darkroom,
Marketing & Development Director at Live Wire //**
www.theportlanddarkroom.org

Your work is lovely, relatable, and poetic. Though this project was a very personal exploration, your introspection and the exploration of your surroundings is something many can relate to, especially in times of change. I enjoy the tension between movement and stillness in Figures 1 and 2, as well as how that dichotomy connects back to your project statement. Something I notice through this project is a transition in the imagery featuring people. The earlier images mostly do not include figures, and, if they do, they are facing away, and exist in relation to their environment. But, later in the series, figures face towards the camera, take up larger amounts of the visual space in the images, or are in groups. I love the pairing of Figures 16 and 17 - feels temporal and delicate. I think there is a strong cohesion between the first portion of the project. These vague, less descriptive images really feel connected to the project concept. I have a bit more difficulty connecting the later images in the series back to the concept. From an outside perspective, the work starts to feel a bit less directed/centralized, but I assume that's likely related to your personal journey through these times. Readers might benefit from more information about the transition of these images as the project progresses.

Rebecca Manning // Collections Manager Mulvane Art Museum Washburn
// Instructor Washburn University // mulvaneartmuseum.org

Photographer Stevi McNeill (b. 1986) taps into what universally appeals about landscape—its ability to convey history, memory, spirituality, identity and regeneration. Originally from Brighton, the artist has been living in the American West since 2007, treating the landscape of the region as a primary subject. It is fitting that she should allude in her photo series title to another British photographer who sought to explore the same area in the late 60s, Hamish Fulton. The English walking artist's influence is evident throughout. Like Fulton, McNeill uses her photographs to translate the emotional experience of navigating a given space. “[Fulton] documents his walks honestly, and in a minimal manner, yet they allude to loneliness and wonder that only he can experience firsthand,” McNeill writes.

Removed from the context of firsthand experience, the photographs in *Common Ground* possess a familiarity in their fleeting sensory details and sense of atmosphere. Like Fulton, McNeill often uses the path as a pictorial motif in her photographs. In this manner, *Ogden Utah, 2020*, utilizes an appealing and almost formulaic composition to capture the subtle tonal qualities of a curving trail receding to the horizon. “When looking back at my images, I noticed I was focusing on the paths and trails more so than anything else around me,” McNeill writes, “Upon reflecting on what drew me to photographing the path, I came to realize it represents the possibility of where it will lead.” Winding down a mountainside, the trail motif appears again, though less prominently, in one of the most striking images of the series, *The North Fork Valley, 2020*. With its oblique vantage point, this image of mist over a small mountain lake does not so much imply an intended journey as much as it lends the viewer the sense that they have arrived at a place of communion with nature.

The linear quality of the trail motif extends to other landscape features, such as rivers and streams, which similarly serve to draw the viewer's eye through the composition and extend the outlook by presence of an implied journey. The idea of embarking on a journey is more overtly communicated when McNeill includes indicators of travel—such as signs and boats. These markers also serve to acknowledge the implicit human presence within the landscape. Introducing and indicating the figure to landscape was purposeful on the artist's part, “I started to include people in my landscapes more, not just the traces of them. I felt it an essential part of the project and its progression to show the human experience of the places.” Advancing from *Sky Pond*, an image of seemingly discarded old shoes on a trail, to *Green River, Utah*, an image of a woman standing in an arid landscape, the function of the figure shifts from the significative to the actual subject. In that shift, the viewer goes from vicariously experiencing the landscape via the photographer's perspective, or lens, to a less participatory role: watching female figures interact with the landscape.

The conceptual crux of *Common Ground* is McNeill's consideration of how she uses her camera and processes her images. The artist used plants she collected from the landscapes she photographed to develop her film. In so doing, she has connected the site of the image, and its organic vestiges, to the physical photograph. Her literal journey through landscape pervades the picture plane and manifests itself in its making.

-Rebecca Manning

FIGURES

FIGURE 1. WASHINGTON, SUMMER 2020, STEVI MCNEILL
FIGURE 2. WASHINGTON, SUMMER 2020, STEVI MCNEILL
FIGURE 3. WASHINGTON, SUMMER 2020, STEVI MCNEILL
FIGURE 4. WASHINGTON, SUMMER 2020, STEVI MCNEILL
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FIGURE 26. MICHIGAN, SUMMER 2020, STEVI MCNEILL
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FIGURE 29. UTAH, SUMMER 2020, STEVI MCNEILL
FIGURE 30. UTAH, SUMMER 2020, STEVI MCNEILL

FIGURE 31. UTAH, SUMMER 2020, STEVI MCNEILL
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DUSTGRITS.PIC-TIME.COM/ART
FIGURE 52. SCREEN SHOT OF WEBSITE, ACCESSED AT
STEVIMCNEILL.COM
FIGURE 53. SCREEN SHOT OF WEBSITE, ACCESSED AT
STEVIMCNEILL.COM
FIGURE 54. SCREEN SHOT OF INSTAGRAM POST, ACCESSED AT
INSTAGRAM.COM/FALMOUTH_LANDINGS/
FIGURE 54. SCREEN SHOT OF INSTAGRAM POST, ACCESSED AT
INSTAGRAM.COM/STEVIMCNEILL/