

“Even when the landscape is greatly disfigured or brutalized, it is always deeply animated from within. When one really sees an awesome, vast, and terrible place, we tremble at the feeling we experience as our sense of wholeness is reorganized by what we see. . . This is the gift of a landscape photograph, that the heart finds a place to stand.”

—Emmet Gowin, April 1994

Arguably Bucks County’s best-known living artist, Emmet Gowin is a distinguished photographer who is renowned for his poetic and evocative approach to the medium. At the age of sixteen, his interest in photography was sparked by a photograph by Ansel Adams. Gowin graduated in 1965 from Richmond Professional Institute, Virginia, and from Rhode Island School of Design in 1967 with an MFA. He later received a Guggenheim Fellowship, two National Endowment for the Arts Fellowships, and a Pew Fellowship.

His early work, begun while he was in graduate school, deals with themes of family and community by exploring the lives of four generations of his wife’s family (he married in 1964) in Danville, Georgia. The photos are considered mannered, as well as autobiographical; Gowin admired the family for their simplicity and generosity and tried to show these characteristics of theirs in everyday situations. Though many of the pictures have the appearance of snapshots, he posed his subjects and used a camera with tripod.

In 1967, Gowin began his teaching career at the Dayton Art Institute. In 1971, he moved to Newtown, Pennsylvania, to teach at Bucks County Community College, and in 1973 he began teaching at Princeton University. During that time, the subject matter of his work changed dramatically.

In 1980, Gowin became fascinated with the devastation caused by the eruption of Mount St. Helen’s in Oregon; he began to make aerial photographs of the area, then expanded the project to include aerial photography of such far-flung locations as Kuwait, Japan, and the Czech Republic. In 1982, Queen Noor of Jordan (a former student of Gowin’s at Princeton University) invited him to photograph Petra, an ancient city in Jordan. Gowin was the subject of a major traveling retrospective in 1990 organized by the Philadelphia Museum of Art. In 2002, the Yale University Art Gallery organized another traveling exhibition of his aerial photographs, accompanied by the major publication *Emmet Gowin: Changing the Earth. Aerial Photographs*.

Emmet Gowin

Date of Birth:

12/22/1941

Place of Birth:

Danville, Georgia



***The Buffalo Jump
Called Chugwater
and an Irrigation
Pivot Near
Wheatland,
Wyoming, 1991***

silver gelatin print on
paper
H. 15.75 x W. 18.25
inches
Group I

