
Shoshone Falls

Cooper, T. and O'Sullivan, T. H. (2010) *Shoshone Falls*. Radius Books, Santa Fe, New Mexico, U.S.A. ISBN 978-1-934435-25-0

Photographs by Thomas Joshua Cooper and eight photographs by Timothy H. O'Sullivan. Critical Essay by Toby Jurovics, Curator of Photographs, the Smithsonian Museum of American Art, Washington DC.

Submitted by Thomas Joshua Cooper
Output No. 1



OUTPUT

This practice-based project responds to the last works of the pioneering 19th century artist Timothy H. O'Sullivan. O'Sullivan visited the great western American landmark, Shoshone Falls (known as 'the Niagara of the West') and made a group of pictures that were his last in 1874. He pioneered a photographic approach to outdoor picture-making, that is peerless to this day. This project set out to challenge O'Sullivan's process, not only by reviewing it, but pursuing this review with the purpose of developing and extending it in an original and contemporary photographic way. The project is a conversation between artists of different generations and the problems of making conclusive artworks at definitive moments in their individual working lives.

Cooper, T. and O'Sullivan, T.
H. (2010) *Shoshone Falls*. Radius Books, Santa Fe, New Mexico, U.S.A. ISBN
978-1-934435-25-0

Photographs by Thomas Joshua Cooper and
eight photographs by Timothy H. O'Sullivan.
Critical Essay by Toby Jurovics, Curator of
Photographs, the Smithsonian Museum of
American Art, Washington DC

Title

Shoshone Falls

Submission No.

1

Authors/Creators

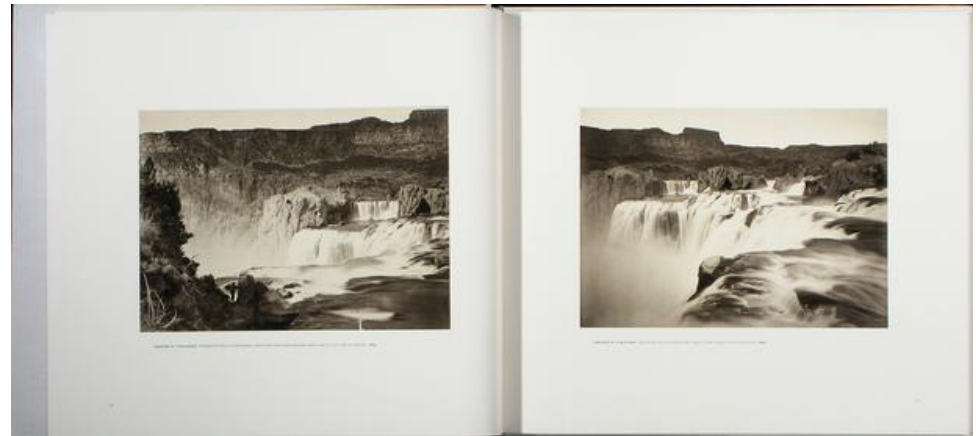
Thomas Joshua Cooper, Timothy H. O'Sullivan





