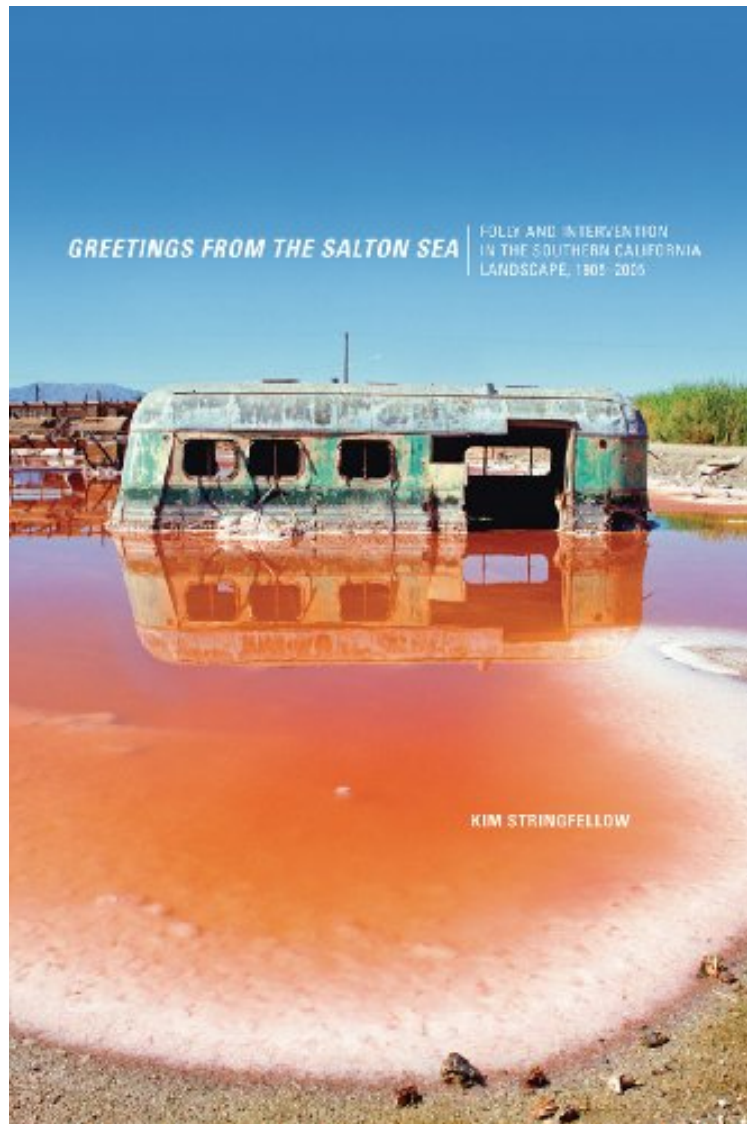


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Greetings from the Salton Sea: Folly and Intervention in the Southern California Landscape, 1905-2005 (Center for American Places - Center Books on the American West)

Kim Stringfellow

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The Salton Sea is a man-made catastrophe, redolent with the smell of algae and decomposing fish. Nevertheless, the lake's vast, placid expanses continue to attract birdwatchers, tourists and artists. In Greetings from the Salton Sea, photographer Kim Stringfellow explores the history of California's largest lake from its disastrous beginningsthe "sea" was formed when Colorado River levees broke and spilled into a depression 280 feet below sea levelto its heyday as a desert paradise in the 1950s and its current state as an environmental battleground.Like the 400-plus species of birds that use the lake as a halfway point in their annual migration, developers flocked to the water too: they planted palm trees, built golf courses, and hired showstoppers such as the Beach Boys to perform at area resorts. These days, politicians seek to redirect the lake's only source of replenishmentagricultural runoff from surrounding farmsto water golf courses and green lawns elsewhere. Greetings from the Salton Sea's photographs capture the war among policymakers, environmentalists, developers, and the individuals still living along the lake's shores. As Stringfellow aptly documents, it is a war for water and, ultimately, for existence.

"Kim Stringfellow's book charts a ten year obsession with the peculiar Salton Sea in the deep desert of southern California. This is an odyssey about an oddity, the condensed story of the peculiarities that people and landscape can inspire in each other when topography and money collide....The area's story is as instructive as it is deeply American, and Stringfellow tells it well, deploying conventional historical text and retrieved artifacts, as well as well-realized color photography of the area as it stands today." --Phil Harris, Photo-Eye Booklist"The Salton Sea is one of the great conundrums for our time--a new place already in ruins, a toxic place that is also a wild bird refuge, a strange mix of debris and sublimity that Kim Stringfellow's pictures and history portray compellingly." --Rebecca Solnit, author of River of Shadows"Kim Stringfellow's odyssey into the Salton Sea excavates cultural relics and treasures that surprise and astound. She weaves the fragments, tatters, and shards that she found into a salty tale that makes one nostalgic for the sea's future, something that seems always around the bend. She has added an eloquent new exhibit to this museum of decay." --Matthew Coolidge, Director, Center for Land Use Interpretation"With a cover photograph drenched in radioactive colors and irony, this book rests in the hands like a live grenade. Did we pull the pin? How long do we have...? Stringfellow lets the tragic saga of Salton Sea speak for itself in brief chapters that unfold with a novelist's flair and a scientist's precision." --Ann Jarmusch, San Diego Union-TribuneAbout the AuthorKim Stringfellow is an associate professor in the School of Art, Design, and Art History at San Diego State University. She is the author of Jackrabbit Homestead Tracing the Small Tract Act in the Southern California Landscape, 19382008.