

PHOTOGRAPHY &
THE AMERICAN ROAD TRIP



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Teacher Resource

aperture

“What should happen at the end of a road trip? A return to the status quo? A revolutionary new beginning? A few minor adjustments to one’s outlook? Obviously it is not enough to drive West and arrive in the Promised Land . . .”

—David Company, “A Short History of the Long Road,” *The Open Road: Photography and the American Road Trip*

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

This resource is intended to inform educators about the exhibition *The Open Road: Photography and the American Road Trip*, so they are better able to lead students of all ages in meaningful discussions surrounding its content. Each photograph in the exhibition offers a valuable opportunity for students to discover and discuss themes related to the American experience. This resource provides a selection of photographs from which to begin these dialogues.

Also included in this resource are pre-visit recommendations and post-visit activities.

Before a conversation about a photograph begins, offer your students a few moments to examine the work and carefully investigate the scene. Encourage them to look closely and share their thoughts and ideas about the artwork, then guide a dialogue based on their inquiries, perceptions, and thoughts.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

The mythology surrounding the American frontier has engaged photographers since early practitioners such as Timothy O’Sullivan and Carleton Watkins documented the expansion into and landscape of the western states, starting in the mid-1800s. Photographers Walker Evans and Edward Weston then made seminal trips through America in the 1930s and 1940s. After World War II, the “road trip” by car began appearing prominently as both subject and incubator of literature, music, film, and photography. Subsequently, many more photographers have embarked on trips with the intention of creating work about America or better understanding their place in it.

The exhibition *The Open Road: Photography and the American Road Trip*, and the book that accompanies it, consider the photographic road trip as a genre in its own right, tracing it from Robert Frank—whose 1955 road trip resulted in *The Americans* (1958)—to present day. This is the first exhibition and book to explore the story of the American photographic road trip—one of the most distinct, important, and appealing themes of the medium. *The Open Road* presents the work of nineteen photographers for whom the American road was muse. Presented in chronological order, the featured artists and road trips represent the evolution of American car culture, the idea of the open road, and how photographers embraced the subject of America, in order to reflect on place, time, and self.

BEFORE YOUR VISIT

Considering that some students may have never journeyed across the country before, we recommend that you encourage them to reflect upon and discuss their ideas about what defines a “road trip” before visiting the exhibition. Below are guiding questions that can be adapted and expanded based on your teaching objectives and your students’ needs.

1. Who has been on a road trip? What is the longest road trip you have been on? Where did you go?
2. If you have never been on a road trip, when you imagine one, what do you see? What do you hear? What do you feel?
3. The photographs in the exhibition do not offer in-depth explanations of the subject matter. How, then, can a photographer capture a larger idea of “America” if he or she is only photographing one thing? Is there just one thing that defines America? Or many things? What are they?
4. Share the following quote with your students:

“... one of the highest callings for a photographer, and one of the toughest challenges, is to document the present for sake of the future” (Campany, 23).

Ask them: what should we take pictures of today in order to preserve American history? How is the story of America told today? Through television? Music? Social media?

WATCH

Share the following video with your students to acquaint them with subjects and sensations that inspired the photographs and the development of the book and exhibition.

<https://vimeo.com/105063589>

INVESTIGATIONS & INTERPRETATIONS

The photographs in *The Open Road* exhibition present an opportunity to discuss many different themes that relate to American culture and its visual landscape. Aperture has identified the following three lines of inquiry to help organize your tour of the exhibition:

1. **Many Photographers, One America?**
2. **Car Culture and Postwar America**
3. **Along the Road: Signs and Symbols**

Within each category, specific photographs are highlighted to illustrate these particular themes, although many of the photographs in the exhibition connect to a wide range of topics. Contextual information is provided to assist teachers in further enhancing students' understanding and interpretation of the photographs, and guiding questions are provided as a framework for leading inquiry-based conversations about what your students see, think, and feel.

