

Not about Travel: Taiwan Landscape in Photographic Images

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Abstract

Photography, a medium named for light writing, is better suited to directly recording nature than painting. At the time of photography's invention, painters were pursuing a new type of realism grounded, in the West, in a new scientific awareness of nature, whereas "the other" figures of the pioneers and colonizers appeared in the landscape photography. The early travelers looking for "picturesque" based on specific presumptions or texts, made their ideal scenery. The landscape is not necessarily related to its natural appearance, nor consistent with reality. In John Thomson's landscape photography, Taiwan landscape is only the background of time and space. Often, what he wanted to explore and record is the humanistic features of that era. After the turn of 20th century, the definition and expression of "scenery / landscape" gradually came to be related to how the photographer think about the world. In addition to trying to clarify the context of Taiwan landscape, this paper also takes the history of photography as an axis, and discusses the photographers who have photographed Taiwan's landscape from the 19th century to the present: St. Julian Hugh Edwards, John Thomson, Lang Jingshan, Ko Si-Chi, Wong Ting-hua, Ben-kuan YU, YAO Jui-Chung, Po-I Chen, Yang Shun-Fa, Lee Hsu-Pin, LuLu Shur-tzy Hou, Huang Wen-yung, Shen Chao-Liang , etc. It is about exploring how they reconstructed Taiwan landscape with their visual representation, and how they embodied the Arcadia in their hearts.