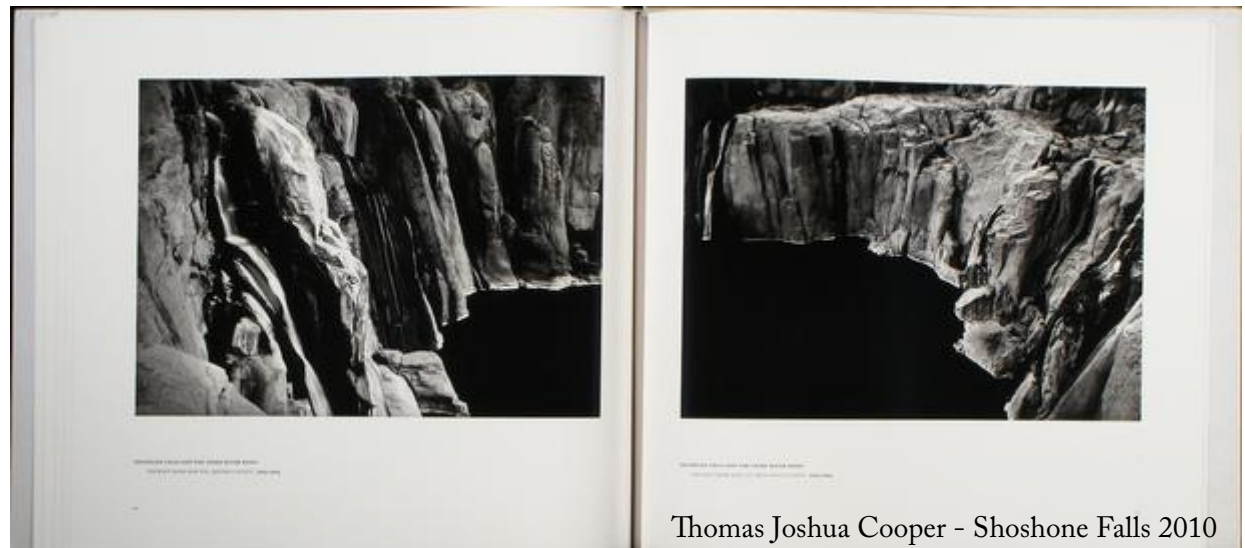
Shoshone Falls

THOMAS JOSHUA COOPER
TIMOTHY H. O'SULLIVAN



Timothy O'Sullivan

Cooper, T. and O'Sullivan, T.
H. (2010) *Shoshone Falls*. Radius Books, Santa
Fe, New Mexico, U.S.A.



Thomas Joshua Cooper - Shoshone Falls 2010



Thomas Joshua Cooper - Shoshone Falls 2010





Timothy O'Sullivan



Timothy O'Sullivan



Thomas Joshua Cooper - Shoshone Falls



Thomas Joshua Cooper - Shoshone Falls



Thomas Joshua Cooper - Shoshone Falls



Thomas Joshua Cooper - Shoshone Falls



Thomas Joshua Cooper - Shoshone Falls



Thomas Joshua Cooper - Shoshone Falls



Thomas Joshua Cooper - Shoshone Falls



Thomas Joshua Cooper - Shoshone Falls



Thomas Joshua Cooper - Shoshone Falls



Thomas Joshua Cooper - Shoshone Falls



Thomas Joshua Cooper - Shoshone Falls



Thomas Joshua Cooper - Shoshone Falls



Thomas Joshua Cooper - Shoshone Falls



Thomas Joshua Cooper - Shoshone Falls



Thomas Joshua Cooper - Shoshone Falls



Thomas Joshua Cooper - Shoshone Falls



Thomas Joshua Cooper - Shoshone Falls



Thomas Joshua Cooper - Shoshone Falls

CONTEXT

In the summer of 2003, Thomas Joshua Cooper travelled to Shoshone Falls in southern Idaho to photograph where the Snake River had tumbled across a 212-foot precipice, once one of the most sublime landscapes in the American West.

These images are a response to the work of Timothy H. O'Sullivan, photographer on the late-nineteenth-century geologic and geographic surveys led by Clarence King and George M. Wheeler. Travelling to Shoshone Falls in 1868, and again in 1874, O'Sullivan made images that capture both the physical grandeur and emotional resonance of this unique landscape.

These photographs simultaneously engage the work of this important predecessor while expanding his own formal vocabulary in a project that generates a dialogue around history, geography and the photographic process and purpose.



Shoshone Falls

THOMAS JOSHUA COOPER
TIMOTHY H. O'SULLIVAN

TIMOTHY H. O'SULLIVAN
The King Survey Photographs



Selected Bibliography

Timothy H. O'Sullivan

François Brunet, "Revisiting the Enigmas of Timothy O'Sullivan: Notes on the William Ashburner Collection of King Survey Photographs at the Bancroft Library," *History of Photography* 31:2 (Summer 2007): 97–133.

✕ Rick Dingus, *The Photographic Artifacts of Timothy O'Sullivan* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982).

✕ James D. Horan, *Timothy O'Sullivan: America's Forgotten Photographer* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1966).

✕ Toby Jurovics and Thomas Joshua Cooper, *Shoshone Falls: Thomas Joshua Cooper, Timothy H. O'Sullivan* (Santa Fe: Radius Books, 2010).

✕ Toby Jurovics, Carol M. Johnson, Glenn Willumson, and William F. Stapp, *Framing the West: The Survey Photographs of Timothy H. O'Sullivan* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010).

Robin Kelsey, *Archive Style: Photographs and Illustrations for U.S. Surveys, 1850–1890* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

Robin Kelsey, "Les espaces historiographiques de Timothy O'Sullivan," *Etudes photographiques* 14 (January 2004): 4–33.

