

# Black & White

## Book Reviews

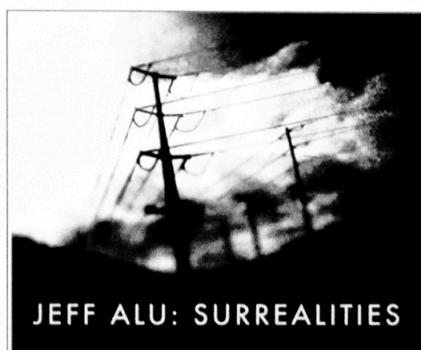
Dean Brierly

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## Exploring the Boundaries of Physical and Metaphysical Space

### JEFF ALU: SURREALITIES

*Zero + Publishing*  
96 pages, 61 photos  
Hardcover, \$40



When considering the photographs of Jeff Alu, it's appropriate to note that he is also an amateur astronomer who has discovered nearly two dozen asteroids and a pair of comets. He practices photography with a similarly explorative bent—as a way to discover new ways of seeing and new reasons to continue the search. For Alu, the journey itself is as important as the images that accrue from it.

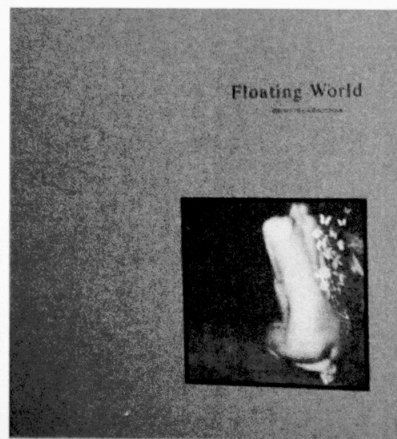
Alu's photographic sojourns have taken him to New York and Los Angeles, but he finds the greatest visual and spiritual fulfillment in southern California's deserts, where he seeks a forlorn poetry in parched landscapes, decaying structures, a dying lake. His approach is fluid and intuitive. It's very much about waiting for the moment, being fully within it, and ultimately letting it direct him as much he directs it. As his artist statement proclaims: "This wind, this heat, this music is taking me to a place where finally, I can stop

thinking. I can literally become one with whatever it is I'm supposed to become one with..."

The trick is to not only recognize those moments, but to also articulate their implications in concrete visual terms. To this end Alu applies selective focus and contrast pushed to extremes, transforming literal contours into abstract forms and shadows. He also plays with depth, space and scale in interesting ways, keeping the viewer off-balance and uncertain as to time, place and reality. The effect is akin to seeing something in the distance that oddly beckons, and yet, when approached, remains perplexing and somehow unknowable.

### FLOATING WORLD

*Photographs by Brigitte Carnochan*  
Hudson Hills Press  
108 pages, 44 photos  
Hardcover, \$55



The subtitle to Brigitte Carnochan's latest book is "Allusions to poems by Japanese women of the 7th–20th centuries." The literalness of the phrasing

belies the lyrical nature of the images between the covers.

The project was inspired by Carnochan's discovery of a book of haiku and tanka whose emotional imagery resonated so strongly with her that she determined to create their visual equivalents through photography. After careful consideration, she found metaphorical inspiration in various permutations of flowers, landscapes and the female form, elements that are as much spiritual as physical.

Fittingly, Carnochan doesn't allow her models to interact directly with the viewer. She either frames just their torsos, or turns them away from the camera. In the rare instances when their faces are visible, direct eye contact is avoided. By thus shrouding them with a greater sense of privacy and intimacy, Carnochan allows their vulnerability to more clearly emerge.

Much like the poems themselves, which tend toward the elliptical and enigmatic, Carnochan's delicate images speak in hushed, wistful tones evocative of yearning and fulfillment and the many spaces in-between those emotional poles. In addition to creating the photographs, Carnochan, who is also a poet, translated all the verse with precision and insight. Words and images attain perfect balance in this profound and affecting meditation on love lost and love longed for.