

**LEO HURWITZ THE ART OF SEEING SERIES 2**  
**DISCOVERY IN A LANDSCAPE 1968 -1970**  
**“I Will Look With Your Eyes, You Will See With Mine”**

**By Sandra E. Cohen**

Seeing isn't a simple thing. It often takes another person's eyes to help us understand something in a new way. This is how Leo Hurwitz uses his eyes and camera in his *The Art of Seeing* series with its three films, *Light And The City*, *Discovery In A Landscape*, and *The Island*. In these films, made between 1968 and 1970 with fellow filmmaker and wife Peggy Lawson, Leo uses a form of empathic communication that he calls, “I will look with your eyes, you will see with mine.” Through this kind of seeing, Leo gives each of us a chance to make our own personal discoveries.

*Discovery In A Landscape*, and the whole *The Art of Seeing* series, is about opening our eyes to what is going on beneath the surface to that which we might otherwise be unaware. This is the same looking and seeing that is part of my work as a psychoanalyst. I look with my patients' eyes, feel into their experience, and help them see things in a different way. Leo does this with his camera and his editing. I do it with my words.

*Discovery In A Landscape* begins with Leo's voice, as birds chirp in the background: “I invite you to an adventure of theme.” What is that theme? It is, as far as I can gather, whatever we each make of what we see, hidden from us until we begin our journeys. I invite you ... please come along on mine.

### **Hidden Forces**

I enter into *Discovery In A Landscape* to an unusual kind of autumn, an autumn with colors I've never seen – leaves that have turned the most gorgeous hues of pastel pinks and white. Leo's voice guides me: “We stand on the hill among hidden forces in a drama that stains the world once all green.”

I am now part of summer becoming a magical fall. I see a most delicate tree, as if it is made of wisps of cotton, white turning to the lightest shades of pink.

Those hidden forces are the forces of change. An old way of seeing things gives way to another. One era of time ends and a new one calls out to me with its soft tantalizing whispers: come along on this journey, as pink and white intermix with green.

A car travels slowly on a remote road – am I one of the travelers? Or am I behind the camera that moves my eyes through the leaves of a tree out into the village by a stream, its white houses living amidst the autumn trees? I am both.

Leo’s voice accompanies me as I move along, looking with my newly opened eyes: “The view is of trees, fields, wild hills, a village by a stream.”

The car continues to travel in the distance; a train whistles to alert its journeyers to something up ahead; a waterfall spills itself over a bridge into the water below, merging with the currents of a changing time.

“What will we find, looking long? What will we discover looking deep and long, accepting what is there, accepting the real world in all its richness?”

### **The Past Comes With Us**

Accepting what is there. Can I travel into my future more equipped for the realities that face me, with all they mirror about the present and the past?

The camera’s images now center on water rippling under the reflection of the white house, a house half hidden – graying - amongst green, pink; pink/white trees. The reflections in the water come closer through the camera’s eye.

A child walks on a sidewalk. Is she my child self who I carry across the seasons of change? Yes, I think she is.

She comes with me through all the steps I take. Through the intricacies of my relationships, the then and the now – with effects as subtle and delicate as the pastel leaves turning, turning, circling and spinning. I must know and accept her, so that I might breathe myself forward into that deep and long dreaming of a different kind of realness in those nameless times to come.

“Autumn fire, winter threat - a multiplicity of colors to discover, harmony; shock.” All this is there, here in my life - seen, wrestled with, named, and said yes to. Change. Seeing the truths of a life that can’t be predicted, knowing those pieces that suddenly shock. I am looking.

### **Pieces Of A Life**

I am looking - at all that changes and all that stays the same. I am who I am, but I carefully take each piece of myself, turn it over in my hands; consider it. I am not a passive journeyer carried only by seemingly random currents of change.

Leo's voice: "Colors change, make in a forest a leaf, each leaf, an individual."

A car circles around a turnabout. A Border collie saunters across a field of high grass and flowers, sniffing, smelling; the smell leads him farther on his way. "It is Sunday, a day of leaves in their season." What is my season?

Here comes another small child with hood pulled over his head; running across fallen pink leaves quilted on green grass. He hesitates in front of stairs leading into a gazebo; and then he climbs, carefully, step-by-step. He has his intent. He's going somewhere. Yet another child falls into leaves, his hood a barrier to the chill of the day. He rights himself, taking off out of sight behind a tree.

Sunday is a day for reflection, for going forward - not for hiding.

Through soothing pink leaves mixed with the green of trees, we steal a look with Leo's camera as he captures people, unknowingly, going about their Sundays. A woman walks with her dog, frolicking to catch up from behind; another woman dressed in Sunday clothes, quietly returns from church.

The leaves are moving frames, giving Leo's camera a window - into pieces of lives, and me into my own.

### **A Soft Passage**

The camera returns, over and over, to the fallen leaves, a blanket over the world, as we knew it in summer - a signal of change, a sign of soft passage.

Leo's voice carries me along: "We enter the woods between the branches, we enter a community of leaves. Contact of eyes has sent us on squirreled paths of ground and air; our travel is by the image, our travel is with the eyes, through the many avenues of the landscape."

My own life has varying levels and layers of terrain that I move through. Look. That's what Leo tells me. If I look at what came before, I will know now how to choose. This is the journey of many. This is my journey now.

### **Seeing**

*Discovery In A Landscape* takes me into blue sky and a tree with maple leaves of white/beige tones. The camera moves spinning through branches and back through more leaves, this time pink/white/green. Everything undergoes change.

A foot, not noticing/oblivious to what the camera sees, takes a step, and the leaves crackle under its weight. A caterpillar crawls, moving beneath the leaves, burrowing; more interested in what is underneath than the people walking fast, too fast, not stopping to see.

If I see what's underneath, those hidden forces help - don't hinder.

A slight breeze blows grasses and leaves. A train whistles, loud and demanding, interrupting the still landscape of oblivion. An owl hoots. A warning. Don't turn away.

I watch as water reflects leaves on the trees above, rippling, making dances with the fallen leaves floating in the stream. I might dance too; I might move with the currents of my life; while the stream water caught by Leo's camera rotates over a spare tire; discarded, submerged, but there to be seen and not forgotten.

It's a meditation, this water, a convergence of tire, leaves and rocks - all coming together just as pieces of life might gather the past into the present - and change, moving towards the future.

A flute, woodwinds, a piano, accompany what I witness through the lens of Leo's camera, his vision - as I leave the forest into a scene of rolling green fields, soft as velvet, and back again into the forest of leaves. Birds chirp as my eyes light on a leaf; a flower hangs from a branch; a cow moos, a dog barks. I continue my travels, upwards with the birds, through the leaves and now fruit on the branches of trees.

## **Being**

This is my purpose: to stop, to savor - to see.

My great uncle Leo's voice guides me: "The vast and small, the leaves and the landscapes, interwoven ... the landscape and the leaf, stream, wind, sun, and earth are interconnected. There are forces working deep in the veins and capillaries of the autumn leaf ... moving in our world we become part of it. We are ourselves changed by the changes of nature, the infinite variations, and the simple wholeness of the landscape."

In that simple wholeness of the landscape is a personal wholeness I can find.

A wind blows through the grasses fast, with some fury against the trees and leaves. The gusts quiet once again. The wind no different than the rhythms of my feelings: what is stirred, seen, calmed, stirred again. It is inevitable.

“Our travels are with the eyes through the many avenues of the landscape.”

So I travel, through all parts of my inside landscape, with eyes wide open into the interiors of my self, my dreams, and my feelings. They take me here, to now; they inform me of who I am and where I go.