



Empire: Photographs and Essays by Lewis deSoto

Lewis deSoto, Foreword by Paul Chaat Smith, Curator's Statement by Sant Khalsa

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In this book of photographs and essays, noted visual artist Lewis deSoto explores his birthplace and ancestral Cahuilla homeland, the “marvelous and abject” landscape of Southern California’s Inland Empire. Sixty intimate photos capture the paradoxes of the region’s deserts, lushly manicured lawns, freeways, and inland sea. Punctuating these single-frame images are panoramas of landscapes that capture infinitudes of detail. DeSoto’s captions unpack these panoramic shots, revealing their geologic, social, and cultural significance.

But beyond captions, *Empire* marks deSoto’s emergence as a nonfiction writer. Eight essays meditate on a youth spent in regions including San Bernardino, mountainous Highway 18, Rancho Cucamonga, Riverside, and Palm Springs. DeSoto’s elegant prose marks these places as locales of rich history, industrialization, sharp social strata, as well as sites of deep personal transformation. Taken as a whole, this is the work of an established artist and the dawn of a new literary voice: one that both assembles, piece by piece, a picture of a specific place, and deconstructs the complexities of home.

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