Robin Kelsey, "Photography in the Field: Timothy O'Sullivan and the Wheeler Survey, 1871–1874" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2000).

Robin Kelsey, "Viewing the Archive: Timothy O'Sullivan's Photographs for the Wheeler Survey, 1871–74," *Art Bulletin* 85:4 (December 2003): 702–23.

Ellen M. Murphy and Jeane M. Knapp, eds., *Kaleidoscope of History V. The American West Revisited: Research Papers* (Milwaukee: American Geographical Society Collection of the Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 1990).

✕ Beaumont Newhall and Nancy Newhall, *T. H. O'Sullivan, Photographer* (Rochester, NY: George Eastman House, 1966).

John Samson [pseud.?], "Photographs from the High Rockies," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 39:232 (September 1869): 465–75.

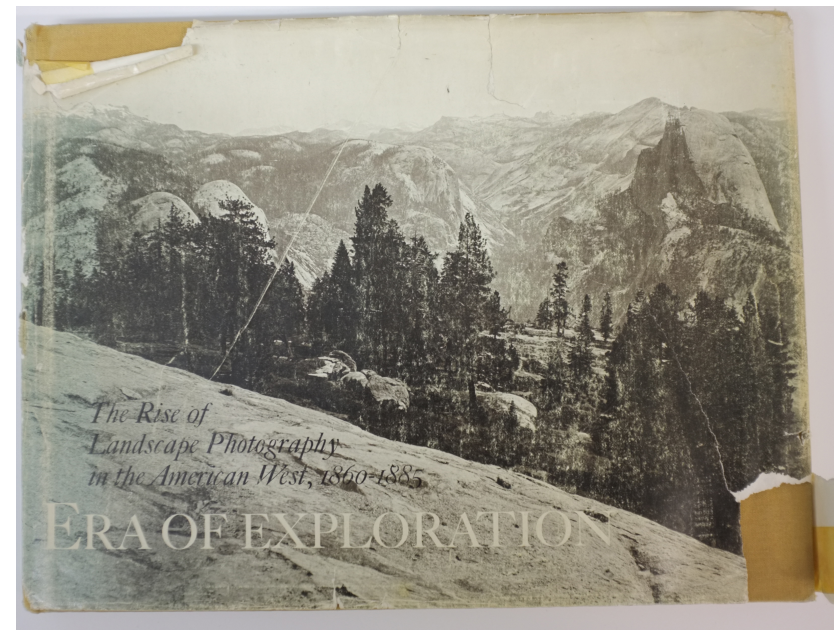
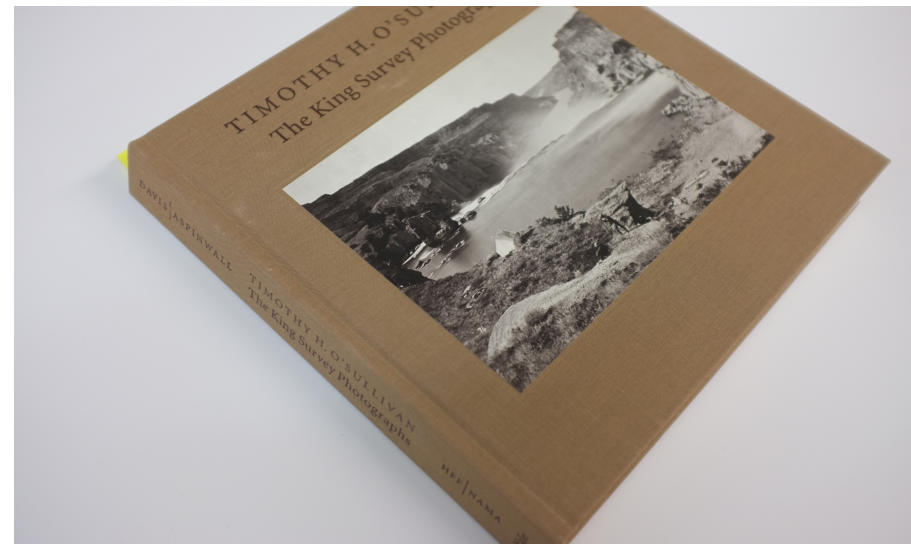
✕ Joel Snyder, "Aesthetics and Documentation: Remarks Concerning Critical Approaches to the Photographs of Timothy H. O'Sullivan," in Peter Walch and Thomas Barrow, eds., *Perspectives on Photography: Essays in Honor of Beaumont Newhall* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986), 125–50.

