

munity in the discussion process that created exhibits. Archibald expanded minority employment from one employee to many. In addition, he looked at MHS's business practices and found almost total reliance on traditional business sources—that is, few minority- or women-run businesses were included or even solicited for bids. The MHS found ways to address these practices by breaking down projects into smaller components and by inviting bids by minority-owned businesses throughout the city. In doing so, Archibald and the MHS made contacts with many of those who were underrepresented in the life of the MHS. Contracts for film and paper led to trust and to MHS's emergence as a leader in St. Louis for the number of minority contracts it makes. Those business contacts led to more diverse involvement in the activities of the MHS.

This chapter is a very important guide for anyone in a historical agency who wants to address community problems. It is a program that takes certain and sure leadership and a commitment that history be a part of the answer, not a mirror of the problems of the past. It is a bold chapter and one not to be missed.

Enjoy a *Place to Remember* for an excursion with Robert Archibald. But read chapters 7 and 8 with a marker in hand, for they will challenge and inspire and then guide all of us to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

*Places of Grace: The Natural Landscapes of the American Midwest*, photographs by Gary Irving, essay by Michael Strutin. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999. 110 pages. \$49.95 cloth.

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*Places of Grace* is a beautiful book. Neatly balanced between a well-written text that explores the varieties of midwestern landscapes and an impressive array of stunning color photographs, *Places of Grace* presents the terrain of the central United States with an unusual range and sensitivity.

Noting that the Midwest is "a place hidden in plain view," a place often misunderstood as monotonous, Strutin and Irving proceed to dispute this myopic idea by revealing its rich offerings. The first half of the book is dominated by Strutin's essay, sprinkled with appropriate photographs by Irving; the second half is entirely pictorial, resplendent with his large and lustrous images, which capture the land's variety and beauty in ways that will impress even the most well-traveled midwesterners.

The text is divided into thoughtful and informed discussions of the region's primary landscape types: forest, water and wetlands, and prairies. Strutin explores the different ecosystems each of these comprises. She distinguishes, for example, between the far northern boreal forests, the North Woods, and southern deciduous woodlands, describing their glories—both large and small—and including their inhabitants, from pileated woodpeckers to wolves and bears. But not all is solely descriptive. Strutin interweaves the region's historical and geological roots with its present-day characteristics. She notes, for instance, that as large as the Great Lakes are now, they were even larger at the end of the last Ice Age, when melting glaciers swelled their volume tremendously. She is perhaps at her best when explaining the contradictions of prairies, the least well-preserved ecosystem in the U.S. today, in part because its beguiling complexity and simplicity are only now beginning to be understood. Texts such as this can only help to alleviate that situation and prompt awareness of the region and support for preservation efforts.

For all of the text's evocativeness, however, Gary Irving's photographs are the crowning glory of this book. Not unlike the spectacular scenes made famous by Eliot Porter, they are visual symphonies of color and natural phenomena, each offering a metaphorical journey into another world. Often literally glowing with atmosphere, they present everything from quiet bogs and early spring woodlands to sweeping vistas from bluffs and prairie rises. Quiet misty rivers flow through shimmering green foliage, stormy waves crash on the shores of Lake Michigan, and clouds billow over miles of windswept grasses. The photographs take us on a tour of the most sublime scenes of the central United States—a tour that all but the most cynical will find revelatory.

Although I love the wide-ranging focus of this book, a minor complaint is its definition of "midwestern." For diversity's sake, it is unusually broad, encompassing—in addition to the usual states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Missouri, and Iowa—Kansas and Nebraska, which are usually considered western or at least part of the Great Plains. If Kansas and Nebraska are included, why not the Dakotas or even Oklahoma? This is a minor quibble, one posed more for the academic value of considering regional definitions than anything, but it does prompt musings on the diversity of terrain within the central United States, one of the points of the book.

Nevertheless, this book is richer for its wide-ranging scope and worth recommending. It is not a scholarly study, but a pleasurable trip and a visual feast. With more efforts such as this, the notion of the

Midwest as a region of limited geographical offerings will eventually be dispelled, and more people—especially those who live here and fail to appreciate their surroundings—will, I hope, find a sense of place, and a place of grace, in their own homeland.

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