

Activity and Activism: Lewis and Nathan Clark and the Evolution of Sierra Club Photography, 1924-1961.

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Abstract

Using the photography of Sierra Club members Lewis and Nathan Clark, this thesis explores the relationship between image and landscape in the rise of outdoor recreation in early and mid twentieth century America. Focusing on the role of photography in the construction, articulation, and representation of landscape, I trace two concurrent shifts in Sierra Club history. First, I examine how the Sierra Club members, who originally used images to write and record their own history, began to deploy those images as part of public awareness campaigns. Second, I analyze how the Sierra Club shifted from a social club using landscape as a hub for recreational activity to a political club using notions of landscape to campaign for environmental causes. By analyzing how the Sierra Club published and disseminated a set of cultural values through the medium of photography and by connecting these values to the construction of a physical landscape, this thesis examines the co-evolution of image, activity, and place as a form of social practice shared within a community and broadcast outward. By explicitly avoiding the limiting and passive paradigm of consumption and advertising that has become prevalent in cultural landscape studies of this type through a focus on landscapes as finished products or static images, I offer new methodological considerations as a means to access amateur photography and tourist imagery.

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Activity and Activism: Lewis and Nathan Clark and the Evolution of Sierra Club Photography, 1924-1961, the red soil causes empirical crisis of the genre.