The Utah Portfolio

In July of 1981, I had the privelege of attending a workshop which was conducted by Eliot Porter. Although I had previously been an admirer of Mr Porter's work, it was the close personal contact with him which proved to have a most significant influence on myself. Acknowledged as one of the preeminent nature photographers, Mr Porter was more than willing to share his many thoughts and talents. This created an atmosphere which was extremely conducive to deeper musings of myself. The workshop seemed to crystallize my own directions in photography. Although I had been exploring photography in a serious manner for nearly ten years, I felt that I lacked a well defined sense of direction, especially as concerns subject matter. Through the workshop, I was able to appraise my emotions to certain subjects and I became aware of just how strongly I was attracted to the landscape. In retrospect, I feel that the workshop experiences will prove to be a major transition point in my photography, and perhaps even in a broader sense. Thus, I am quite grateful to Mr Porter, and I shall endeavor to be a worthy disciple.

So it was, a few months later, that I found myself in Utah, armed with camera and new found goals. Even before arriving, I had chosen a theme to work by: "Nature the teacher, Man the student". While admittedly a broad theme, it did serve to focus my approach to a most incredible land. These 28 photographs represent a 10 day sojourn in Utah. Unfortunately, 10 days is such a meager allotment for such an overwhelming place. However, it was not so much my goal to "capture" Utah, as it was to utilize the landscapes there to elicit emotional responses in myself. Utah acted as a catalyst which allowed an introspective study; a study which was facilitated by the camera. The act of photographing becomes a very intense, physical interaction between photographer and subject. And the resultant revelations give me an impetus and reason for the activity.

Geographically, these photographs represent a diagonal swath across Utah. From Arches National Park in the northeast, I travelled southwesterly through Capitol Reef and finally came to the twin jewels of Zion and Bryce. The tortured geology; the fanciful colors and the quiet solitude provided ample opportunity to explore the "landscape". Whereas I had previously tended to photograph the sweeping vistas, I now turned my attention to the smaller details. It seemed reasonable to suppose that the "whole" could be better understood by examining the sum of its parts. These photographs become a non-verbal diary, not only of my personal self, but also of the more elusive qualities of the landscape. And while these photographs are about form and color and texture, they are also about Utah. And if this is true, then these photographs must also examine man's relationship to his environment. Finally, it is my sincerest hope that these photographs will cause the viewer to pause a moment and reflect about conservation and land management, and the relation of our society to the land as a resource.