✕ Joel Snyder, *American Frontiers: The Photographs of Timothy H. O'Sullivan, 1867–1874* (Millerton, NY: Aperture, 1981).

Joel Snyder, *One/Many: Western American Survey Photographs by Bell and O'Sullivan* (Chicago: David and Alfred Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago, 2006).

Alan Trachtenberg, "Naming the View," in *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989), 119–63.

Richard B. Wilson, "American Vision and Landscape: The Western Images of Clarence King and Timothy O'Sullivan" (Ph.D. diss., University of New Mexico, 1979).





Timothy O'Sullivan

Clarence King's Survey, undertaken between 1867 and 1872, covered a vast swath of terrain, from the border of California eastward to the edge of the Great Plains.

It was the first survey to include a full-time photographer—Timothy O'Sullivan—who produced about 450 finished photographs in large-format and smaller-format stereographs. O'Sullivan's images convey a distinct individual quality of perception, at once direct and laconic, as well as a perfect union of objective fact and personal interpretation. As such, O'Sullivan remains the most admired, studied, and debated photographer who worked on the great western surveys of the 19th century.

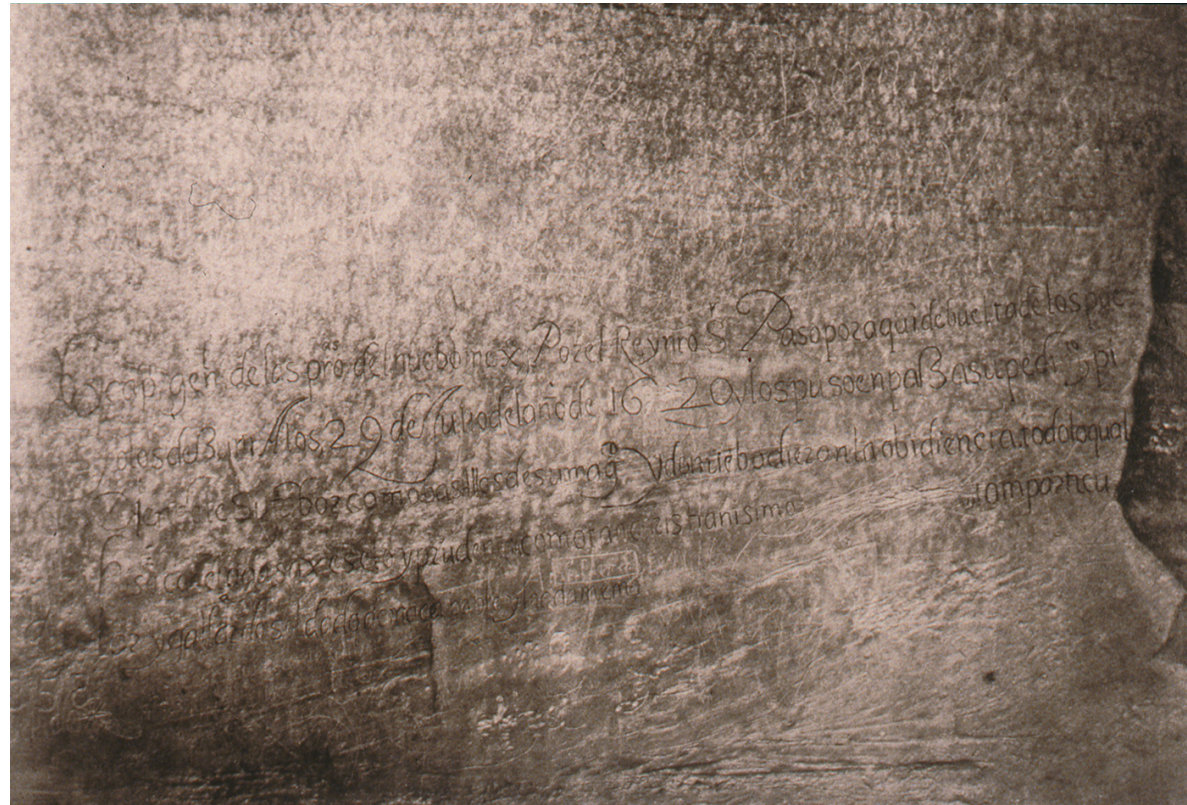
The work aims to enrich and enlarge our understanding of O'Sullivan's pivotal body of western photographs by emphasizing the idea of context. This ambition encompasses several frames of reference: O'Sullivan's best-known images in relation to his larger body of survey work; the function his photographs served in relation to the survey's overall goals and methodologies; and the King Survey itself as a logical part of a complex and prolonged expeditionary endeavour.