1. MANY PHOTOGRAPHERS, ONE AMERICA?

All of the photographs in the exhibition were made “on the road,” and reflect the particularities of each photographer’s experience. However, taken as a whole, the exhibition reveals much about America and its people during the last half of the twentieth century. The cultural **themes** found by Robert Frank in *The Americans* can still be discovered in more recent photographs: tourism, religion, music, racial tension, advertising, open space, and the “all-encompassing obsession with the automobile” (Campany, 42). When considering the photographs in *The Open Road*, contemplate what the subjects and their stories reveal about American society, and identify motifs that reoccur.

The following selected photographs illustrate themes found throughout the exhibition. To explore these themes, start by leading your students in discussion using the provided contextual information as a reference. Challenge your students to search for these themes in other photographs throughout the exhibition.

TOURISM



Lee Friedlander, *Mount Rushmore, South Dakota*, 1969

FOR THE TEACHER

The considerable increase in privately owned cars beginning in the 1950s contributed to an American cultural mindset that championed personal exploration, and set off an explosion in tourism (the practice of traveling for recreation).

Mount Rushmore National Memorial in Keystone, South Dakota, is a massive sculpture carved into a granite cliff face depicting four U.S. presidents: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt, and Abraham Lincoln. The monument has come to symbolize America and its values, and has been a focal point for tourists since its creation. In 1969, the year that Friedlander made this photograph, 1,763,900 people visited Mount Rushmore. It remains a tourist

attraction to this day—in 2014, 2,144,808 tourists visited the memorial (National Park Service).

From 1969 to 1975, Lee Friedlander set out to photograph every imaginable monument in the United States, including war memorials, public sculptures, statues, and everything in between (Campany, 116). In this photograph, we see two tourists looking off into the distance—one with a camera, and the other with a set of binoculars. The reflection in the building reveals that they are looking at the iconic American monument Mount Rushmore. By choosing to make a picture of Mount Rushmore in this way, Friedlander is telling us more about the experience of visiting the monument than he is about the monument itself.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. What is the main subject of this photograph?
What do you see that makes you say that?
2. What are the man and the woman in the photograph looking at?
What can you find out about them by looking at the photograph?
3. Why do you think the photographer would make a picture like this?
What is he telling us?
4. What is tourism and what is a tourist? Do you think that the man and woman in this photograph are tourists? What evidence do you see to support your opinion?

MUSIC



Justine Kurland, *Claire, 8th Ward*, 2012

FOR THE TEACHER

Traveling extensively with her young son, Casper, in a custom van, between 2007 and 2014, Justine Kurland explored and photographed America—its roads, landscapes, and people. Kurland made this photograph in New Orleans, seven years after Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast in 2005. New Orleans is known for its colorful architecture, vibrant street life, and music, all of which Kurland managed to capture in one photograph.

In this picture, a young woman named Claire plays a piano accordion, sitting isolated from the group in the background. She is a lone performer resting on a truck's tailgate, next to coffee cups and a pair of sunglasses. Although “music” is not the direct subject matter of this photograph, it is present in the image, because we can imagine the sounds she’s playing. Music is a universal language—a way for humans to communicate and connect with one another. It is a form of self-expression, and what travelers listen to during the long, boring parts of any road trip.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. Do you recognize this instrument? What kinds of sounds does this instrument make? (If possible, play a sample recording of a piano accordion for your students.)
2. Ask students to discuss the mood of this photograph. When you look at Claire, what kind of music do you imagine her playing? What do you see that makes you say that?
3. How do you think Claire was feeling at the moment this photograph was taken? Why do you think that?
4. Do you think Claire is a traveler, simply visiting New Orleans? Or do you think she lives there?

