Metaphorical Landscapes

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Strong landscape and nature photographs go well beyond mere documentation and representation of place. A strong photograph needn't represent any realities or truths; it just needs to captivate its viewers and engage their senses and sensibilities. "Scenic" photographs are easy to look at and digest (and unfortunately often momentary), but photographs infused with deeper meaning can command a viewers attention for minutes, hours, and days.

Photography as metaphor (symbols, ideas) tends to be the province of "other" genres (contemporary photography; abstraction; etc.) but is rarely seen in landscape and nature photography. The places we explore and photograph are as rich with metaphorical possibilities as any other place, yet many landscape photographers work only in the literal and representational. Why?

I prefer photographing the unusual, the uncommon, and that which causes me to stop whatever I am doing. Take the attached photo, for instance; one from my *Desert Palm Oasis* series. It's just two wild palm tree skirts, but let your mind wander a little. Now what do you see?

Here's a few more examples of metaphor from my *Desert* collection:

The American Dream (http://www.michael-gordon.com/photo.php?id=35&gallery=desert)
Water Apparitions (http://www.michael-gordon.com/photo.php?id=36&gallery=desert)
The Bleeding Wall (http://www.michael-gordon.com/photo.php?id=37&gallery=desert)
Mojave Mothership (I did not actually have an alien encounter to get this photograph!)
(http://www.michael-gordon.com/photo.php?id=51&gallery=desert)

Eschew the representational and seek the personal. Make your photographs about you and the way that you see.

Michael E. Gordon is an award-winning fine art landscape photographer and respected digital print maker. Michael leads photographic workshops and tours and provides printing services and custom printer/paper profiles for photographers. He lives in Southern California with his wife Shauna and their menagerie of rescued animals.