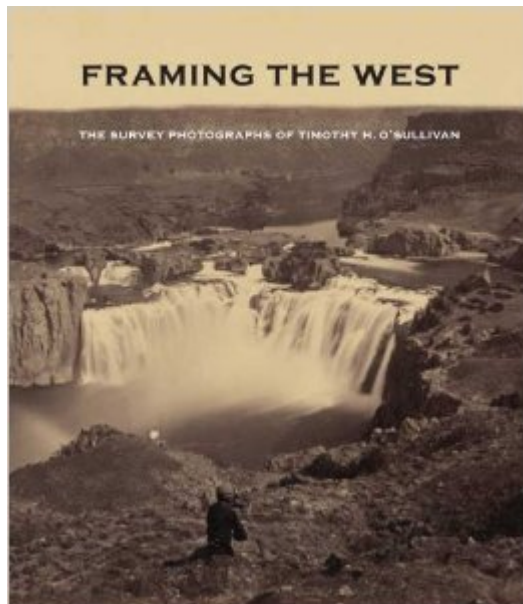
Timothy O'Sullivan



Timothy O'Sullivan



Timothy O'Sullivan



The image of the untamed American West persists as one of America's most enduring cultural myths, and few photographers have captured more compelling images of the frontier than Timothy H. O'Sullivan.

Trained under Mathew Brady, O'Sullivan accompanied several government expeditions to the West—most notably with geologist Clarence King in 1867 and cartographer George M. Wheeler in 1871. Along these journeys, O'Sullivan produced many beautiful photographs that exhibit a forthright and rigorous style formed in response to the landscapes he encountered. Faced with challenging terrain and lacking previous photographic examples on which to rely, O'Sullivan created a body of work that was without precedent in its visual and emotional complexities.

For the first major publication on O'Sullivan in more than thirty years, Toby Jurovics in "Framing the West" offers a new aesthetic and formal interpretation of O'Sullivan's photographs and assesses his influence on the larger photographic canon. The book features previously unpublished and rarely seen images and serves as a field guide for O'Sullivan's original prints, presenting them for the first time in sequence with the chronology of their production.

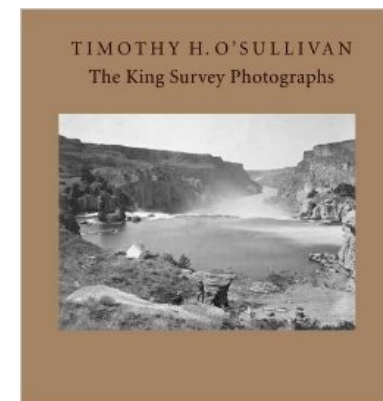
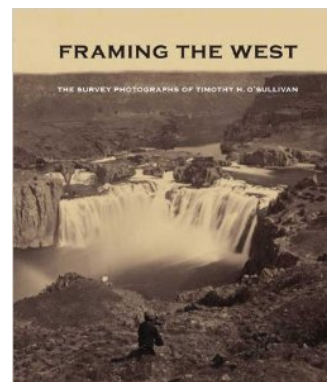
In both the exhibition and the publication Jurovics featured two of Thomas Joshua Cooper's "Shoshone Falls" as contemporary examples of O'Sullivan's resonance with contemporary makers, and Cooper's ability to find new solutions in the making of work with reference to living art history.

CONTEXT

The project is a conversation between artists of different generations and the problems of making conclusive artworks at definitive moments in their individual working lives.

Once one of the most spectacular and truly awesome waterways in the American West, at 212 feet Shoshone Falls on the Snake River is higher than the more famous Niagara Falls far to the east. Now depleted by irrigation, 12 dams, and ever increasing demands from a too-rapidly growing population, and global warming, the flow of the river has significantly decreased.

Jurovics writes in the essay in Cooper's "Shoshone Falls" that through the visit to a common place, Cooper and O'Sullivan become involved in a non-verbal dialogue that cuts across time. Through the making of the work, both the relationship to Shoshone Falls, as the relationship to the medium become apparent.

