

Stephen Shore in a Conversation with Lynne Tillman

Aperture Books
March 2003

LYNNE TILLMAN: Hardly any attention -- none, actually -- is paid to Warhol's influence on you. You spent time in the Factory from 1965 to 1967.

STEPHEN SHORE: It had an incredible effect on me. I was 17. I was very involved in photography and filmmaking. The photography world was very different then. What I had been exposed to was largely what I think of as a "camera club" mentality. There was a critique group in the city, but the pictures were terrible, like what was in "Popular Photography" magazine. There was no particular intentionality, no real aesthetic intelligence behind the photography. It was about making pleasing pictures. I'd already started becoming educated in a different way. A neighbor of mine who knew I was interested -- for my tenth or eleventh birthday -- gave me a copy of Walker Evans' "American Photographs." So there was a seed of something more aesthetically oriented. That seed was nourished by a family friend, Lee Lockwood, who edited a small magazine, "Contemporary Photographer," which was sort of like "Aperture" but had different goals. It was the first time I saw the work of Lee Friedlander. It published Duane Michaels, probably for the first time.

Then I came to Warhol. My approach was sort of journalistic -- taking pictures of what's happening, events. They weren't attempting to be pretty pictures, so it was different from some of the influences I'd had, though still kind of illustrative. With Warhol, I see a couple of things. Every day I watch an artist working. I see his decisionmaking process. Andy was very vocal and open about it. He would often ask people, "What do you think of this color?" or "Should the cow head be this large or a little smaller?" I think he did this, because he liked having the energy of people swirling around him. It helped him work.

LYNNE TILLMAN: You saw that everything was a decision.

STEPHEN SHORE: I started becoming aware of the decisions an artist makes. That's the most important thing. The second is: Warhol worked in a serial vein, and I began to think about images, about serial projects. If I can jump ahead a year or two to the late '60s, a book was published written by John Coplans, "Serial Imagery." It also was very influential. I started thinking about serial and sequential imagery. The first body of work I produced after I was at the Factory, which has not been reproduced, was in my show at the Met. It was either sequential or serial work, black-and-white. Most was conceptually derived, conceptually based.

LYNNE TILLMAN: Would you say "American Surfaces" is a serial work?

STEPHEN SHORE: It was a different project. I had moved to a different phase in my work. Actually, I had found having the show at the Met a confusing event. In some ways I was too young. I was 23. This is what everyone hopes for, then it happens, and you think, "Oh my God, now what am I going to do?"

LYNNE TILLMAN: You were fortunate in a way that it happened then, because your parents could see it -- you'd photographed them, they were in it. They died fairly young.

STEPHEN SHORE: So, yes, I was fortunate. An equally significant thing I derived from Warhol was a delight in our culture, a kind of ambiguous delight. He was fascinated by it.

LYNNE TILLMAN: The fascination is in "American Surfaces."
It's more Warhol than Walker Evans, with whom you're often compared. I'm struck by its casualness, the rough, naked intimacy of the interior shots -- the dirty bedsheet, the baby who doesn't look happy. It's closeup, sometimes tawdry, even abject, though it's not about a financial poverty. When you think of Walker Evans, you think about poverty. Yours depicts another kind of poverty. Where did you first show it?

STEPHEN SHORE: At the Light Gallery in 1972, in the small, back room, not part of their regular changing exhibition, so they left it up for three months. It covered the walls, a grid, probably three pictures deep, three pictures high, over three walls of the room.

LYNNE TILLMAN: Nobody would have exhibited photographs like that then.

STEPHEN SHORE: They were Kodak prints, before the one-hour photo machine, very glossy paper, about 3" x 5-1/2". I did that consciously, they were supposed to look like snapshots. I was interested in a visual naturalness. I don't think I thought of the word then, but I would now call it transparency. They were meant to seem very offhand -- and casual.

LYNNE TILLMAN: Photographers weren't showing Kodak.

STEPHEN SHORE: No, no one would do that. It got terrible reviews, I think, because of that. Also, because while the hanging may have been innovative, I don't think it was successful -- there were too many images of people to look at. Now, I think there was a barrier, in the hanging: you walk into this room, and it's essentially photo wallpaper. You have to make a very conscious leap to start looking at the individual pictures.

