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Tyler Green Modern Art Notes

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## The Modern Art Notes Podcast: Sholis, Ruwedel



This week's Modern Art Notes Podcast features a new exhibition at New York's apexart titled "[The Permanent Way.](#)" The show looks at the continuing impact of the railroads on the way American artists look at landscape. The exhibition is on view through July 28.

My guests are [Brian Sholis](#), who curated the show, and Mark Ruwedel, a photographer who is included in the exhibition and whose "Westward the Course of Empire" series spotlighted the continuing physical presence of the railroad in the West.

Sholis is a New York-based writer, editor and PhD candidate at the City University of New York. He is the co-editor of "The Uncertain States of America Reader," a 2006 anthology of writing on contemporary art and politics. He contributes to Artforum, where he was previously an editor and to magazines such as Aperture, Art in America, Bookforum and Frieze. His essay for "The Permanent Way" [is available \(for free\) here.](#)

Sholis and I discuss:

- Why railroads and related interests published and distributed the early 20thC postcards in his exhibition;
- The different ways in which the impact of the railroad has surfaced in contemporary photography; and
- The five artists in his exhibition, including Jeff Brouws, Justine Kurland, James Welling, Victoria Sambunaris and Ruwedel.

Ruwedel is a California-based photographer whose work frequently examines the ways in which Americans have impacted the land in the American West. His work is in the

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permanent collections of the Tate Modern, the National Gallery of Art, the J. Paul Getty Museum, LACMA, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, SFMOMA and more. The book related to the project discussed on this week's show, ["Westward the Course of Empire,"](#) was published in 2008 by the Yale University Press.

Ruwedel and I discuss:

- How he somewhat accidentally became interested in the railroad-in-the-landscape as a subject;
- The most expensive railroad ever built anywhere in the world;
- The importance of his representing the scale and ubiquity of the western railroads in his work ("It was kind of nuts");
- The impact of Robert Adams and Lewis Baltz on his work; and

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W.E. Tunis, Railroad Map of the United States & Canada, 1859.

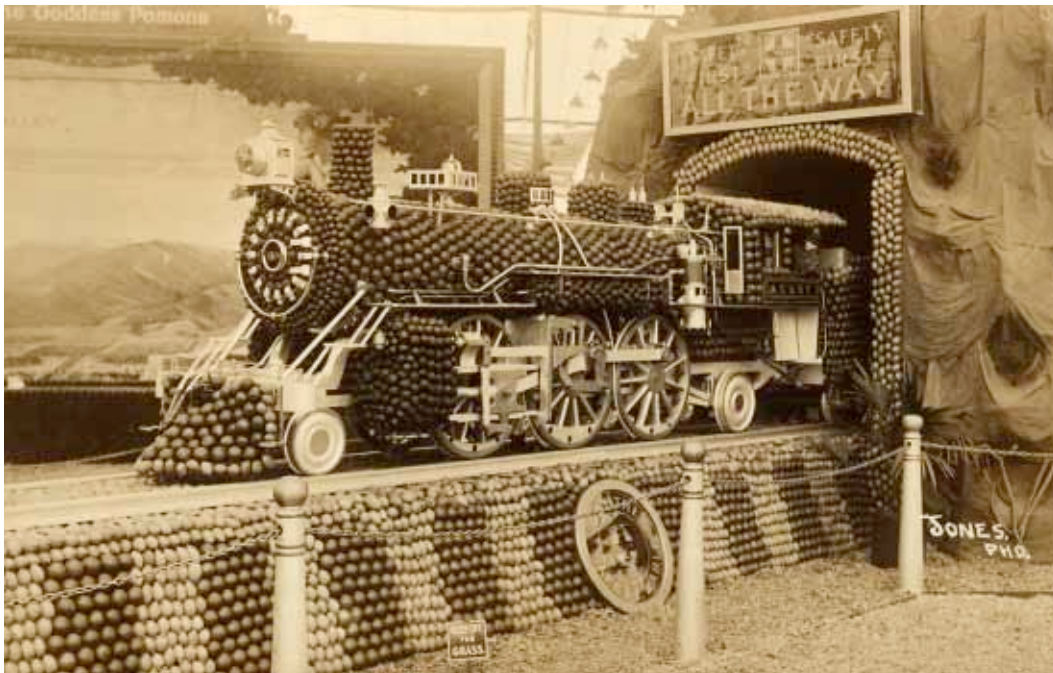
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Harry Gannett/US Census Office, Railroad Systems, 1890, 1898.

