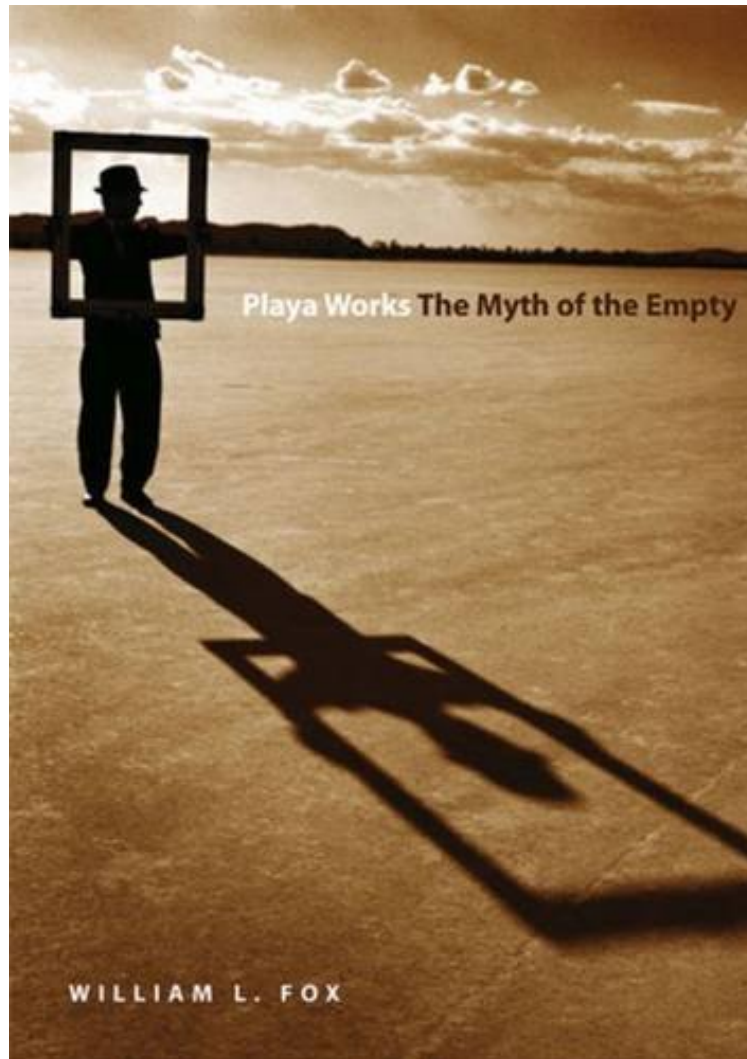


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Playa Works: The Myth Of The Empty (Environmental Arts and Humanities Series)

William L. Fox

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William L. Fox : Playa Works: The Myth Of The Empty (Environmental Arts and Humanities Series) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Playa Works: The Myth Of The Empty (Environmental Arts and Humanities Series):

5 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Good but not great By Rob Brennan I approached this book hoping for an analysis of the impact of emptiness and isolation on the human psyche. No doubt my expectations were influenced by my nationality -- Australian -- where our "playas" (which we call claypans or salt pans) are nearly all isolated and deserted, and the impact of human activity is minimal. Fox provides graphic descriptions of the

multiplicity of activities which take advantage of the US playas, ranging from military to counter-cultural festivals. He's clearly very well acquainted with his subject. I found it generally depressing to read about the military use of playas. (Here in Oz, we had the Brits testing atomic devices at Woomera several decades ago.) An interesting book, but too focused on American issues to satisfy my more general interests.

Writer-poet William L. Fox has spent much of his career contemplating the complex ways that landscape, human cognition, and history collide to create our perceptions and treatment of place. In *Playa Works*, Fox considers the West's emptiest spaces - the playas, or dry beds, of the ancient lakes that once filled much of the Great Basin. Among the flattest, most barren places on the planet, the West's playas have haunted the American imagination since the Fremont expedition first surveyed them in the early nineteenth century. In these eight brilliant essays, Fox explores many of the major playas of the American West, examining locations as diverse as Nellis Air Force Base and Frenchman Flat, where the federal government has tested experimental aircraft and atomic weaponry; the Great Salt Lake Desert, where land-speed records have been broken; and the Black Rock Desert of Northern Nevada, site of the colorful Burning Man arts festival. He analyzes the geological and climatological conditions that created the playas and the historical role that playas played in the exploration and settlement of the West. And he offers lucid and keenly perceptive discussions of the ways that artists have

About the Author William L. Fox is the author of six works of nonfiction exploring the arid regions of the American Southwest. He recently spent a season in the Antarctic as a participant in the National Science Foundation's Antarctic Visiting Artists and Writers program, and served as a visiting scholar at the Getty Research Institute to work in its art and cognition program, and as a Lannan Foundation writer-in-residence. He has also published fourteen volumes of poetry including *Reading Sand: Selected Desert Poems, 1976-2000* (see page 20).