LYNNE TILLMAN: Years later, people in a gallery would know how to look. Think about Gerhard Richter's show at DIA, snapshots, images covering the walls. Back then you made an ordinary display, which was also Warholian. About the importance, the fascination and the beauty of ordinariness. Not the pristine 8" x 10" print. Warhol's emphasis was on the multiplicity of images around us.

STEPHEN SHORE: Another thing on my mind at that time was the use of photographs to do exactly that: show the multiplicity of images that surround us. Later in the same year as my Met show, 1971, I did a show at the 98 Greene Street Loft, a space Holly Solomon owned before she started her gallery, available to artists to do what they wanted. I put on a show of found imagery. I was and still am interested in all the different ways that photographs are used. It was called "All The Meat You Can Eat." I had a collection of police photographs from the D.A. of Amarillo, Texas, confiscated images, like pornography. I showed auto-erotic Polaroids, postcards, posters published by the U.S. Government Printing Office -- jets in formation flying over national monuments. Also a series of poster-size portraits from the Russian Government Printing Office of the Politburo, all heavily retouched.

LYNNE TILLMAN: This preceded the Light show -- and was still in your youthful Warholian period.

STEPHEN SHORE: Yes, and it was before "American Surfaces." I also did, in '71, a series of postcards. I had 6,500 sets of ten cards printed up....

LYNNE TILLMAN: They were generic tourist postcards.

STEPHEN SHORE: Yes, of Amarillo, Texas. The back of the card doesn't ever say "Amarillo," though. It says: "Polk Street" or "Doug's Barbecue." When I made the trip in 1973, and I'm keeping the journal, which is also represented in this book, I had the idea to distribute the postcards: I stopped in each town and went to postcard racks and stuffed them with cards. So, part of the journal is a record of how many cards I leave places. It was called "Postcard Distribution." There are 30 cards in Delphos, Ohio.

LYNNE TILLMAN: Do you know why you wanted to make and distribute them?

STEPHEN SHORE: It was fun, especially, a year or two later, to stop at the same gas station and find some cards there. It also shows my interest in the vernacular uses of photography. I had started "American Surfaces" as snapshots. But I can also see a lot of different formal things happening in those pictures, which are not simply casual, like the picture [AS, p.25] of an intersection.

LYNNE TILLMAN: An image that could be in "Uncommon Places."

STEPHEN SHORE: Exactly. Then there's a picture of a picture on a wall [AS, p.24], straightforward and exactly centered, carefully framed.

LYNNE TILLMAN: A kind of cultural image, concerned with the kind of art that's hung on that kind of wallpaper.

STEPHEN SHORE: Right. There's also a picture of a television set, but the set is a little off-center [AS, p. 24]. It also is a cultural image.

LYNNE TILLMAN: You photographed a number of TVs. There are also many interiors, which you don't do much of later. But I wanted to ask you, first, about why you switched to color.

STEPHEN SHORE: In 1970, I showed my work to someone I didn't really know; his first reaction was, "They're not in color!" By 1971, I started working in color.

LYNNE TILLMAN: That makes sense, given your interest in the vernacular, to move away from the dominant mode of art photography.

STEPHEN SHORE: It was just one of these little events that set off a train of thought: Why was he expecting color? Why was I not working in color? Why was there this tradition of black-and-white when there was, in fact, color out there? One thing I've thought about is that in another age, an aspiring artist would be an apprentice; I had no one to apprentice myself to, except in a certain way, I could apprentice myself to a tradition, and, as questions arose, I could look back and see the records other artists had left of how they dealt with those questions. I don't think about what I've broken away from, although I look back on the past 10 or 15 years and see that what's tended to happen is that I do what is pleasurable to do, or what is challenging to do. There's pleasure in the challenge. I'm not particularly thinking about the style that the picture is, or the audience, or the tradition. So in a certain way, say, my work of the past decade or so may look like it falls into many different styles. Does that make sense?