RELIGION



Alec Soth, *Adelyn, Ash Wednesday, New Orleans, Louisiana*, 2000

FOR THE TEACHER

Alec Soth traveled to New Orleans to attend Mardi Gras—a notoriously rambunctious, exhilarating, and overwhelming three-day celebration before the Christian season of Lent. Soth photographed Adelyn outside of St. Louis Cathedral on Ash Wednesday, a day when Catholic priests place ashes of palm branches

on worshippers' foreheads and commonly recite the words, "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." Ashes are historically symbolic of mortality, repentance, and purity. Adelyn told Soth that her ash cross was "just cigarette ashes."¹

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. Do you recognize the marking on this woman's forehead?
If so, where have you seen it before? What does it mean to you?
2. When you look at this portrait, what emotions do you feel?
What in the photograph makes you say that?
3. Does this photograph remind you of any other type of picture you have seen before?

¹"Ash Wednesday, New Orleans," *New York Times*, April 1, 2010. <http://www.nytimes.com/video/opinion/1247467479159/ash-wednesday-new-orleans.html>

RACIAL TENSIONS



Robert Frank, *Trolley—New Orleans*, 1955

FOR THE TEACHER

Robert Frank moved from Switzerland to America in 1947. In 1955, at the age of 31, he began a photographic project “to photograph freely throughout the United States, using the miniature camera exclusively,” which would become the book *The Americans*, a visual study of American society. “Frank was fascinated by America, but troubled by its vanities, its self-deceptions, its racial divides, and its ever increasing love of money” (Campany, 42).

Trolley depicts a New Orleans city streetcar with its windows open and six passengers peering out. Frank framed the photograph to exclude everything

beyond the streetcar, drawing the viewer’s attention to the people inside, their expressions, their races, their ages, and the seats they occupy. Frank provides no commentary other than this visual document of this particular place and moment, but this picture has been interpreted as a stark condemnation of America and racial segregation.

This image presents an opportunity to discuss what race relations were like in the United States at the time, at the beginning of the civil rights movement and nine years before the Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawed segregation.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. When do you think that this photograph was taken? What clues can you find in the photograph to support that?
2. Read the following quote to your students:
“Life for a photographer cannot be a matter of indifference. Opinion often consists of a kind of criticism. But criticism can come out of love. It is important to see what is invisible to others . . .”
—Robert Frank, on *The Americans* (Campany, 42)

What commentary do you think Frank might be trying to make about American society? What do you see in *Trolley* that supports your interpretation?
3. Does the photo show us anything about race relations at that time?
4. Look closely at how Frank chose to frame the photograph. Does the composition of the photograph support the subject matter? Why or why not?
5. Does the top row of windows contribute to your thinking about this picture?
6. Does it matter that three of the people in the trolley seem to be looking directly at us? How would the meaning of the picture change if they were not making eye contact with the photographer?

AUTOMOBILE OBSESSION



Inge Morath, *Cherokee Village, North Carolina. A favorite tourist attraction, 1960*

FOR THE TEACHER

The 1950s saw a massive increase in car manufacturing and highway improvements, giving travelers like Inge Morath access to destinations that might have otherwise been isolated from mainstream society. By 1950, over three million cars were sold annually (Campany, 23).

On her road trip across the country, Morath became fascinated by tourist attractions, which had become a central aspect of American culture during the automobile age. This photograph was taken in

Cherokee Village, a Native American community that was commercialized and turned into a tourist trap. In this photograph, we see cars lined up outside of a strip of ice cream parlors, coffee shops, and “Tomahawk gift shops.” Still more cars are approaching the scene, waiting to pull in. In the second car, a man on the driver’s side is leaning out the window, looking into the distance.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. Morath chose to include a lot of information in one frame. What details can you find? How do they work together to tell a larger story?
2. What do you think cars represented for Americans at the time? What do you see in the photo that makes you say that?
3. What do you think the man in the car is thinking? What do you see in the photo that makes you say that?
4. Do you think modern-day Americans are as obsessed with the automobile as they were in the 1950s and '60s? Why or why not?

