



# THE ART *of Seeing*

When imagining the traces in our environment, it is worth recognizing that our environment is filled with a lot of stuff, and we only see (rather, recognize) a fraction of it - when we are on our way to class, to work, etc. ‘Seeing’, then, and retraining your visual field to reimagine the environment, takes practice. We can consider this “the art of seeing”.

This is a practice that has been acknowledged by many, the most notable being author Lance Esplund’s work, *The art of looking: how to read modern and contemporary art*. Esplund makes the point that art viewers are, in reality, “art interactors”; that viewing is not simply an external or separate presence from what is being viewed.

With that in mind, how are we, as viewers of traces, interacting with them? Does their existence or story change by our visual acknowledgement of them? Esplund would say that indeed, it does, that while the trace may influence us and our thinking, we are also adding us to the story of the trace, and that we may go on to give it a life of its own (such as is done in this photographic collection).

“Seeing” and “looking” are two concepts particularly explored in artistic fields, including Esplund’s work, *The Art of Seeing: An Interpretation of the Aesthetic Experience* by Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, *The Art of Seeing: Photographs* from the Alfred Stieglitz Collection in the MET Museum, and *The Art of Seeing* by Zelanski & Fisher, to name a few.

However, we do not have to be artists or even art viewers to learn to see things that occur everywhere around us. Art and ecology retain a symbiotic relationship, and by understanding one we can understand the other. These ideas converge with art and the earth, ‘land art’, social ecologies, performative landscape, and site-based ceremony (Heuer, Zorach & Sterling Francine Clark Art Institute, 2018), acknowledging that this is not a new or unrecognized practice. With regards to Alfred Stieglitz Collection in the MET Museum, we can be reminded that practices such as photography help us to capture and reimagine the process of ‘seeing’, and how that is intrinsically linked to our surroundings.

It can be asked, then, “how do we practice “seeing” our environment?” The ways are limitless, and involve a unique and personal sense of visual and explorative creativity. Being outside and ‘investigating’ the surroundings, exploring places of contact such as door handles, or even staying in one place for an extended period of time are all ways to open up the door to the art of seeing; rather, your art in seeing. Interestingly enough, you may be fascinated by what you find.

## Works Cited

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