LYNNE TILLMAN: I would still return to Warhol, to how he influenced your moving away from certain ideas of photography; then I think you've come up with your own way of doing it that is sui generis. I'm curious: did anyone ever again say something which

caused a great shift in your work?

STEPHEN SHORE: Yes. Close to that time, 1972, I showed "American Surfaces" to John Szarkowski at MOMA. Whenever I had a new group of pictures, I'd show it to him. This time, he asked how accurate the viewfinder was on my camera. In a way, that simple question led to my formalism. As I understood it, he was asking me, "Are you really paying attention to framing?" I thought I was. But I look at those pictures now, and I've edited the ones that I think are completely coherent visually. His question led me to pay attention to framing and structure in a different way, which then led to a series of explorations. I found it was a process that went on for years, answering and solving visual problems, and in doing that, new questions and new problems arose. This process propelled my work for almost all of the period this book covers.

LYNNE TILLMAN: The frame has become one of your photographs' identifying voices. It's the frame -- not just the image or the subject matter, although it's germane and has a voice too.

STEPHEN SHORE: At this period, I was figuring out how a photograph works visually, how a visual structure is in the picture. But I am still attracted to the naturalness of "American Surfaces."

LYNNE TILLMAN: Or its casualness?

STEPHEN SHORE: Yes. I'm interested in the process of how to be consciously casual. As an analogy, there's the training of an actor, learning to walk. We learn to walk by the time we are 12 and 13 months old. Years later, you're walking through a room when you know people are looking at you, you become self-conscious -- you forget how to walk. What it is is that you haven't consciously learned how to walk. It's now an automatic activity. As an adult, you didn't consciously learn how to walk.

LYNNE TILLMAN: That's why actors study Alexander technique, to use their bodies effectively.

STEPHEN SHORE: Do it consciously, naturally. As an actor, the actions, even though they may be natural, have a presence, because they're filled with conscious intention.

LYNNE TILLMAN: When you're taking a photograph, does the frame become that conscious intention?

STEPHEN SHORE: It's not just the frame. It's all the relationships inside the frame. This is not the only way to take pictures. I don't mean this as a rule, I don't always follow this. I sometimes take pictures that are intentionally playful or intentionally extremely formal. But I find it interesting, as a goal, to be able to take pictures that are consciously casual.

LYNNE TILLMAN: As an example, there's the image on the original cover of the "American Surfaces." A landscape in the background, the Painted Desert, and in the foreground, a highway guardrail. It's paradigmatic Shore.

STEPHEN SHORE: It was taken two-thirds of the way through the project. "American Surfaces" was done within a year; this was done in the late summer.

LYNNE TILLMAN: You can sense the conscious effort to make a relationship between natural scenery and artifice. It has a very different charge or affect from many of your photographs then. It leads into the work in "Uncommon Places."

STEPHEN SHORE: I hadn't thought of it that way before. But as you're saying it, I think: first, there were a number of different trips in the book that's collected as "Uncommon Places." The first trip, in 1973 -- it's the year after I'm doing this -- there were a number of pictures in which there are natural phenomena in a man-made setting. The Horseshoe Bend Motel, with a rainbow over the "Horseshoe Bend" sign. There's one of a geyser basin in Yellowstone National Park, but it's the parking lot with the geyser basin behind it.

LYNNE TILLMAN: The photograph of a field with a shockingly blue sky and incredible cumulus clouds -- dead center is a billboard of a mountain cap with a lake in front, an image of a landscape juxtaposed to a "real" landscape, all of it image. How did that come about?

STEPHEN SHORE: I was heading south on a highway, toward Mt. Shasta, and looked in my rearview mirror. There was this billboard -- and the sky. The sky is more amazing than the painted sky.

LYNNE TILLMAN: As in the "American Surfaces" cover image, there's a playful relationship, though more uncanny, because the image within the picture is nature against nature. The image in "American Surfaces" shifts from casual-casual, to much more consciously casual, to even less casual and more formal.

STEPHEN SHORE: As a photographer, I can deal with lots of different things, even in one day. Even in one photograph, I can think of formal things, cultural things, I can take 20 different pictures in a day (more depending on what kind of camera I use), can deal with many different issues as they arise. There can be some continuity; there can be some things coming from left field.