OPEN SPACE



Shinya Fujiwara, *Untitled*, 1988

FOR THE TEACHER

Shinya Fujiwara journeyed from his home in Japan to travel across America in a motor home. “Motor homes are the modern version of wagons,” Fujiwara stated, linking his road trip to those of the early homesteaders (Campany, 240). Fujiwara took this photograph on

the side of the road near Davenport, Iowa, and left the work untitled. There are three key elements in this photograph: the dark interior frame of his motor home, the vast landscape he sees before him, and finally, the reflection of what he has left behind.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. Imagine you are inside this motor home, traveling alone across the United States. Where are you going? What are you hoping to find?
2. Why do you think Fujiwara chose to leave the location of this photograph unknown to viewers?
3. Would the meaning of this photograph change if Fujiwara had gotten out of the car to take it? What does he tell us by staying in the car to make the picture?

2. CAR CULTURE & POSTWAR AMERICA

At the start of the twentieth century, railroads served as the most efficient means of cross-country travel, but improved highways and affordable cars soon reignited the “pioneer spirit” for most Americans and their families. Over one hundred million cars were manufactured in 1950, and with this rapidly expanding postwar car culture came the promise of democratic travel. Families were shown advertisements featuring the American landscape and its landmarks. In this new era of motoring, these landmarks became increasingly accessible. The idea of American expansion was originally rooted in the promise that one would find freedom and hope by picking up and moving westward. In postwar America, it was the affordability of the car and consumerist culture that supported this, defining postwar America as still in ideological, industrial, and social transition.

Consider the following six photographs, and lead your students in an investigation of the role of the automobile in postwar American culture. Consider the photographs individually, and then as a sequence. How do they connect?



Robert Frank, *Covered Car*, Long Beach, California, 1956



Robert Frank, *Car Accident—U.S. 66, Between Winslow and Flagstaff, Arizona*, 1956

FOR THE TEACHER

In Long Beach, California, Robert Frank photographed a parked car covered by a shroud-like tarpaulin. Interpretations of this picture frequently reference death, partially because when viewed in *The Americans*—the photograph's original context—it precedes the photograph of a dead body covered by a

blanket on the side of the road titled *Car Accident—U.S. 66, between Winslow and Flagstaff, Arizona*, 1956. In this context, this car, a defining symbol of postwar consumerist culture, is seen by Frank as a dead thing resting under two memorial palm trees, which, like the four spectators in *Car Accident*, stand vigil.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. What is the subject of *Covered Car*? What is the subject of *Car Accident*?
2. Look closely at both pictures. What ideas do you have about how they are similar or different?
3. When looking at both *Covered Car* and *Car Accident*, what is the overall mood of the photographs? Does the mood change when you view them individually? What do you see that gives you this feeling?
4. What is the message about car culture that Frank was sending by placing these two pictures together? Why do you think that?



Ed Ruscha, *Knox Less, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma*, 1962

Ed Ruscha, *Standard Station, Amarillo, Texas*, 1962

Ed Ruscha, *Phillips 66, Flagstaff, Arizona*, 1962

FOR THE TEACHER

During a road trip from Los Angeles to his parents' house in Oklahoma City, Ed Ruscha photographed gas stations along the way, which resulted in the seminal artist book *Twenty-six Gasoline Stations*, 1963. He traveled iconic Route 66 from Santa Monica, California, to Chicago. Ruscha photographed these stations in a very straightforward manner, from a middle distance, perhaps as a way of capturing the “non-moments” that are scattered throughout a driver’s blurred road trip experience (Campany, 24). Every driver has had the experience of stopping at a gas station to fill his or her car with fuel, which is why there are competing businesses lining the roads. Business owners do their best to catch the eyes of potential customers. Notice the waving flags, large text that reads “STOP” and “SAVE,” and the multiple filling stations and services available to drivers.

