

In the Mind's Eye: Essays Across the Animate World

Elizabeth Dodd

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"On the long, hairpinned climb..." begins Dodd, taking readers with her a journey through the "animate" world by way of her "mind's eye." With personal passion, she explores the tops of mesas, the depths of caves, and the hearth of her own home, connecting these places through time, history, space, and—always—the humans who changed or were changed by them. Dodd's essays combine the author's physical and mental journeys, and are held together by the force of her intellect. Throughout, she quotes from a vast array of writers, beginning with Ezra Pound and ending with Seamus Heaney—in between, she cites Heidegger, John Muir, Heraclitus, her partner Dave, Thoreau, Charles Sternberg, Tillie Autrie, Picasso, and fellow travelers she meets along the way.

In the first essay, set in the American Southwest, she meditates on footprints in the region's rock art and her own wet feet from hiking. She connects these to more rarely found handprints in rock art and the human sign not to touch—the extremities of the human body linked to each other, to the past, and to the present. In the title essay, she explores canyons, the artistic mimicry of nature; varnish and vernissage; and people's journey through the physical and artistic landscape. While these essays are primarily set in the United States, she also travels to the Chauvet cave.

The joy is in the author's depth of thought, her poetic descriptions, the jumbling together of images, and the sense she makes out of all these elements. In spite of the meditative nature of the material, the writing is conversational and immediate, and each essay can stand alone, allowing readers to explore this book one essay at a time, taking visual and mental "bites." It's a good read anytime—summer on the patio or winter by the fire.

Dodd is a professor of English at Kansas State University and the author of such books as *Archetypal Light* and *Prospect: Journeys and Landscapes*. This book is the next step in her exploration of the worlds that fascinate her. She closes the book with a selected bibliography, giving readers ways to explore the worlds she has taken them through and engage in the kind of mental jazz riffs that make this book so delightful.

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