LYNNE TILLMAN: Some people might think your work is entirely formal. Yet you have a tremendous interest in the multiplicity of things. There's a tension: To be a formalist, you must exclude a lot to find the image which fits your idea of what makes a picture. Another side of you wants inclusion.

STEPHEN SHORE: When you were saying that, I was thinking of maybe my favorite formalist, Walker Evans, who spoke about his work in the '30s as being in documentary style. In a certain way, that makes him the first postmodernist photographer. His work is very consciously structured. He's making his choices that make reference to a vernacular style of imagery and adopt the cultural resonances that that style calls up. The document.

LYNNE TILLMAN: In "American Surfaces," you photographed meals, food, often.

STEPHEN SHORE: It was a visual journal of a trip across country. When I started the trip, I had many ideas about what I was going to do. I didn't want to do Decisive Moments. Cartier-Bresson had used the term for a particular kind of visual coming together, but I was interested more in the ordinary, of things not happening in your life. I wanted to be visually aware as I went through the day. I started photographing everyone I met, every meal, every toilet, every bed I slept in, the streets I walked on, the towns I visited. Then when the trip was over, I just continued it.

LYNNE TILLMAN: It's similar to a writer's first novel being a roman a clef. But autobiographical visual images are different from what happens with words. What you're looking at is outside yourself; your autobiography necessarily includes what you see as pictures: others, objects, houses, meals.

STEPHEN SHORE: Maybe related to it is that the following year, when I did the first pictures for "Uncommon Places," in 1973, I actually kept a journal. None of it is introspective at all, though there's some writing. It's photographic, too. I'm choosing certain facts. How many miles I drove. Postcards I collected.

LYNNE TILLMAN: Did you feel at the time that it was important for you to remember everything?

STEPHEN SHORE: It was more a fascination with how certain kinds of facts and materials from the external can describe a day or an activity. The journal had its root in "American Surfaces," when I was recording my life.

LYNNE TILLMAN: That kind of journal is similar to displaying the contents of a refrigerator. The question occurs: who would have this refrigerator? The journal's not a psychological portrait. Not how you're feeling, but how activity defines character, with an attitude or approach to character and place. Not psychological ideas about interiority, but a commentary about your place in the world. Your portraits aren't about individual psychology. They seem more about how people pose for the camera, how they live or fit inside their environments.

STEPHEN SHORE: Yes. But they also have to do with what they look like. And what the backgrounds are, what kind of room they're in.

LYNNE TILLMAN: In "Uncommon Places," when I look at the photograph of your wife, Ginger, against an orange wall, I think about her hair, skin, the tones of orange and red. She's looking away. You could be presenting a young woman or a meal. The photograph of your friend, Michael Marsh, on the couch, with the naked woman lying on him: you represent a relationship -- two bodies in an embrace -- but we don't see the woman's face, her expression. It's about the embrace. The man is looking impassively at the camera. We see the couch, the rug....

STEPHEN SHORE: The TV stand.

LYNNE TILLMAN: The newspaper is on the floor. It's a complex image, a couple in a context. Is it an anti-romantic version of the couple? He's holding her, without tension or passion. There's a reflection on his eyeglasses. You make us more aware of its being a picture. It also feels like an unguarded, unsentimental moment. She may be naked, but she's not exposed; still, it's a naked look at a relationship.

STEPHEN SHORE: Yes. It's this funny or odd play between being responsive to what one encounters, but having a certain mental framework that digests it.

LYNNE TILLMAN: That reminds me of your seminal photograph: Merced River, also in "Uncommon Places." Mountains, fir trees, the edge of a river, people.

STEPHEN SHORE: It's a beach going into the river, in Yosemite National Park. In fact, the mountains in the background are the ones that Ansel Adams photographed.

LYNNE TILLMAN: Today many artists place people in scenes, landscapes. You didn't pose anyone.

STEPHEN SHORE: No. The boy standing is the only person in the river. This was shot with an 8"-by-10" camera, so it's highly detailed. The woman is taking a picture of him.

LYNNE TILLMAN: Behind her is a woman with a baby, with a child.