Ruscha remarked about the project: “I want absolutely neutral material. My pictures are not that interesting, nor is the subject matter. They are simply a



collection of ‘facts’; my book is more like a collection of ‘readymades.’”²

The road trip gives travelers the unique ability to compare the many places and things that they pass quickly, and find both similarities and nuanced differences as they traverse different regions of the country. Alone, Ruscha’s photographs can seem deadpan, but together they make us question the sameness of the American vernacular landscape, and what a gas station represents in American culture. Is it a means of supporting continued travel and adventure, or is it an essential function (or symbol) of postwar American consumerism? Or both?

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. Describe what you see in these photographs. What are these businesses selling?
2. Why do you think the artist Ed Ruscha chose to photograph twenty-six different gas stations? Looking at these three, what do they have in common? What is different?
3. These photographs were taken in 1962. How do the gas stations that you see today compare?
4. Think about the nature of Ruscha’s road trip, during which he chose to photograph the same type of structure over and over. How does this compare to Robert Frank’s pictures that explore the road trip through various subjects?
5. Think of an ordinary place you frequently pass. What do you know about this place that others do not? How would you photograph it?

² *Artforum* interview, quoted in Lucy Lippard’s *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972*, 1973



FOR THE TEACHER

Ryan McGinley's locations are unknown. In his photographs, the car is rarely the main feature but serves as a means to an end. In *Dakota Hair*, the great American landscape is just a blur, not a tourist destination. The truck in this picture is clearly moving; it is not parked as the cars are in the previous pictures by Frank. McGinley is photographing freedom and

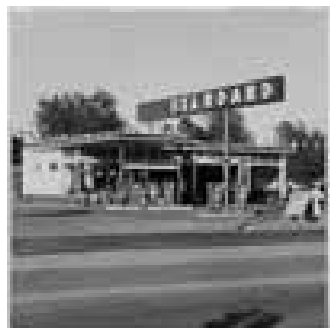
escape from tuition debt and cellphone chargers. There are, however, remnants of mainstream society—notice the fast food drink the young woman sips. Campany writes, “McGinley’s posse takes to the open road not to look for America, but to run away from it temporarily” (Campany, 284).

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. What time of day do you think this photograph was taken? What makes you say that?
2. Where is the girl sitting? Have you ever ridden in the bed of a truck? If so, what was it like?
3. Imagine you are in this truck. What would you feel, hear, smell, and see?
4. How does your view of the world change when you are facing backwards?

CONSIDER THE SEQUENCE

Discuss each of the three photographers' unique approaches to photographing car culture in these pictures. What visual connections can you draw between these photos? What story do the photographs tell us about how cars function in American life, both practically and symbolically?



3. **ALONG THE ROAD: SIGNS AND SYMBOLS**

Is a sign simply a visual aid offering direction? Is a symbol an object representing something more abstract? Or are the two interchangeable? The signs intentionally displayed facing a car window are recognizable and more readily grasped than the smaller details of American life, especially if you are moving fast. It is important to recognize the editorial action that takes place when a photographer is documenting a specific place and time, and how the signs we make, post, and find along the road direct us in more ways than one.

Look at the following four photographs with your students and lead them in an investigation of how and why photographers chose to document roadside signs and symbols.



FOR THE TEACHER

The dramatic increase in automobile production in the United States during the 1950s and '60s and the popularity of the American “road trip” sparked an exponential outcropping of roadside signs and advertising.

Inge Morath made this photograph of a roadside sign in Memphis on an eighteen-day trip to Reno, Nevada. Morath was Austrian, and “America perplexed her. She found it a challenge to get past the obvious: the landscapes of inhuman scale, dotted with the all too human flotsam of signage, commerce, and limited cuisine” (Campany, 62).

The central focus of the photograph is a colorful streamlined sign advertising mobile homes. Underneath the text is a disembodied arm pointing to a portrait of Louis Poole, the manager of the dealership, accompanied by a hand-painted sign that reads, “This is the Man to See.” This photograph documents a pivotal point in the development of a new advertising medium, when roadside advertisements had to catch the eye of the passing motorist. Note that the sign is up-to-date neon while the portrait is a somewhat amateurish painting. Together they beg the question: what is being advertised here—mobile homes or the salesman himself?

