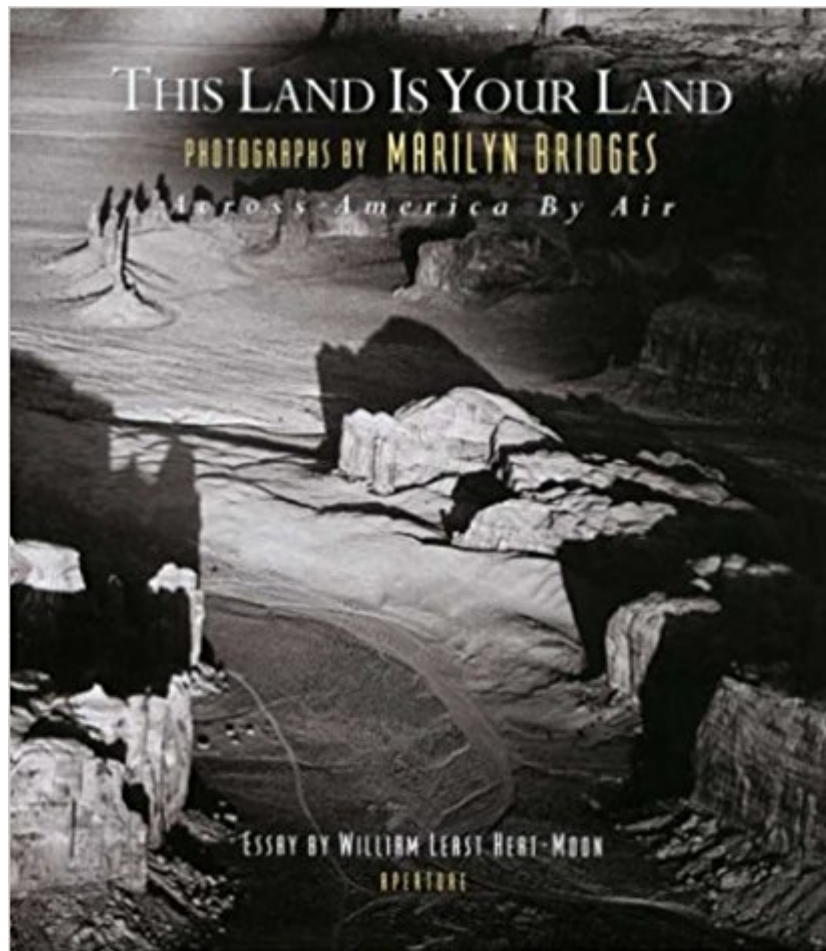




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This Land Is Your Land: Across America By Air



Synopsis

This *Land Is Your Land* offers a unique perspective on the American landscape, making the familiar fantastic, as well as an aesthetic experience of dizzying proportions. Marilyn Bridges takes us on an inspiring journey, as we look down together on the fleeting moments and lasting signatures of the United States that are etched on our continent. An aerial photographer who has explored ancient cultures around the world for more than a decade, Bridges has now focused her attention on a subject no less intriguing: the grandeur of America. By flying and photographing at low altitudes, and by maintaining a sensuous closeness with her subject, Bridges avoids the simplistic representation of landscape as mere design. Divided regionally, *This Land Is Your Land* accents the variety of America, but follows civilization's uneasy interaction with the environment as a common thread. We see the earth shaped and reshaped to service humanity. Monuments rise to celebrate our achievements even as nature wards off intrusion. Fledgling communities spring up among lava and sand. Scars left by clear-cutting, mining, and nuclear waste raise concerns for the future. Yet here, too, there is ironic wit. The towering presidential portraits at Mount Rushmore appear dwarfed by surrounding mountains. The Statue of Liberty hides in plain sight, completely swathed in scaffolding. From the intimacy of a farmhouse to the majesty of the Grand Canyon, Bridges's original vision provides an unequalled perspective on the land in which we live. In the Book's Essay by acclaimed writer William Least Heat-Moon, and the Afterword by Bridges, we are given insight into the photographer's working process and the inspiration behind her images. Certainly, *This Land Is Your Land* contains an urgent environmental message; in every photograph we sense a longing for a purer time, before humanity dismissed the land's indigenous curves and flow in favor of the urban grid. Still, Bridges offers no facile solutions or sentimental appeals. Faced with the jumble of American progress, we look for a vision of nature as idyllic--only to be awed by the savage forces unleashed by Mount St. Helens and the Kilauea volcano. Never what you expect, *This Land Is Your Land* provides page after page of visual surprises. The book inspires in us a haunting and profound admiration for a vibrant land which will prevail long after our civilization has gone.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

When do buffalo look like cockroaches? When does a nuclear site look like a work of art? No doubt about it, things look different from the air. Flying high above the ground in a plane and looking down is one thing; photographing it is quite another. But Marilyn Bridges has met the challenge with imagination and verve. Viewing her black and white photographs of World War II aircraft gunnery tracks in the California desert, Washington monuments, or Oklahoma wheat fields, one can "feel something about our interaction with the land" and experience "the pure emotional response" Bridges gets behind the camera.

William Least Heat-Moon (Prairyerth, 1991, etc.) crisscrossed America by land and conveyed his impressions in words; Bridges travels by air and records her vision in photographs. Writing of her work here, Heat-Moon notes, "For her, the face of the earth is one glyph after another shrouded in shadows to be exposed and interpreted." Indeed, the stark contrast of her black-and-white photos gives free range to shadow play, adding a mysterious, if not slightly sinister, aura to even the most innocuous image, such as a church emerging from the darkness, surrounded by pine trees that seem to glow in the shadows. Other images create delicate ironies about humankind's impact on the land and air: Evoking the grandeur of Egypt, the pyramid-shaped convention center of Memphis, Tenn., rises calmly on the shore of the Mississippi; on the next page, a power plant rises more menacingly, belching a huge cloud of smoke. Weblike human mazes, in the form of a golf course, contrast with the more spidery maze of cattle tracks. This is a probing record of what Bridges calls the calligraphy of the land. -- Copyright ©1997, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

Aerial photos in black and white are past their prime these days, especially when photographers like Jim Wark and Alex MacLean have delivered remarkable color work. MacLean's book *Over: The American Landscape at the Tipping Point* is probably the gold standard for this aerial creativity

but I've always had a soft spot for Marilyn Bridges book because of her different approach to earth photography. This kind of photography is usually done on bright sunny days to get the maximum clarity between the photographer and the ground. Ms Bridges gives her images a unique edge by going for shadows and this produces some quite remarkable photos of industry and the landscape. The seventy-seven photos are split into four sections: Northeast; South; Midwest; West. They are a mixture of industrial, rural, agricultural, military and natural. There are plenty of aerial photo books of cities so there are few here, the Chrysler Building, Jefferson Memorial for example. Mostly the pictures show man-made America from a few hundred feet, people and their shadows are clearly visible. The book's large page size, excellent semi-matt gloss and three hundred screen make the photos sparkle. An additional mark of quality is the duotone separation work from Thomas Palmer. Well worth getting if you want to see a different take on the surface from above.

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