Spanish Architect Ignasi de Solà-Morales coined the term terrain vague to describe the abandoned, ambiguous, or marginalized pieces of land within an urban landscape that stand in contrast to the otherwise cohesive, definable organization of the city. These kinds of spaces—abandoned lots, post-industrial sites, bridge underpasses—define the character of a cityscape through these pauses and stutters of visual dissonance.

My intention with this work is to expand on Morales’s notion to use it with a bit of poetic license in order to describe a sense of longing I find so prevalent in these Central Maine landscapes. The empty storefronts, the spaces between modest homes, and vacant lots are for me filled with the beauty, despair, yearning, and disappointment that define this time in history in many places throughout the world.

In a sense these photographs are anti-scenic; they do not present us with beautiful or idyllic spaces. The images are filled with a sense of passage, decline as well as the ordinariness of utility pared down to the basics: the piling of soil, the scraping of the earth, the fencing in of property. Some of them are layered so that trees and brambles hide a home, a human story. These are the spaces we barely bother to attend to visually, all the more reason to give them further attention.

Gary Green describing his series, Terrain Vague

Gary Green received his Master of Fine Arts degree from The Milton Avery Graduate School of the Arts at Bard College and has been teaching photography since 1994. He lives in Waterville, Maine where he has been on the faculty of Colby College since 2007. Green has exhibited across the country and his work resides in the collections of the RISD Museum of Art, The Bates College Museum of Art, the Amon Carter Museum, The Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, Texas, and the Bowdoin College Museum of Art.

Points of View

From June 12 – October 17, 2015, the Bates College Museum of Art will present Points of View, an exhibition of contemporary photography featuring new and recent works by Jay Gould, of Baltimore, Maryland, Gary Green, of Waterville, Maine, David Maisel, of Marin, California and Shoshannah White, of Portland, Maine. Viewing elements of the Maine landscape from different levels of scale—from great distance to close-up, each artist explores a different aspect of the boundaries and interrelationships between human activity and the natural world.
STUDENTS NAME

1. What do you think the artist was trying to show us with these photographs?

2. What do you see in the photograph that makes you say that?

3. How do you think these photographs were made?

4. What else can we find in the photograph?