

The title, "East and West, Near and Far," circumnavigates the globe. It encompasses the Eastern Seaboard of the United States, the Near East or, as it is known today, the Middle East, and the Far East as well as the generic West, which is Western Europe and America and the Far West or West Coast. This is not a book of geography or landscapes but of still life paintings.

When we began this series we were doing a good bit of traveling. By we, I do not mean the authorial we but the marital and collaborative we. I pause here to introduce my wife and myself whose names appear on the title page of this book. We began our collaboration as artists in 1990 when we were living in Israel, where we met. We were both American immigrants to that land. I was a photographer who had arrived only two years earlier, at age 38, with two suitcases and a camera. She was an artist who had arrived there in 1981.

Without going further into the background, I will focus in on this particular body of work, which began when we returned to America, first as visitors and then, in 1998 to live here. This involved a lot of jumping back and forth between continents and between the West Coast and the East Coast and also the Midwest as we visited family and friends. There is something about revisiting a place, a familiar place, and seeing it as if for the first time.

Traditionally, still life compositions were arrangements of objects placed by the artist or the art instructor to be depicted in a painting. We did something different. Perhaps it was the photographic, even documentary habit of leaving things as found. It is, in fact, considered unethical for a documentarian to interfere, though, it has been argued, the mere presence of a camera is interference itself. The juxtaposition of objects in people's homes, particularly in the homes of our parents and the parents of friends or friends of parents and even, in one case, a grandparent, is like a museum. It is a curated experience and speaks not only of taste but also of history, both personal and general.

These paintings, most of them from twenty years ago, carry a nostalgic value for us. I realize that pure, undistilled nostalgia is poison in art and I hope we have properly distilled it, first through the selectivity of the photographer and then through the interpretive technique of the artist. All of these paintings are oil pastels on black and white photography on cotton rag paper.