



## Touring *Art of the Southwest*

Alex Harris  
(b. 1949)  
American

*Black Mesa Looking East from  
Fred Cata's 1957 Chevrolet Belair*  
July 1987  
Chromogenic Print

**This object sheet is meant to provide you with information about the specific artwork and to help in developing your tour of the exhibition. This information is focused on how the artwork relates to the specific themes of the exhibition. These activities are intended to help you facilitate conversation with visitors as you explore the exhibition.**

Look: Have the group spend time looking at the artwork gallery. Then gather the audience in front of the artwork to explore using conversation and questions.

### DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY

Inform: In the late 1970s – 80s, Harris photographed extensively in the villages of northern New Mexico. Many of his photographs depict local landscapes from the perspective of the elegantly detailed interiors of cars. Harris gave himself greater leeway to stage his car photography as the cars he wanted to photograph were often parked in garages or facing less interesting scenes. Once he identified a car to photograph he would choose the time of day and the location to photograph.

Inform: Harris frames this series (*Red White Blue and God Bless You: A Portrait of Northern New Mexico*) not only as a portrait of a person, but as a portrait of a region.

Do: Look closely at the photograph. What details do you notice through the windshield?

Ask: If you were to make a portrait of your hometown, what would you frame in the windshield? What kind of car (or vehicle in general) would you choose to frame your scene?

### SENSE OF PLACE

Inform: Harris has framed a quintessential/canonical southwestern landscape: Black Mesa, a region known for its arid grasslands, rock formations, the Native American Plains Tribes, and even outlaws on the lam. These associations could call to mind stereotypical conceptions of the "Wild West," but Harris' choices in this photograph ask us to consider it differently. For example, by framing the landmark through the windshield of a specific person's car, Harris layers that individual's personal sense of identity and self-expression (expressed through his car) with the landscape. He ties cultural experience and identity to the very land that defines the Southwest.

Inform: Harris was originally from the southern United States. He captured this series of photographs (*Red White Blue and God Bless You: A Portrait of Northern New Mexico*) after living in the area for nearly two decades.

Ask: How would your portrait of a region change based on whether you were photographing your hometown or an adopted region?

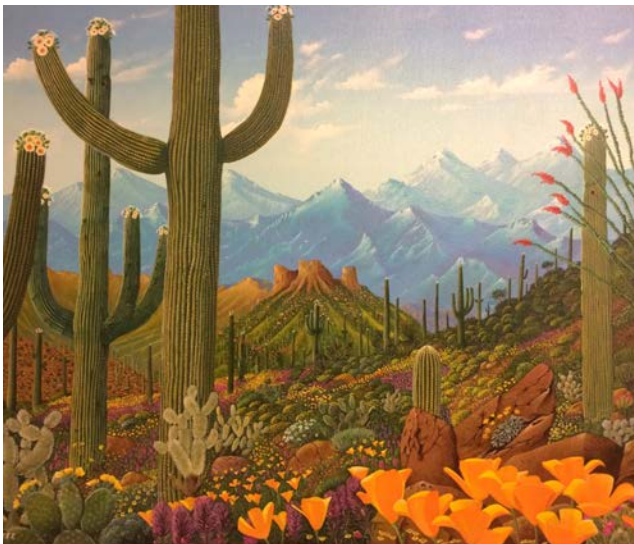
**Related artworks in the exhibition:**



Laura Gilpin  
(1891-1979)  
American

*Summer Hogan, The Cove Area*  
Negative: 1934  
Print: 1950  
Silver Print

Another example of **Documentary Photography**



Andrew Velez  
(born 1964)  
American

*Emergence*  
2010  
Acrylic on Canvas

Another example of a southwestern landscape conveying a **Sense of Place**

**About the Artist:**

See attachment. (from <http://alex-harris.com/about/bio>)

**Further Reading:**

Harris, Alex. *Red White Blue and God Bless You: A Portrait of Northern New Mexico*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992.

Alex Harris' website: <http://alex-harris.com/photography/red-white-blue-and-god-bless-you/1>