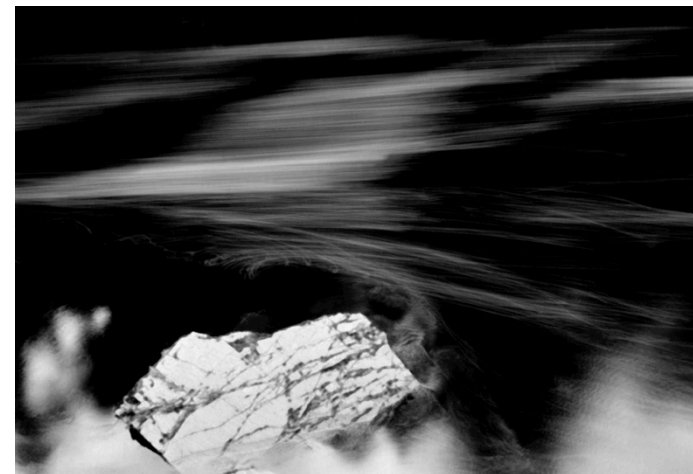


METHODOLOGY

A detailed examination of the O'Sullivan's pictures of Shoshone Falls and an in-depth survey of the current geographical condition of the waterfalls over a period of weeks took place, before making a series of thematically grouped singular pictures.

These pictures respond to the historical views of O'Sullivan and to the current and vastly changed physical circumstances of the entire area now surrounding Shoshone Falls and the Snake River Basin.

A long collaboration with art historian of the American West, Toby Jurovics, an in-depth interrogation to the work of Sullivan culminated with this project and the response through practice







What is it about Timothy O'Sullivan's photographs of Shoshone Falls that inspired Thomas Joshua Cooper to venture from his home in Glasgow to a now nearly extinct river in southern Idaho? Of course, Cooper, addicted to extreme geography, is inclined to far-flung places, even travelling to the ends of the earth, lugging his beloved 1898 Agfa Field Camera. For this fearless contemporary explorer, it was his perception of similar qualities in O'Sullivan that inspired him; both interested in the "evidence of the tension found along the edges of the known world," their images become messages to each other across space and time. Both O'Sullivan and Cooper share an acute awareness of photography's capacity for metaphor. As Jurovics writes about their images: "They convey a sense of vulnerability inherent in the experience of wilderness, and a recognition of the fragility of human life." Cooper claims a recognition -- "a mirror in spirit - I felt as if O'Sullivan were on my shoulders" and while in Iceland made a diptych of homage: *A Premonitional Work/Message to Timothy O'Sullivan / Gullfoss (Golden Falls) / Iceland*. The images of the two photographers speak to each other, and to us as viewers, across time and space from different continents.

Cooper's images of Shoshone Falls are not re-photographic, rather than a comparison from GPS point to GPS point strung across time, they allow for the possibility of "parallel experiences" that illuminate "moments of intensity and understanding through beauty." While most of us may not travel to the ends of the earth, to Iceland, and maybe not even to Shoshone Falls, we can appreciate the photographic work of both O'Sullivan and Cooper in this exquisite new publication from Radius Books. The fine reproduction of the photographs, each to a full page, induces another type of reverie, and will perhaps, inspire the visual dialogue to continue with other photographers in other times, other places

Mary Anne Redding – Review in Photo Eye –
<http://blog.photoeye.com/2011/02/photo-eye-book-reviews-shoshone-falls.html>



Thomas Joshua Cooper



Timothy O'Sullivan



Thomas Joshua Cooper

DISSEMINATION

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS:

- 2013 – Photography and Travel. By Graham Smith, Critical inclusion in an essay plus two photographs, pp.149-151.
- 2010 Framing the West – The Survey Photographs of Timothy H. O’Sullivan. By Toby Jurovics, Curator of Photographs, the Smithsonian Museum of American Art, Washington, D.C. Critical inclusion in essay, pp. 11, 26, 27, 35, plus one photograph with biographical text, pp. 249. Library of Congress, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Yale University Press. New Haven, Connecticut, U.S.A. and London, England. ISBN: 978-0-300-15891-5.

