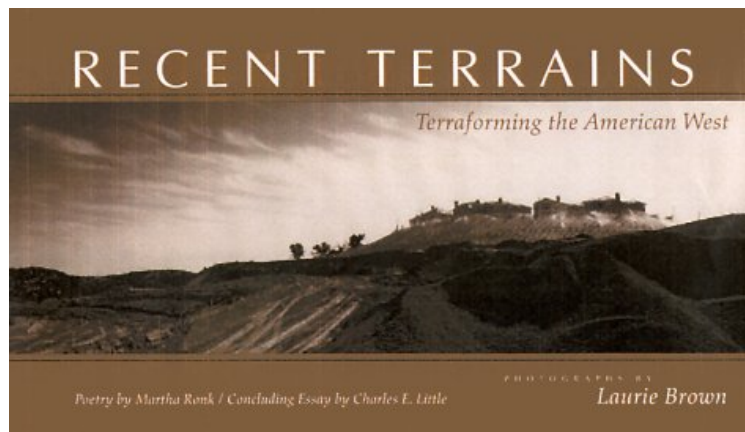


(Download pdf) Recent Terrains: Terraforming the American West (Creating the North American Landscape)

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Laurie Brown

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Laurie Brown : Recent Terrains: Terraforming the American West (Creating the North American Landscape) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Recent Terrains: Terraforming the American West (Creating the North American Landscape):

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Book Review By Customer I know Ms. Brown and wanted to see her book. Photographs are very good, just not in my interest area.

In this book of sixty black-and-white panoramas, photographer Laurie Brown documents the changing landscape along the western edge of Southern California. These stark, compelling images reveal a world scraped and reshaped by construction equipment boulders pushed aside, stretches of earth flattened and then measured with surveyor sticks. High-tech housing developments rise in these places, lines of identical homes that simultaneously offer a pleasing vision of order and a numbing prospect of sterile conformity. Recent Terrains: Terraforming the American West is a thoughtful sequence of photographs that consider how the planet's surface has been transformed to meet the needs of our consumer society. The term terraforming originated in Kim Stanley Robinson's science fiction trilogy about the colonization of Mars, in which that planet is reshaped for human settlers. The panoramic format of Brown's photographs is partly inspired by space photography with their long and low perspectives of the horizon, these photos give us views of our own planet as it might be seen by the Mars explorer. But if many of the images look like alien landscapes, they reveal a familiar shift in American geography: the wild, agricultural terrain of our early frontier gives way to densely built suburban communities. Brown's photographs are neutral about what they record, dramatizing some of the tensions and dualities that comprise our society's complex relationship to nature. She shows the invasion of unspoiled territory by the high-tech developments we so often label with the pejorative term suburban sprawl. At the same time, however, she uncovers surreal stillness and beauty in the built environment, searching for a postindustrial idea of the sublime. Taken during the last decade of the twentieth century, these photographs serve as an archive of change at a specific place on the coastal edge of California at the turn of the millennium. But these images have larger relevance for all of us, exploring our ideas about what constitutes a home and what defines our sense of

community. The book is divided into three sections, each prefaced by a poem by Los Angeles poet Martha Ronk; it concludes with an essay by renowned writer and conservationist Charles E. Little. *Recent Terrains* is a major photographic work a thoughtful, serious book of time and place.

All cities are like Troy in their potential to mingle tragedy in the commonplace, Homer knew. Brown reaches toward that knowledge without flinching or sentiment. Though ambivalent as her photographs must be, she shows us town being made that may claim someone's allegiance, answer their longing and persist in memory. (D.J. Waldie *Los Angeles Times Book*) Brown reveals the intermingling of history, culture and nature behind the area's efforts to provide housing on a wide scale. The resultant instant suburbias glow with an aura of newness and seem to be inhabited by a particular quiet. (Doubletake) Flipping through the pages, the story of the urbanization of the American West unfolds like a turn-of-the-century flip book the landscape literally and visually morphs like a sand painting. (Deborah Picker *LA Weekly*) A collection of panoramic black and white photographs, Brown's exploration of evolving suburbia along the southwest Californian coast displays the movement of man-made lines versus the original landscape. (Afterimage) Her images are the documents of an observant but self-effacing bystander, combining a delicate feel for tonal contrasts and pleasing compositions with a cool objectivity... Brown has an uncanny ability to find elements of grace in unpromising surroundings. (Cathy Curtis *Los Angeles Times*) Recording those transitions between the unbuilt and the built, Brown has captured a series of alien and foreboding terrains that are stunningly beautiful in their stark austerity and esoteric geometries arid lands relentlessly scoured, scraped, modeled, and engineered in preparation for domestication. Even more unnerving are her photographs of the eventual consequences of those geometries the planned, repetitive, sterile, and seemingly endless tracts of suburban homes stretching to the horizon's haze, the expanse of the American dream taken to its end. One may wistfully cherish those operatic vistas of pristine wilderness photographed by the likes of Ansel Adams; Laurie Brown shows us what really exists just beyond the Half Dome. (Robert A. Sobieszek, Curator of Photography Deputy Director of Strategic Artistic Initiatives, Los Angeles County Museum of Art) About the Author Laurie Brown was awarded a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship in 1978, and her photographs are in the permanent collections of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, the Center for Creative Photography in Tucson, the Minneapolis Institute of the Arts, and the New Orleans Museum of Art, among many others. Charles E. Little is the author of a dozen books, most recently *The Dying of the Trees*. Martha Ronk is the author of seven books of poetry, most recently *Displeasures of the Table*.