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Benjamin Dimmitt: An Unflinching Look

Alison Nordström, *Photo Editor*

Photographs have been a part of the *Journal of Florida Studies* since its inception, both as illustrations and as featured portfolios in their own right. As an interdisciplinary journal, *JFS* celebrates the inherently interdisciplinary nature of this medium. Our portfolios have included art photographs of all kinds, from near-abstraction to documentary. The same pictures have also included information about the aspects of Florida they depict that may be relevant to sociology, anthropology, history, and environmental studies, as well as all sorts of visual and cultural studies from fashion to architecture to tourism.

Our themed issues offer us the particular opportunity to add the immediacy and comprehensiveness of photographs to the other forms of communication more common to scholarly journals. Like any other scholarly work,

they combine research and observation with analysis and conclusions; the interpretation of a place, person, or thing that the photographer provides is subjective, nuanced and authorial. If this take on the world is also of sufficient aesthetic interest to command the attention of broad audiences, so much the better. Especially in the case of such a critical subject as Florida's water, a mode of presentation that is broadly accessible serves us all.

Benjamin Dimmitt's work in this issue consists of luminous black and white images made on film with a medium-format camera. The clarity of detail and controlled depth of field permitted by this approach is particularly appropriate for the creation of landscapes drawn from the natural world, while their unavoidable reference to images of the early 20th century, when this process was commonly used, underscores traces of

nostalgia and loss in what the
photographer saw and would have us see.

Dimmitt has been photographing in
the Chassahowitzka National Wildlife
Refuge for more than a decade. His
perspective over time, like each
photograph's ability to record not only
specific places but also specific moments
in them, allows him to look unflinchingly
(his own choice of words) at the tragic
effects of rising saltwater levels on this
fragile and quintessentially Floridian
ecosystem. Photographs lend themselves
to side-by-side comparisons that cannot
occur in real life, especially of then and
now, as these do. Such an approach
implies a further set of images made
some years from now; they force us to
consider the future of this beautiful place,
as we should and must.