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. What is the first thing that catches your eye when you look at this photograph?
2. What is being advertised in this photograph? What do you see that makes you say that?
3. Was this sign old or new when this photograph was made in 1960? Why do you think that?
4. What kind of advertisements do you see in your daily life? Are they effective?



William Eggleston, *Untitled*
(*Los Alamos Portfolio*), 1965–74

FOR THE TEACHER

William Eggleston's *Los Alamos* portfolio was a private photographic research project named after the Los Alamos National Laboratory, where the atomic bomb had been developed in secrecy (Campany, 98). The portfolio was comprised of over two thousand images

with no titles or captions; they were made in a variety of locations well beyond Los Alamos. This image from the portfolio depicts a set of three signs fixed to a tree by the side of the road. Two of the signs are political, and one is a hand-painted sign advertising a church fair.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. Imagine you are an alien who is researching humans, and only have this photograph as source material. What could you tell about this place or American society from the three signs in the photo?
2. Do you see any similarities or differences between this photograph and Morath's *Outside Memphis, Tennessee*? If so, what are they?



Stephen Shore, *U.S. 97, South of Klamath Falls, Oregon, July 21, 1973*

FOR THE TEACHER

Consider the following question proposed by David Company:

“When the American photographer Stephen Shore declared that ‘our country is made for long trips,’ was he being obvious, merely noting that in a place of such size, epic travel is inevitable, or was it something more profound?” (Company, 8)

In Stephen Shore’s photograph *U.S. 97, South of Klamath Falls*, a billboard depicting an idyllic American nature scene obfuscates the existing landscape behind it. Note that the words on the billboard have been painted over, leaving only the image of the landscape. Some have interpreted this photograph as a meditation on how various forms of media—from photography, to TV, to film—often stand in for an experience of reality.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. What visual connections can you draw between the billboard in the photograph and the surrounding landscape?
2. What is the billboard advertising? What do you see that makes you say that?
3. What is irony? How do you define it? Is this picture ironic, and if so, why?
4. How does your use of technology (iPhones, digital cameras, videogames) mediate your experience in the real world?



Taiyo Onorato and Nico Krebs,
Red Glow, 2006

FOR THE TEACHER

This photograph is part of the series created by TONK (a collaboration between Taiyo Onorato and Nico Krebs) titled *The Great Unreal*, of constructed images that weave together reality and fiction.

TONK created *The Great Unreal* as a way to deconstruct the great American road trip and all its resulting imagery and tropes. Created between 2005 and 2008, quite pointedly “in the United States,” the

series is—in its self-consciousness and playfulness—both a critique and a celebration of the traditional photographic road trip.

