

Robert Dawson

Robert Dawson, who teaches photography at Stanford University, has long been interested in how photography can be used to understand our relationship with the environment. Dawson, along with his wife Ellen Manchester, is founder and co-director of the *Water in the West Project*, a large-scale collaboration with several other photographers. His work, along with others' from the project, was published in *A River Too Far: The Past and Future of the Arid West* (1991) and *Arid Waters: Photographs From the Water in the West Project* (1992).

For Dawson, water is a metaphor for the attitudes that have shaped the landscape of the West. Dawson's photography examines the cultural values that have brought us to this critical point with the natural world. The photographs in the *Water in The West Project* are concerned with our attitudes toward agriculture, mining, resource development, recreation, Native Americans, growth, and environmental controversy.

Dawson has also explored issues related to water in his series *The Global Water Project*, and in *The Great Central Valley Project*. Dawson, a native of the Valley, has explored issues such as water use and ground water depletion, increasing salinity and pesticide contamination in the soil, and survival of the small family farm.

Dawson's work is broad in its concerns, at the same time as it offers acute observations of specific moments in the life of California, and a vivid sense of place. Dawson has received widespread recognition for his work, and has recently received a Guggenheim Fellowship. His work is in numerous collections, including the J. Paul Getty Museum, the Smithsonian, and the Museum of Modern Art in New York.