SELECTED ARTICLES, INTERVIEWS AND REVIEWS:

- 2011 Photo District News (PDN). Volume XXXI, Issue 3, March. “Exposures” by Conor Risch, pages 94-96, three photographs. An article reviewing and discussing the photographs in Shoshone Falls. New York, New York. ISSN: 1045-8158.
- RWA Art, 04, Spring 2011. “Close up // Thomas Joshua Cooper RSA” by Hugh Mooney, pages 38-39, one photograph + book review of Shoshone Falls by Hugh Mooney, page 49.
- Royal West of England Academy, Bristol, England. (No ISSN).
- The Washington Print Club Quarterly, Summer. Vol 46, No 2. “Two Pioneers of Photography” by Janet Tracy Anderson. An exhibition review that discusses “Framing the West: The Survey Photographs of Timothy O’Sullivan” held at the Smithsonian Museum of American Art and which includes one of my photographs. Pp 4-8. Washington D.C., USA. ISSN: 0896-7598.

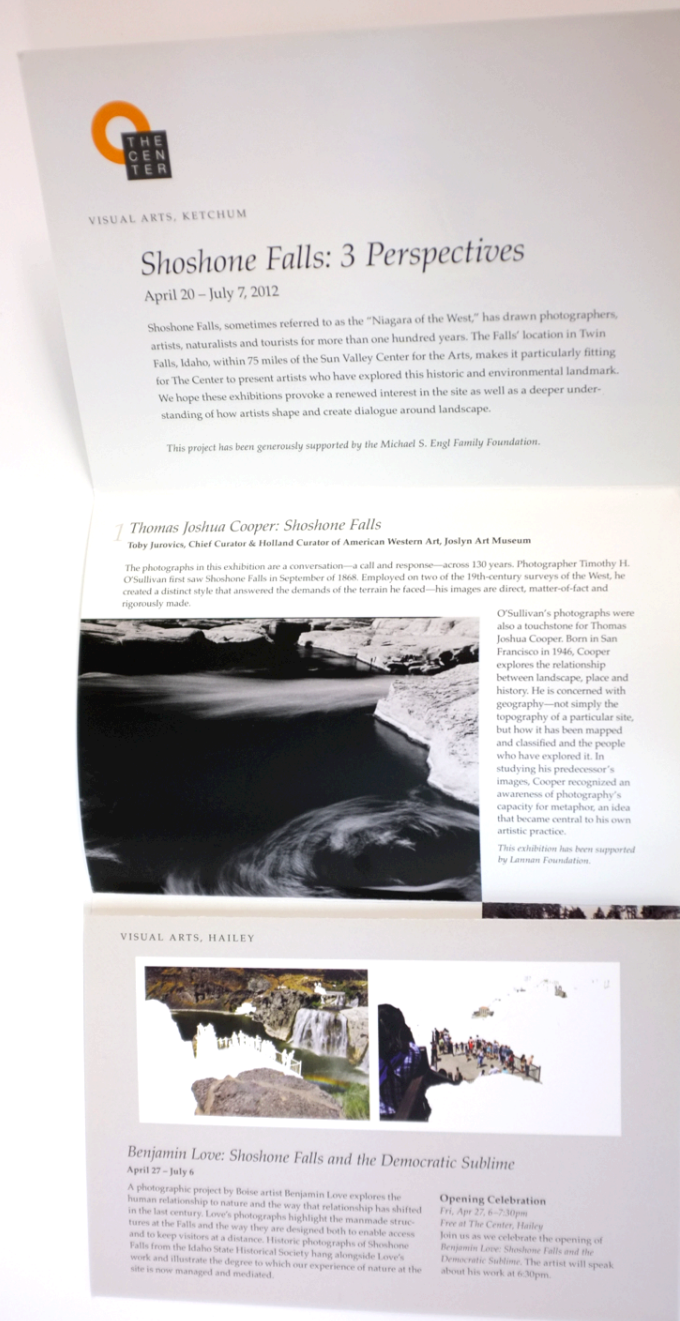


DISSEMINATION

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

- 2012 – Shoshone Falls : 3 Perspectives Sun Valley Center for the Arts, Sun Valley, Idaho
- 2011 - Shoshone Falls: Thomas Joshua Cooper / Timothy O’Sullivan. Lannan Foundation Gallery, 309 Read Street, Santa Fe, New Mexico





Acknowledgements

- Toby Jurovics (historian and project organizer)
- H. Scott McCue (project financier)
- Professor Emeritus Peter Bunnell (project supporter, Princeton University Art Museum)