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A Time Exposure

Robert A. Pike

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HARBOR WITH WIND

A Time Exposure

R. A. PIKE

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TREES AND MIST



Robert A. Pike was educated at Pratt Institute and is currently an associate professor in the School of Art, Syracuse University. Most of his career has been spent working as a mass communication art director, photographer, and filmmaker. His work has appeared in numerous magazines, in this country and abroad, and is represented in several books and museum collections.

All photographs © R. A. Pike, 1986.

THE SERIES OF PHOTOGRAPHS PRINTED HERE have some unique qualities, specifically in terms of my own orientation to photography, but also in relationship to photographic thinking in general.

Most photo assignments, whether coming from a client or self-initiated, tend to be closed-ended. That is, you set out to do a thing, you go through the process of doing it, you stop and move on to something else.

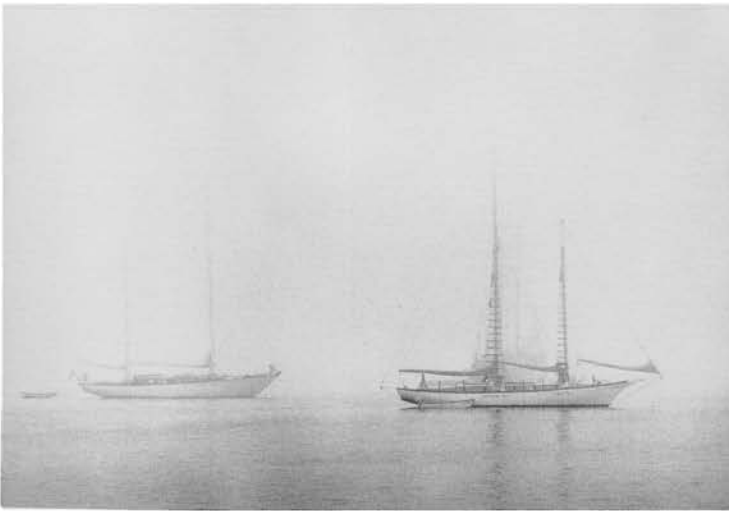
The photos accompanying this article are part of an open-ended series. The images will continue to be made as long as I am able to make them.

These photos were originally intended to be a book, together with a series of short essays, about Nantucket Island. The camera pictures and word pictures combined were to give a sense of those qualities that make that place special, to me and to others.

Although the book is still a short-term focus for this work, a long-term aspect of the project began to impose itself on me as I worked on the prints after the second shooting, which was separated from the first by a year. A change had taken place owing to the extended time span of the work. The second year's work differed from the first's, not because the subject had changed appreciably, but because my perceptions of it had evolved. The process of printing and cropping and editing the photos had altered my sense of the direction and intent of the images. The writing and research had altered the style and content of the essays. The project began to metamorphose, as if

by its own volition. Another year's hiatus, followed by a third shooting session, had the same evolutionary effect.

This is not to say that these pictures should be viewed as a work in progress. They are complete and finished, individually and as a group, to the extent that I am able to complete and finish them. In two years time, however, some or all of them may no longer be relevant to my Nantucket work.