STEPHEN SHORE: Her stroller is down by the water. Then there is a woman putting clothes on a child sitting on these beautiful rocks. But there's also another couple back here, so what happens is that this forms a triangle.

LYNNE TILLMAN: It's formally brilliant: the triangle, figures suspended, the landscape. Again, people within an environment.

STEPHEN SHORE: They're doing ordinary things, and, like me, she's taking a picture of him in Merced River in Yosemite National Park. A setting that's been photographed from Muybridge and Carleton Watkins in the 19th century to Ansel Adams.

LYNNE TILLMAN: Is that why you went there?

STEPHEN SHORE: Yes.

LYNNE TILLMAN: What you added was figures.

STEPHEN SHORE: In the 19th century, there were often landscapes with figures put in for scale.

LYNNE TILLMAN: It feels they might be there forever, suspended. When you photograph people on the street, in "Uncommon Places," they're stopped at a traffic light. If they're walking, they appear very still. Obviously, they're forever in the photograph. For me, this effect calls up a relationship to time, death, not moving on, being stuck in place. What's social or cultural is the character in a setting, inside/outside, a human-made environment, the beings who made the environment, and all is still.

STEPHEN SHORE: A couple of years ago, I wrote a book about photography. One thing I wrote about was how time appears in a photograph. That in some pictures it appears frozen, say, in a Garry Winogrand, where you viscerally feel this moment being frozen out of the flow of time; there are other pictures where time seems to have stopped. That's what you're describing.

LYNNE TILLMAN: Do you think that you stop time?

STEPHEN SHORE: The word I would use is "still" more than "stop." There is a sense of timelessness about it. This is a moment, our conscious minds know the person has to move a second later, but there's nothing in the picture to indicate movement. In this book, I think there is one photograph of a person in movement; the rest are still.

LYNNE TILLMAN: Do you know why you photograph that way?

STEPHEN SHORE: Part of it is the camera. I'm using longer exposures, I can't photograph hard movement. In 1978, I spent a month photographing Yankees in spring training. I was interested in how far I could push the 8"-by-10" camera in terms of stopping action. Some of the pictures were still-lives that obviously were involved in that question, but also I photographed people at bat, pitchers pitching, batters in the practice cage. In "Uncommon Places," there's one of #9, Graig Nettles. I'm using long exposures, so I couldn't photograph him in the middle of a swing without its getting blurred. When batters are at the plate, they're often shifting their weight, moving their arms. Then, from the moment the ball leaves the pitcher's hand, there's a second when they come to a kind

of dynamic balance, poised potential energy, before they begin their swing.

LYNNE TILLMAN: That's where they're holding their attention. You're paying attention to that.

STEPHEN SHORE: Yes. I'm timing it and looking carefully at their movements; when that instant comes, I can take the picture. But also there's so much that's arbitrary in what a photographer does. "Arbitrary" is maybe the wrong word. Maybe it is artifice. I can stand in this spot and take a picture of a geyser basin in Yellowstone Park. If I find the exact margin to stand on, I can move back one foot, and it's a picture of a parking lot in front of a geyser basin in Yellowstone Park. That difference so changes the meaning of the picture, and it's simply in the photographer's control of: Do I want the picture to mean this or do I want the picture to be this? And I'm dealing with what's there. But if the decisions are that artificial, in a way, then I don't see where it's a big leap to drive my own car into the picture, if I feel that structurally it needs a car in the corner. The decision of whether it's going to appear to be a natural landscape and one of the wonders of Nature, or a picture dealing with how it's contained in a touristic society, that decision is an arbitrary one, in a way, to make.

LYNNE TILLMAN: In your photograph, with the Esso sign in it, there's a sense of endlessness, I guess that timeless quality. It just goes on and on, there's almost an emptiness. I think of Agnes Martin, Barnett Newman, who are getting rid of a lot, yet their work is full. In this photograph, you're using the center, pushing everything else out to the frame, and so the picture becomes a vortex. Because of that, it appears it could go on forever.