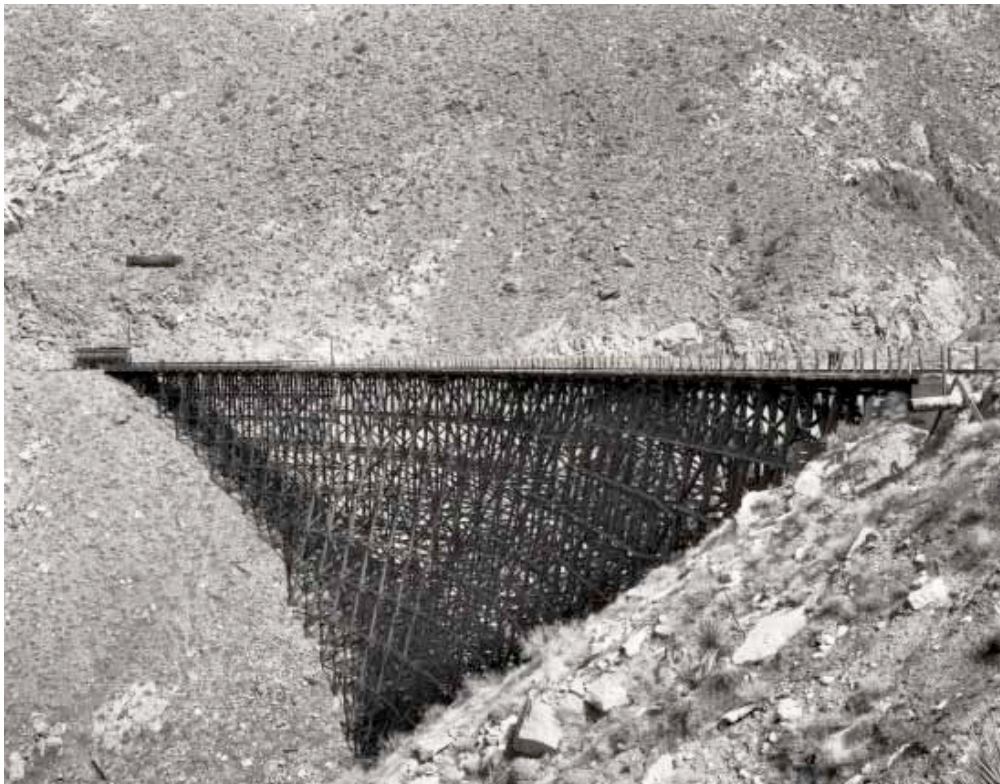


Get the Safety Cable [Orange Train #1], ca. 1910.

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Famous Horse Shoe Curve, on Main Line PRR, ca. 1910.



Mark Ruwedel, *San Diego and Arizona Eastern #7* from the series "Westward the Course of Empire," 2003.



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Gustave Courbet, *Origin of the World*, 1866. Collection of the Musee d'Orsay, Paris



Mark Ruwedel, *Kettle Valley #29* from the series "Westward the Course of Empire," 1999.

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Victoria Sambunaris, *Untitled (VS-10-10)*, *Train from Cristo Rey, Sunland Park, NM*, from the series "The Border", 2010.



Victoria Sambunaris, *Wendover, UT* from the series "The Border," 2007.

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James Welling, *Hagerstown, MD*, 1991.



Jeff Brouws, *Railroad Landscape #21, former Newburgh, Dutchess & Connecticut right-of-way (abandoned 1938), MP 24, view south, Summer, Anon's Crossing, New York*, 2010

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Jeff Brouws, *Railroad Landscape #56, former Poughkeepsie and Eastern right-of-way as ingress to private hunting preserve (abandoned 1938), MP 92, view south, Winter, McIntyre, New York, 2010.*



Justine Kurland, *Three Riders, UP Mixed Freight, 2012.*

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Justine Kurland, *Donner Pass*, 2008.

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