HARBOR IN MIST #1



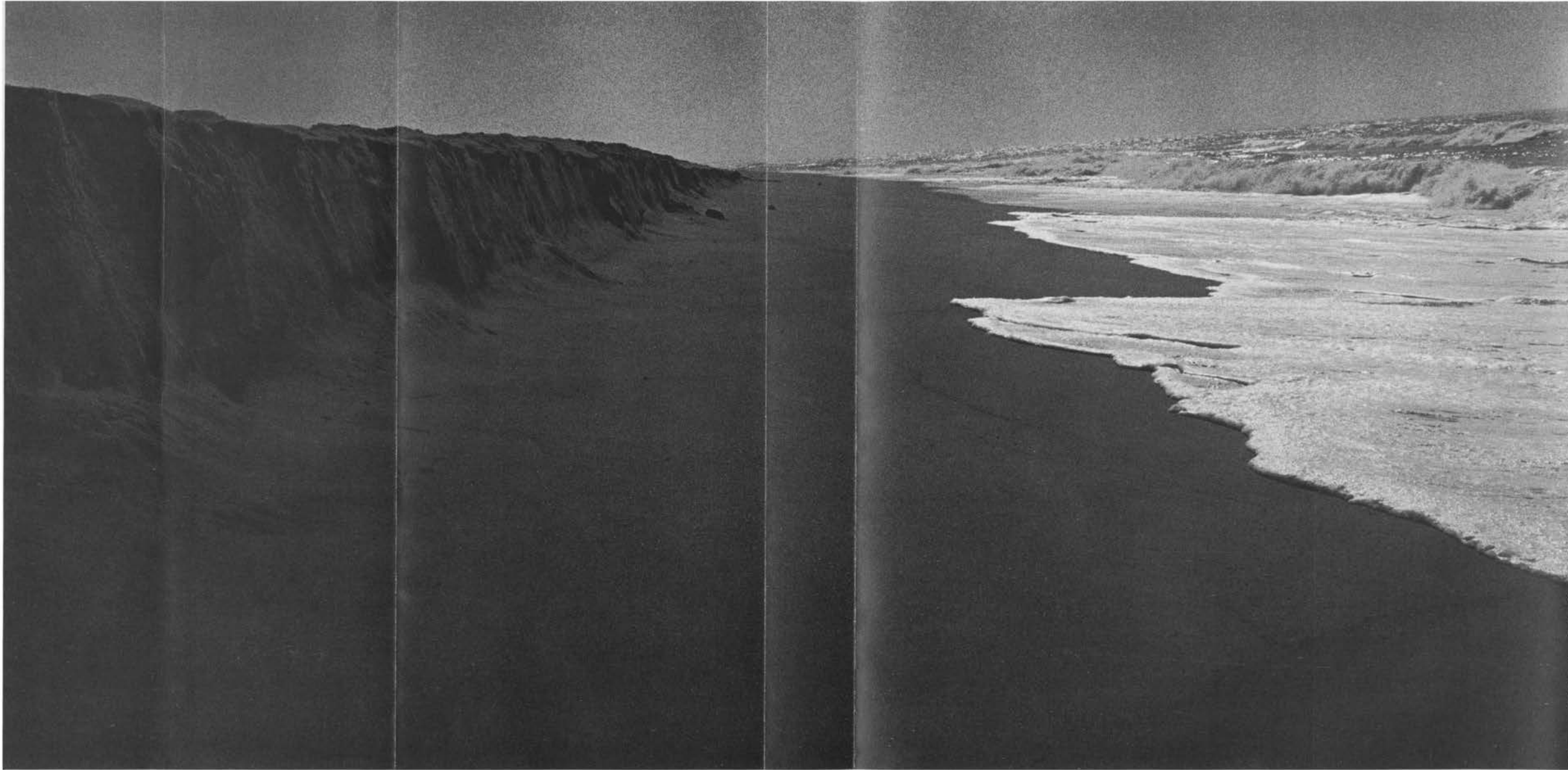
SILVER BUSH #1



SILVER BUSH #3



SILVER BUSH #4



LAND, SEA, SKY #1 AND #2

The gradual lengthening of the scope and outlook of this project has begun to influence the rest of my work, adding a sense of freedom that was quite unanticipated. The cultural and aesthetic boundaries imposed, or implied, by working in an “instant” art form have begun to peel away. The photos and writings build toward a conclusion that might never be reached, although the results of the process can certainly be examined along the way.

This attitude toward photography is one that has been ignored or discounted by almost all photographers. One occasionally finds hints

of it in a large-scale retrospective. Some photographers, Gene Smith comes to mind, periodically return to their older work and reinterpret the prints based on their thinking of the moment.

Photos taken by anthropologists are sometimes followed up over periods of time because of the demands of scientific methodology.

None of these instances, of course, really deals with the concept of the extended (lifelong) study of a limited range of subject matter. Unfortunately, one of the few prototypes for this concept and process is also one of the least intelligent or aesthetically conceived uses of

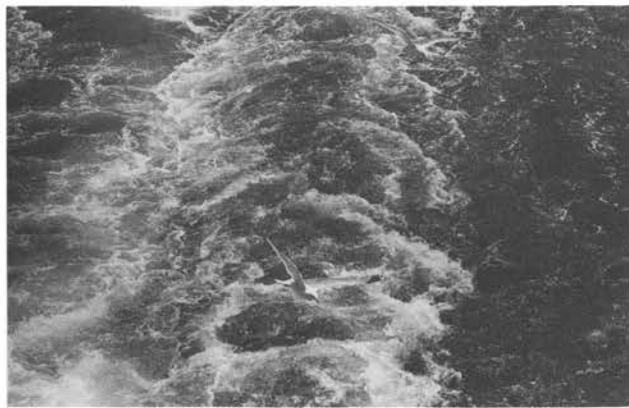


photography. The traditional family album or scrapbook has been with us almost since the invention of photography, replete with all the basic elements but without the developed sensibilities. On the rare occasion when someone has gone beyond established convention to create more significance in this form, the effort has usually been regarded as something of an anomaly. The photos of Jacques Lartigue, an extensive documentation of family and friends, although widely admired, never seemed to spin off other projects with similar long-term goals.



HOUSE OF ROSES

Here then is a small portion of my Nantucket scrapbook. It is an attempt to hold on to memories worth holding (How many have been lost to those aging and fading neural passages?). It will be added to, when necessary or desirable. It is subject to editing and revision. It may languish unattended for a time. Like a family scrapbook, it may lack the completeness and balance one might desire. It will continue though, and through the process of continuing, perhaps, achieve that sense of purpose and meaning that makes the effort worthwhile.



SEAGULL AND WAKE