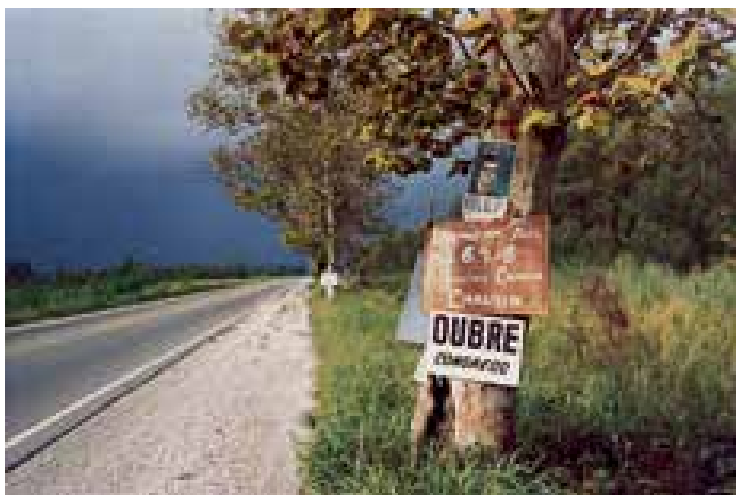
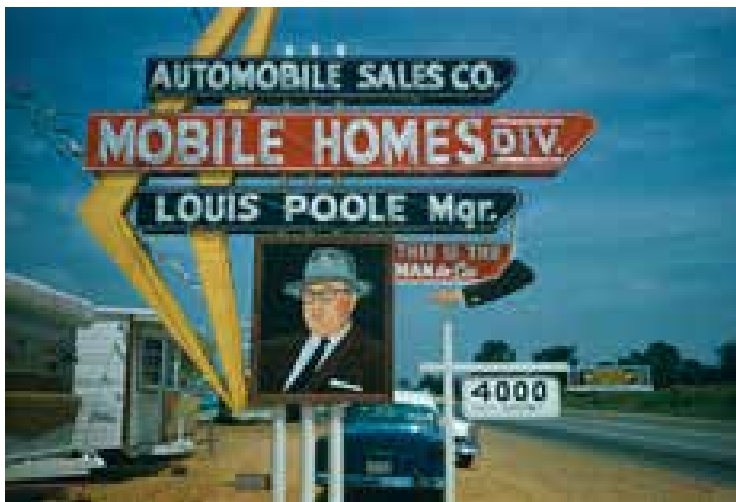
In *Red Glow*, a billboard in an unidentified location emanates a mysterious red light—or is it spray paint? While we certainly wonder how this picture was made, the more important question is: why?

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. How do you think TONK created the “red glow?” What do you see that makes you say that?
2. Do you see any similarities or differences between this photograph and the three you’ve seen before? If so, what are they?
3. If you could give this picture a new title, what would it be? Why would you choose that title?

CONSIDER THE SEQUENCE

Discuss each of the photographers' unique approaches to photographing signs and symbols along the open road. What visual connections can you draw between the four photos? What symbolic connections?



POST-VISIT ACTIVITIES

After your visit, allow students to reflect upon the exhibition. We suggest you lead a follow-up discussion about their observations from *The Open Road*, or ask them to write down their ideas and share. Students can further explore themes found in the exhibition during the art-making activities found below. These activities can be adapted and expanded based on your teaching objectives and your students' needs.



Alec Soth, *Peter's Houseboat, Winona, Minnesota, 2002*

Before you begin the activity found below, lead your students in a discussion about Alec Soth's photograph, *Peter's Houseboat, Winona, Minnesota, 2002*.

FOR THE TEACHER

Alec Soth traveled up and down the Mississippi River for over four years, photographing people from all walks of life. Read this statement by George Slade on storytelling and truth-telling in Soth's photography:

"I think there's something about Alec's images that sort of flirts with fiction, that have a kind of story behind them that might take them into territory that isn't always about truth-telling. It's about storytelling. Sometimes that's real, sometimes it's not."

—George Slade, artistic director of Minnesota Center for Photography, 2003–8 (Minnesota Public Radio, 2004, http://news.minnesota.publicradio.org/features/2004/07/13_combsm_soth/)

FOR YOUR STUDENTS

What do you see? Is this photograph telling a story? If so, what is it?

PORTRAIT ACTIVITY

Create a portrait of a friend that tells a story about them. Think about the details that you could include in your artwork. Are there specific objects or a particular setting that could enhance your story?



Taiyo Onorato and Nico Krebs,
Pommes Frites, 2005

Before you begin the activity found below, lead your students in a discussion about Taiyo Onorato and Nico Krebs's photograph, *Pommes Frites*, 2005.

FOR THE TEACHER

Taiyo Onorato and Nico Krebs (jointly known as TONK) created the series *The Great Unreal* as a way to deconstruct the great American road trip and all its resulting imagery and tropes. Created between 2005 and 2008, quite pointedly “in the United States,” the series is—in its self-consciousness and playfulness—both a critique and a celebration of the traditional photographic road trip.

FOR YOUR STUDENTS

Describe the photograph. What do you see? What is in the foreground of the photograph? What is in the middle ground? What is in the background?

