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Duke University Press Publishes Steven B. Smith's  
*The Weather and a Place to Live*

New Book is Second Winner of The Center for Documentary Studies/Honickman Foundation First Book Prize in Photography

The new winner of biennial Center for Documentary Studies/Honickman First Book Prize in Photography, Steven B. Smith's *The Weather and a Place to Live* (November 15, 2005), is a dramatic follow-up to 2003's much-heralded *On Fire* by Larry Schwarm.

In compelling, often stunning black-and-white photographs, *The Weather and a Place to Live* portrays the manmade landscape of the western United States. Here we come face to face with the surreal intersection of the American appetite for suburban development and the resistant, rolling, arid country of the desert West. Steven B. Smith's extraordinary photographs take us into the contemporary reality of sprawling suburbs reconfiguring what was once vast, unpopulated territory. With arresting concision and an unblinking eye, Smith shows how a new frontier is being won, and suggests too how it may be lost in its very emergence. Since the early 1990s Smith has been making large-format photographs in California, Utah, Nevada, and Colorado.

The power of these photographs lies in part in Smith's unusual knowledge of the places he portrays. Raised in Utah, Smith has worked on construction crews, and he was a contractor in California after living on the East Coast for a few years.

Smith says that he wants to show how people are "changing the land, making it into something that they thought was valuable. Specifically, these developments where the land is dramatically changed, but in a way that supposedly takes the local environment into consideration—the manmade reflecting and paying homage to the existing landscape. I am mostly interested in the systems that people use to restrain the land and route the water, these elaborate systems of short-term control."

Smith's photographs offer a disturbing vision of the future of our planet, where the desire for home ownership is pitted against the costs of development in epic proportions. These altered landscapes force us to consider the consequences of human design battling natural forces across great expanses, a fragile balancing act and a contorted equation in which nature becomes both inspiration and invisible adversary. Smith's elegant photographs of this constructed universe confront us with the beauty of images as images, yet push us to reflect on the devastation possible in the simple act of choosing a place to live.

Smith's work has been featured in solo exhibits at Red Eye Gallery in Providence and Blue Sky Gallery in Portland, Oregon. He has participated in group exhibits at Gallery Luisoti in Santa Monica, Wheeler Gallery in Providence, Albertus Magnus Gallery in New Haven, and Boston's Photographic Resource

Center, among others. His work is also featured in several museum collections including the Princeton Museum of Art, the Rhode Island School of Design Museum of Fine Art, the PaineWebber Photography Collection in New York, and the Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Fine Art in Logan, Utah. A past recipient of a Guggenheim grant and an Aaron Siskind Fellowship for Photography, Smith is currently Professor of Photography at Rhode Island School of Design.

THE WEATHER AND A PLACE TO LIVE

Photographs of the Suburban West

by Steven B. Smith

with an introduction by Maria Morris Hambourg

Images from the book are available for use in reviews or feature articles.

Please visit <http://cds.aas.duke.edu/press/fbp/smith/index.html>

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