STEPHEN SHORE: This relates to something else I was interested in for all during this time, and for years afterward: I would see some pictures, which, though they were a flat piece of paper, had an almost tangible sense of deep space. I wanted to figure out how to achieve that. That sense of space, or this endlessness we're reaching out for. It's like the experience of driving through the Northern Great Plains, through the Plains of Canada, where a town is in the middle of an immense flat landscape, and, on the days I was there, a cloudless sky. I saw a village, Gull Lake, as buildings in the middle of this vastness. Space was on my mind the whole time.

LYNNE TILLMAN: Many Americans find contentment going on the road. It's part of American myth -- Turner's frontier thesis. There's something always to find that might be better. In terms of your work, there's something down the road, around the bend -- possibility, hope, surprise, the promise of movement, of change, or because of its stillness, the other side: entropy. One of my favorites images is very still: the drive-in theater with the word "sunset" on it. The word "sunset" dominates. It makes reference to Ruscha....

STEPHEN SHORE: His paintings, not his photographs.

LYNNE TILLMAN: The word "sunset" refers to an image that's so much a part of vernacular photography.

STEPHEN SHORE: Yes. Also I photographed it exactly flat-on. So knowing how clearly the camera is going to record the back of the screen, I know that this is going to look almost like writing on the surface of the photograph. So because it's flat, you don't see it in terms of the sky or the background particularly. In a certain way, it adheres to the surface.

LYNNE TILLMAN: So, as time went on, your photographs -- moving from "American Surfaces" through to "Uncommon Places" -- became less casual and more distanced. You stood farther from the scene. You used a large format camera. The scene you described was bigger, more social, less intimate than what we saw in "American Surfaces." You made more use of long and medium shots, you're not in close, the way you often were in "American Surfaces." Was that a motivation when you made that shift?

STEPHEN SHORE: No. There were a number of things involved in the shift. I look now at "American Surfaces" and see, as I said, some pictures that are similar to the more distanced shots in "Uncommon Places." After "American Surfaces," I wanted to make larger prints than snapshot-size. The film Kodacolor made in 1972 and 1973 was so crude that larger prints fell apart. They became much too grainy. After doing a couple of trips with a 4-by-5, I was dissatisfied with the quality of the enlargements. There was an immediacy to the smaller prints that I wasn't seeing in the larger prints, so I decided to go to a larger format camera, the 8-by-10, which allowed me to do some pictures of the kind in "American Surfaces" better than I could do them before. But then doing the more closeup detailed shots became cumbersome and awkward. I remember shooting pancakes that I had for breakfast, when I had to stand on top of the chair because the camera had to be so far from the pancakes to focus. It became a ridiculous production, not the same thing as simply looking down at what's in front of me and taking a picture. So there were some things that became more awkward with the large format. Other things were intensified by it.

Because of the 8x10's descriptive power, I didn't have to get in as close as I did with the 35-millimeter, that if there were some small detail I found interesting, I knew that in the print I could allow it to be small, yet it still would be completely readable. That allowed me to move back farther and take pictures, which were more packed with information, more layered, and I learned to rely on what the camera was able to record. That allows for lots of different points of interest to exist in the same picture, and not necessarily to direct the viewer's attention to an object. It's presenting this little world, this little bound world, in which viewers, following their own path, can move their attention from place to place within the image. They can read the image differently.

LYNNE TILLMAN: The photographs, in "Uncommon Places," seem always to describe an inherent architecture. People don't dominate the scene, but fit into it. Buildings and streets construct perfect angles. These are formal concerns, but they also define an attitude to life. I'm struck by photographs whose center is an open road, with objects on the sides, but in it a line breaks up the picture plane. What I mean by an "inherent architecture" is the way in which you picture life happening on these streets, to indicate the way things make shapes in relation to each other and to people. Human beings have created architecture; it somehow mirrors their desire for a kind of order. There's order in your photographs. There are many intersections. There's the main street in towns. There are traffic lights. There's a corner, right angles, places of intersection.

STEPHEN SHORE: This speaks to the analytical qualities of photography. First of all, forgetting a major question, what to photograph? let's say, I'm photographing this intersection, and I see it as almost a three-dimensional problem that I have to then resolve in some way. Where am I going to stand in this? Where am I going to cut it off? How much am I going to show? Am I going to wait for a person to stand in or for a car to stop?

