

*"Life has a way of giving us what we need if the longing is deep enough and pure enough."*

Steven D. Foster

It is with remarkable recurrence that I find myself observing a loose piece of paper, perhaps a receipt for a bank transaction or wrapper from a candy bar, caught in a gust of wind immediately after opening my car door. It is in these moments that I am afforded two options: give chase and take action for my disorderliness or pretend as though I haven't noticed and contribute yet another scrap to the dozens already gathered, wilted, melted, and stuck to the gutter alongside my vehicle. My guilty conscience rarely permits me to avoid pursuit. Some days, however, are particularly gusty and on those days an altogether unpredictable, absurd spectacle is likely to ensue.

A casual onlooker may take pleasure in watching me attempt to discretely bend over to collect the paper just before it blows slightly out of reach. They may see me attempt to secure the loose object with my foot, performing a staggered shimmy along the center line of the road, just before encountering a piece of recently discarded gum getting lodged in the tread of my shoe; the paper inching further and further away. They may watch me locate a small stick to remove the gum, spearmint flavored, and notice my delight in realizing this could be a new tool to track down the fugitive scrap. And ultimately, they may watch me end my failed pursuit, as I get distracted by an intoxicatingly insignificant event; an albino squirrel scurrying over a neatly stacked pile of cream city brick, twenty-two shattered lightbulbs sitting alongside a dumpster, fluorescent blue sidewalk salt spread into a dizzying array. And I will be struck with some moment of epiphany, sensing some new profound understanding of the world, and need to grab a camera. And I will think of Steven Foster, my former professor, mentor, and friend.

"The thing about epiphanies," I remember Steven saying, "is that they are not all good. They can take you down a deceptive path." However true that may be, after persisting through his labyrinthian online project, "The Departing Landscape", it becomes unmistakably clear the significance Steven Foster places in spontaneous moments of revelation within his own life and practice. It was within one such moment at the age of 10, a first introduction to drugstore snapshots by a family member, just weeks before he'd lose his father, that Steven understood his life's pursuit would be with the medium of photography. More recently, it was a moment within a museum of Turkish and Islamic art, where the pages of an illuminated Qur'an appeared to come to life, and set him feverishly on path toward a deeper understanding of sacred art. Much of Steven's proclivity towards such phenomena is well documented in his own writing, where he credits the concept of synchronicity, moments of meaningful coincidence when the internal psyche recognizes itself manifest in the external world, as influencing the underlying

thesis for decades of prolific work. It is the idea of unexpected moments of coming together, spiritual, psychic, and otherwise, that binds Steven Foster's full oeuvre, ranging from works about family, music, poetry, spirituality, and the self. It is that which allows Steven to bend and reshape his own imagery by repeatedly reworking his visuals time and time again. And it is within that spirit that the pages of this catalog have taken shape, providing for a non-chronological poetic reinterpretation of Steven's work that strives to unearth moments of meaningful connection, sympathetic imagery, and new relationships that were never intended to be, but point at something of greater depth that has persisted since Steven first picked up a camera.

I've never quite known how to put into language the symbiotic relationship I feel with Steven through his imagery. As I inch closer to some word or phrase that feels right, it quickly slips away and leaves me feeling foolish for even trying. So, instead I choose to be absorbed fully by the intoxicatingly significant breadth of his remarkable career and avoid having to pry out the sticky, stretchy, stubborn gum from the sole of my shoe.

Jon Horvath is an artist and educator that studied with Steven D. Foster at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee from 2004-2007.