

David Scheinbaum

## Bio

Whether he's photographing the permanent or the ephemeral, the world's grandest stone monuments or smoky hip-hop clubs in Albuquerque, David Scheinbaum makes images that express truths about time, place, and culture. Often he exposes the reality underneath our preconceived notions about nature or society: Some of the most solid-looking mountains might be fragile or eroding; a culture that seems dangerous to outsiders might be more open than we expect.

For his first major project, Scheinbaum made portraits of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe who, like his grandfather, lived out their last years in retirement communities in Florida. To the immigrants, these communities were the realization of their American Dream, but Scheinbaum poignantly saw them as the ending of that dream.

A Brooklyn native, Scheinbaum moved to New Mexico in 1978. He soon became fascinated, even "obsessed," with the mountains and rock formations of the Southwest. He photographed the Bisti Badlands, a phantasmagorical expanse of undulating mounds and ravines in a far corner of the state, which was being actively mined for coal. For his first book, *Bisti*, Scheinbaum placed his photographs of the Badlands alongside text by an environmentalist, a paleontologist, and a Navajo historian about the threat to this natural treasure and the need for its protection.

He continued his exploration of the high desert landscape in two books co-authored with his wife Janet Russek: *Ghost Ranch: Land of Light* and *Images in the Heavens, Patterns on the Earth: The I Ching*. While working on these books, Scheinbaum began documenting iconic and obscure stone monuments worldwide, from a Kyoto cemetery to Indian temples to the Brooklyn Bridge. The 12-year project, which took him to nine countries, culminated in the book *Stone: A Substantial Witness*. Scheinbaum's unusual format and printing technique define the project: small-format panoramic prints, toned and waxed to increase depth and extend the palette. Each print is unique, because, Scheinbaum explains, "It's not just about the picture. It's about the print." (A master of that craft, he printed for both Eliot Porter and Beaumont Newhall, whom he assisted for 15 years.)

In 1980, Scheinbaum and Russek opened a photography gallery, quickly becoming one of Santa Fe's top dealers. Scheinbaum is also an educator; over 25 years, he helped to build the Marion Center for Photographic Arts at the College

of Santa Fe. Currently he is chair of the department.

Recently, he has returned to photographing human culture as it manifests in a particular time and place: the world of hip-hop and its music, fashion, and politics. Attending concerts with his young son Zach, Scheinbaum discovered the hip-hop community in Albuquerque to be far more diverse and welcoming than he expected. His black-and-white portraits of artists, silhouetted by spotlights against a dark background, recall Roy DeCarava's jazz club images and have been shown in the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery.

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**Bibliography:**

*Bisti* (UNM Press, 1987)

*Miami Beach: Photographs of an American Dream* (Florida International University Press, 1990)

*Ghost Ranch: Land of Light* (Balcony Press, 1997) (with Janet Russek)

*Images in the Heavens, Patterns on the Earth: The I Ching* (The Museum of New Mexico Press, 2005) (with Janet Russek)

*Stone: A Substantial Witness* (Museum of New Mexico Press, 2006)

*Nancy Newhall: A Literacy of Images*, Museum of Photographic Arts, San Diego, 2008

*Beaumont's Kitchen: Lessons in Food, Life and Photography*, Radius Books, 2009