

## Introducing *The River Box*

Alexandra Huddleston

### A Note on a Name

*The River Box* is a private space dedicated to showcasing works of conceptual landscape photography. Its name comes from the Spanish name for the area it overlooks, *Caja del Rio*.<sup>\*</sup> An accurate translation of *Caja del Rio* is *the Box Canyon of the River*, in this case of the Rio Grande which flow fifteen miles to the west. As such, *The River Box* is a bad translation. Nonetheless it succinctly refers both to the local topography and the boxlike nature of an exhibition space.<sup>\*\*</sup>

<sup>\*</sup> Some books (like *The Club at Las Campanas Celebrates Twenty-Five Years* by David Mullings) refer to the area simply as “northwest Santa Fe county,” but other maps (<https://cajadelrio.org>) include it in the Caja del Rio territory. The name Caja del Rio dates back to May 30, 1742 when it became the name of a land grant located between the Rio Grande and Santa Fe (*New Mexico Place Names: A Geographical Dictionary* by T. M. Pearce); however, I will have to do more research to find the exact borders of the old land grant.

<sup>\*\*</sup> There must certainly have been older names. Native Land Digital (<https://native-land.ca>) lists this area as having been used by the Pueblo people and Ute Indian tribe. However, again, more research is needed to learn about any names they may have used.

Flow: Walking the Upper Arroyo Calabasas, Northern New Mexico

Since 2008, my home and studio have been in a housing development in the western suburbs of Santa Fe, New Mexico. Through the center of the development runs the Arroyo Calabasas. It's a dry streambed that fills with water only a few times a year, during the rare storms strong enough to cause a flash flood. The rest of the time, the arroyo is a semi-wild and semi-communal space. It is a path for walkers, horse riders, cyclists, coyotes, deer, and mountain lions. In the last fifteen years I have walked the arroyo hundreds of times; but between 2019 and 2022 I walked and photographed the arroyo intensively and collected the photographs that come together in this exhibition.

For clarity and accuracy, I should add that my work focuses on only a small section of the Arroyo Calabasas, less than a mile at the very upper end of a streambed that continues for roughly ten miles to the southwest until it empties into the Santa Fe River, which then empties into the Rio Grande. But even a mile held enough beauty and drama to keep my attention for three years. This short stretch of ground is constantly transforming as the light and season change and mix with the imprint of passing weather and fauna.

The six photographic works of the arroyo in this exhibition are part of what will be a much larger series titled *Flow: Walking the Upper Arroyo Calabasas, Northern New Mexico*. The main subject of both the series and its individual works is precisely the flow and flux of change and stasis of the arroyo over time.

ALEXANDRA HUDDLESTON is a photographer, writer, and walking artist. Born in Freetown, Sierra Leone and raised in Bethesda, Maryland, USA, and Bamako, Mali, her upbringing has led her to explore landscape and culture from an international and interdisciplinary perspective. Between 2009 and 2014, she walked thousands of miles on pilgrimage in Spain, France, and Japan – journeys that led to her current walking art practice.

Alexandra presents her work to the public through books, exhibitions, and lectures. She holds a Masters of Letters in Fine Art Practice from the Glasgow School of Art, Scotland. She studied broadcast and print journalism (MS) at Columbia University, USA and fine art and East Asian studies (BA) at Stanford University, USA. Alexandra has won a Fulbright Grant, and her work is in collections around the world including the Smithsonian, the British Library, and the Boghossian Foundation – Villa Empain. As creative director and co-founder of the Kyoudai Press, her major publications include *Lost Things* (2012), *333 Saints: A Life of Scholarship in Timbuktu* (2013), *East or West* (2014), *Vertigo* (2016), *Traces of Time* (2022), *Orientation* (2023), and *A Walk in the Park* (2023).