I was also interested in the fact that as I walk down the street, really to pay attention to what I'm seeing, I see a constant change in relationships and space. It's seeing things in the background relating to things in the foreground. As I move, a telephone pole bears an ever-changing relationship to a building next to it or behind it, this mailbox changes its relationship to the telephone pole. These changes occur all the time as one simply takes a

walk and looks with conscious attention at what's there while one is one walking. I wanted somehow to record that experience in a still photograph. And I find architecture fascinating. Everyone, I'm sure, has cultural and societal perceptions that are more easily expressed in words than in images. Photographs show what things look like, and there are perceptions that I have that are not in the realm of what photography can deal with. But what architecture does is shows in a form accessible to photography certain cultural influences. It's done within certain parameters. There are physical and economic parameters. But there are also cultural and aesthetic parameters. There are parameters of expectation, and of meaning, of how people are supposed to respond to a building, of the tradition it comes from. It can make all of these forces visible in a way that's accessible to photography. In addition, it's one building next to another that was built at another time with another set of parameters, and it's on a street that I can see today, all of which has gone through exposure to time and the elements.

LYNNE TILLMAN: Moments before, you used the words "constant change." I could say what you're hoping to capture is the implication of movement that will come, that change will come. But you're working within a moment. It's almost an oxymoronic quest.

STEPHEN SHORE: There's another way that an 8x10 photograph bears a funny relationship to time. I have a camera and a tripod. I can spend several minutes looking at the scene in front of me, I can pay attention to small details, I can see relationships in space that may not reveal themselves immediately, and have all of this inform a picture, which is then taken in very quickly by the viewer. So there is a kind of compression of time in the picture. That to be there and to see everything the camera sees could take minutes; but it can all be grasped at once on this piece of paper. I want to get back to something I thought of before, which relates to why I took certain pictures and may actually relate to structural decisions, as well as choices of content. I've felt often like an explorer, and I'm interested in not just bringing my set of values and ideas to the rest of the country, but I'm also interested in seeing what's there. When I got into the car to make one of these trips, part of it was the pleasure I would find in driving for days on end, driving down a road. I saw many roads that stretched on to the horizon. I found that it put me in a particular state of mind, just seeing this landscape passing by the windshield, for hours and hours. I would sometimes get bored listening to radio and would amuse myself by reciting Shakespeare. One of the pieces in my personal repertory was from "Hamlet," when a group of actors come to Elsinore...

LYNNE TILLMAN: I think they perform "The Death of Gonzago." Hamlet calls it "The Mouse-trap."

STEPHEN SHORE: Hamlet gives them an acting lesson and ends by saying that "the purpose of playing was and is, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure." That last line stayed in my head. I wasn't sure that photography was as good as literature and drama at dealing with virtue and scorn. But the idea "to show the very age and body of the time his form and pressure," I felt that was something I could approach. So I see the formal interest on the part of an artist as not something that would be simply "formalism." The structure of an image imparts both a physical and emotional quality to the response to the image. It also is getting back to showing "the very age and body of the time" as "form and pressure." Some of the artist's perception of the meaning is communicated in the form. Formalism often sounds like a kind of visual nicety, but if I use it, that's not how I mean it.

LYNNE TILLMAN: Hamlet and you were probably around the same age, when you

were making those trips. I don't know what kind of problems you had at home.

STEPHEN SHORE: Nothing as dramatic as his. By then, both my parents were dead, but not by palace intrigue. Now I remember something that I'd forgotten for years: on one of the trips, I wore a jumpsuit for the entire trip.

LYNNE TILLMAN: I hope you didn't wear a pith helmet.

STEPHEN SHORE: On one of them, I may have had an Abercrombie & Fitch safari jacket, which a lot of photographers have, because there are lots of pockets and they're good for carrying all your gear. But I remember, now, thinking that I should dress the part of a person exploring. Actually, I'm remembering something else, too: I realize that my parents' being ill and their dying may have had something to do with my exploring, why I was driving around so much out there, because I was alone then.

LYNNE TILLMAN: To be or not to be.

STEPHEN SHORE: And, out there alone in America.