What is the effect of putting two items (French fries and the Grand Canyon), which aren't normally seen together, in conversation with one another?

WRITING ACTIVITY

Invent a story based on what you see in the photograph.

PHOTO ACTIVITY

Pick a familiar location as a starting point for your photo project. Create a photograph that juxtaposes unlikely items within that setting. Try to choose items that convey something new about the place.

COLLAGE ACTIVITY

Choose a rural or urban photo from a magazine such as *National Geographic*. This will serve as the background of your collage. Using images and scraps from other magazines, cut up photos of objects and place them inside a different context. How does this change your interpretation of the place?

SONG OF THE OPEN ROAD

*I inhale great draughts of space,
The east and the west are mine,
and the north and the south are mine.*

*I am larger, better than I thought,
I did not know I held so much goodness.
All seems beautiful to me . . .*

—Walt Whitman, excerpt from *Song of the Open Road*

FOR THE TEACHER [The excerpt found above is featured at the beginning of *The Open Road*.]

Song of the Open Road is a 224-line poem written by Walt Whitman, originally published in his iconic 1855 collection of poems, *Leaves of Grass*. The poem touches on quintessential American themes, including a yearning for open space, of which “the road” is a central fixture.

FOR YOUR STUDENTS

What connections can you make between the photographs in the exhibition and this text?

ART ACTIVITY

Create a work of art inspired by the excerpt from *Song of the Open Road*.

David Campany, curator of this exhibition and author of *The Open Road: Photography and the American Road Trip*, is one of the best-known and most accessible writers on photography. His books include *Walker Evans: The Magazine Work* (2013), *Jeff Wall: Picture for Women* (2011), *Photography and Cinema* (2008), and *Art and Photography* (2003). His essays have appeared in numerous books and he contributes regularly to *Aperture*, *Frieze*, *Photoworks*, and *Oxford Art Journal*. Campany lives and works in London, where he is a reader in photography at the University of Westminster.

Denise Wolff is senior editor at *Aperture* and is known for her work with both contemporary and historic photography. Prior to *Aperture*, she was the commissioning editor for photography at Phaidon Press. Throughout her career, she has had the opportunity to work on many beautiful books, including monographs with such established photographers as Roger Ballen, Mary Ellen Mark, Martin Parr, and Stephen Shore, as well as first books, retrospectives, and large survey anthologies on a variety of subjects—from portraiture to photographic albums.

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This project is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.



This teacher resource was created by Adair Ewin and Becca Imrich, Stevan A. Baron Work Scholars in the department of Public Programs and Education.

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Lee Friedlander, *Mount Rushmore, South Dakota*, 1969



Justine Kurland, *Claire, 8th Ward*, 2012



Alec Soth, *Adelyn, Ash Wednesday, New Orleans, Louisiana*, 2000



Robert Frank, *Trolley—New Orleans*, 1955



Inge Morath, *Cherokee Village, North Carolina. A favorite tourist attraction, 1960*



Shinya Fujiwara, *Untitled*, 1988



Robert Frank, *Covered Car, Long Beach, California*, 1956



Robert Frank, *Car Accident—U.S. 66, Between Winslow and Flagstaff, Arizona*, 1956



Ed Ruscha, *Knox Less, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma*, 1962



Ed Ruscha, *Standard Station, Amarillo, Texas*, 1962



Ed Ruscha, *Phillips 66, Flagstaff, Arizona*, 1962



Ryan McGinley, *Dakota Hair*, 2004



Inge Morath, *Outside Memphis, Tennessee*, 1960



William Eggleston, *Untitled (Los Alamos Portfolio)*, 1965–74



Stephen Shore, *U.S. 97, South of Klamath Falls, Oregon, July 21, 1973*



Taiyo Onorato and Nico Krebs, *Red Glow*, 2006



Alce Soth, *Peter's Houseboat*, Winona, Minnesota, 2002



Taiyo Onorato and Nico Krebs, *Pommes Frites*, 2005