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## Review of Canyon Visions: Photographs and Pastels of the Texas Plains

John R. Wunder

*University of Nebraska-Lincoln*

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*Canyon Visions: Photographs and Pastels of the Texas Plains.* By Dan Flores and Amy Gormley Winton. Foreword by Larry McMurtry. Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 1989. Introduction, sources, indexes. xi + 113 pp. \$29.00 cloth, \$20.00 paper.

This is a beautiful book. Its beauty is four-fold. There is an allusive introduction by Archer City native, West Texas novelist Larry McMurtry, and lyrical words and phrases in an introduction and photo/portrait captions by Texas Tech University history professor Dan L. Flores. Then there are forty magnificent photos of the canyons of the Texas Plains taken by Flores and thirty-nine reproductions of pastels of the canyon landscapes of West Texas by Amarillo artist Amy Gormley Winton. The photographs and pastels are very effectively organized on separate pages facing each other and are arranged in five sections—"Elements," "Forms," "Texture," "Color," and "Light"—indicating a sensitivity to art and the environment. The book is lavishly designed by Texas Tech University Press.

In the brief foreword by McMurtry entitled "A Land Below the Plain," the man from *Texaville* strikes two themes later to be repeated. He calls upon the readers to discover the canyons below the caprock of the southern Plains. McMurtry describes the delicacy and majesty of this region. He also defines the canyonlands and their art in sensual terms, the canyons as feminine, the art of the canyons as masculine, and the volume as including "sensitive subtle pastels" along with "strong photographs" (p. 1). His final point is that the canyons and their art

arouse feelings for the eternal in their viewers, a concept that rings throughout the volume.

The introduction by Dan Flores ranges far and wide, from Pampa to Post, from hoodoos to Albert Pike. It is preceded by an excellent map of the caprock designed by Amy Troyanasky, a recent Lubbockan, and Flores. There is a discussion of the artists of the south Plains and some pithy observations. Flores notes that most artists of the Plains have been fascinated with its borders. Even so, most Americans do not admire the Plains much. They seem to prefer mountains.

This lack of focus by mainstream Americans Flores says "discourages Plains people" (p. 2). This may not necessarily be the case, but he then continues that most Americans do not see or understand the Plains. This trait has led to a dangerous "cultural preparation for a modern response" that is environmentally destructive (p. 2). This latter observation is certainly so. One need only follow the present nuclear waste disposal debate. It also leads to strange environmentally-static responses such as the Popper Thesis and the Triage Theory.

As Flores so eloquently puts it, there is a need to maintain the biological and mythological meshing of the Plains and its peoples as exhibited in the caprock canyonlands. The Kiowas and O'Keefe knew this, and so do Flores and Winton. Flores concludes with a call to preserve portions of the Great Plains, particularly the caprock, before its native ecology is destroyed.

It is impossible to convey in words the power of Flores's photos and Winton's pastels. The reader must simply observe. Do take note of "Tule Narrows" by Winton and "Tule Floor" by Flores, reproductions of Tule Canyon (pp. 16-17); "Last Hoodoo" by Winton and "Badlands Hoodoo" by Flores, majestic fists rising from the Double Mountain Fork Canyon (pp. 34-35); "Caprock Canyon" by Winton and "Vermillion Badlands" by Flores, the reds and greens of Caprock Canyon (pp. 66-67); and the last three presentations, two photos by Flores of Yellow House Canyon, "Venus Rising" and "The Morning the Sky Was on Fire," and a

pastel by Winton of Quanah's Palo Duro Canyon, "From Darkness into Light" (pp. 104-106).

This is not *just* a picture book. It is plains art, history, and literature in symmetry.

JOHN R. WUNDER  
Center for Great Plains Studies  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln