Yosemite National Park. The Salton Sea of the past, however, at times received more visitors in a year than the esteemed human population. In the 1960s, this popular tourist destination, where a balance existed between the wildlife and California, tells the story of a once prosperous, once booming Sea (2011), documenting the largest body of inland water in North America. Her project, Greetings From the Salton, is gone. Instead, dilapidated buildings, rusted automobiles, and deceased wildlife fill the frames. Similarly, an almost haunting feeling imbues her next project, Jackrabbit Homestead (2009), which records the remains of an area in the Morongo Basin Valley of California. In the 50s, this land was a part of the Small Tract Act of 1938—a land act designed to distribute federal lands deemed "useless," which thereby created the promise of acreage, of a home, of a future to many Homesteaders simply had to lease the land and build a small dwelling on the property within the first three years, and it could be theirs. However, once again, that which is depicted in Stringfellow's work is not simply documenting dilapidated structures in desert landscapes. Her web-based, multi-media projects aim not only to show, but to tell and preserve—to educate. To Kim Stringfellow, the Jackrabbit Homesteads are not simply a part of American history, but a part of the evolving narrative of America.

The desire to photograph isn't new. The urge to capture the varying American landscape has been present throughout the history of photography. From the monumental landscape that reveals changes over time as part of the larger narrative of America, to the everyday, from beauty to barrenness, from the dream to the reality, the American landscape has offered a subject matter that is ever changing while simultaneously remaining familiar. A visual record of the American Dream is constructed through Adams's images of the majestic Yosemite Valley, Brown's narration of the Great Plains, and Stringfellow's documentation of the Jackrabbit Homesteads. Together, these three artists harness that familiarity by documenting remote places that seem to encapsulate the successes and failures encouraged by the American Dream.

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3. Ibid., 11.
6. The viewer is capable of taking a virtual tour through the space, or an audio tour if physically on site, that explains the structures' purpose on the land. www.kimstringfellow.com

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## An Exhibition of Works from the Comer Collection

**Curator’s Gallery Talk:** Thursday, February 25, 2016
2:00 - 2:45 pm, Edith O'Donnell Building Gallery

**Honored Photographer:** Tuesday, March 8, 2016
Kim Stringfellow "Art, Environment and Place"
Reception: 6-7:30 p.m., Edith O’Donnell Building Gallery
Lecture: 7:30 p.m., Jonsson Performance Hall
Curated by Devin Gaudet, February 19 - March 11, 2016

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*American Landscape and The American Dream*

**Artists:**
Ansel Adams  
Morley Baer  
Peter Brown  
Paula Chambless  
Tammy Cromer-Campbell  
Mark Klett  
Richard Reynolds  
Luther Smith  
Kim Stringfellow

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*UT Dallas is an equal opportunity/affirmative action university.*
In the land of the free and the home of the brave, the opportunity to live a prosperous life is boundless. Just as you work hard, you can live well. Ever since the term’s rise in popularity during the early years of the Depression, and as first used by historian James Truslow Adams in his book, The Epic of America (1931), the idea that the “American Dream” has become synonymous for the values that make up the heart of our nation.

And like the American Dream, the American landscape has been translated in as many varied ways throughout the history of photography: from the traditional landscape, namely the idealized vision of nature’s beauty as depicted by Ansel Adams; the historical landscape, records of the evolution of the land and culture documented by Kim Stringfellow; to the vernacular landscape, architecture and language engaged with the everyday rather than the monumental as portrayed by Peter Brown. These disparate approaches and their sometimes contrasting visual results share correlations in terms of concept, in their reflection on the ethos of America, and the vast interpretations of the American Dream.

Idealism encompassed by the American Dream began with the Declaration of Independence, stating that “all men are created equal” and have the unalienable rights of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” Founded on these principles, America was deemed a country of wilderness and freedom with endless land and limitless opportunity — and this before the phrase “American Dream” ever existed. The desire to explore, establish community, and attain prosperity drove American settlers across the Mississippi during westward expansion, as The Frontier and the belief that anyone could make something of the land—of themselves—evolved into the first iteration of the American Dream, an idea that has been understood over time not only as achieving prosperity, but also as opportunity and equality.

Nothing quite represents the wilderness of the American landscape as well as our expansive system of national and state parks and recreation areas. Such is seen in the breathtaking view captured by Ansel Adams in Cathedral Spires and Rocks, Yosemite, 1949/91. Sunrays squeeze towering pines occupying the far right edge of the frame as the diffused light breaks through the clouds to quietly illuminate the flora that surrounds a pond below the majestic cliffs. The morning light creates soft shadows off the trees and reflections in the pond, details likely enhanced during printing in the darkroom. Similarly, the limited value range of the cathedral spires in the upper left portion of the frame in contrast with the deep black tone of the pine to the right and the luminous beauty of nature, the American Dream takes on a different meaning than the one extracted from Adams’s work. In Brown’s landscape, the Dream can be viewed as alive and flourishing through the success of small town businesses and farms and can be felt in the immense expanse of the Great American Plains; simultaneously and in sharp contrast, one could see a dream unfulfilled, with only an empty silence remaining.

While Adams reveals majestic mountains and Brown portrays the wide-open grasslands of the plains, Kim Stringfellow documents yet another expansive American landscape and the architectural forms that define small town America. The color palette of reds, whites, and blues, immediately, even if subconsciously, symbolizes American patriotism. The landscape is uninhabited, is devoid of human presence. The viewer envisions the owner of this shop, a self-made individual, who still works long days behind the counter. Or, on the contrary, some might see only what is left of a family business—what remains of a broken dream. Whether you work hard, you can live well. Ever since the term’s rise in popularity during the early years of the Depression, and as first used by historian James Truslow Adams in his book, The Epic of America (1931), the idea that the “American Dream” has become synonymous for the values that make up the heart of our nation.