

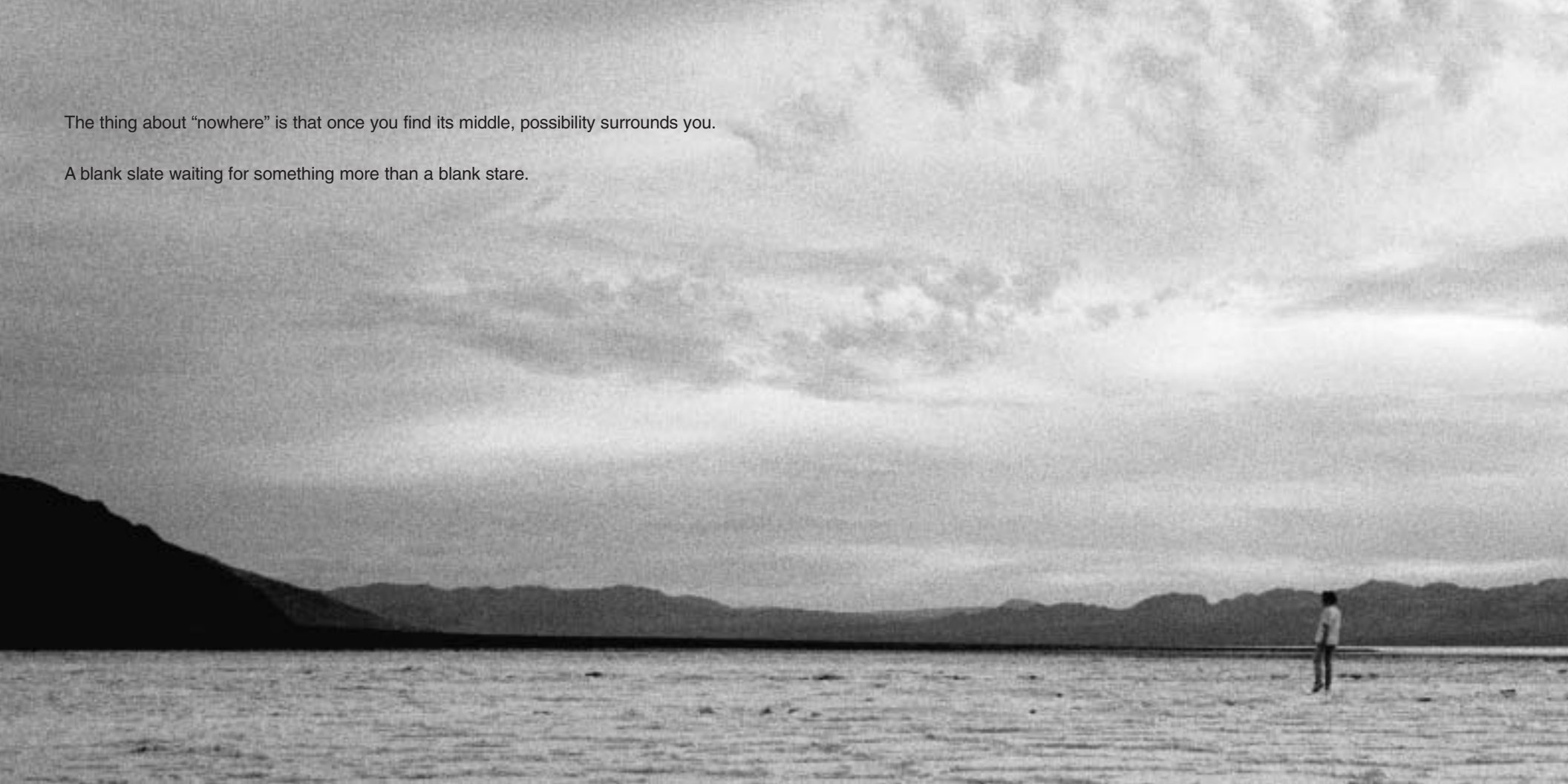
# small wonders

A series of booklets published by Asplandesign



The thing about “nowhere” is that once you find its middle, possibility surrounds you.

A blank slate waiting for something more than a blank stare.



The people of Shoshone, California – population 85 – have a knack for seeing what others might miss. For 3,000 years, they and their Native American predecessors have delved below the sun-baked Mojave surface to tap artesian springs, to mine for gold and to seek a link with those who came before. In 1982, college geology students digging near town unearthed an imperial mammoth, whose remains had lain intact and undisturbed for 300,000 years. Now the bones are being readied for display in the Shoshone Museum, a converted bank that also once was a boarding house.

Make room for Milton, a 15,000-pound refugee from a forgotten ice age who's now at home in a tiny town at the heart of the desert.

# SHOSHONE







It's easy to dismiss Shoshone as a mere pit stop on the road to Las Vegas or Death Valley. One diner, one store, zero reasons to stay. The railroad is long gone, as are the minerals and Borax that once fueled a boom. But stalwarts remain, folks who see Shoshone's open space as the perfect place to raise horses or children or both. For them, life here isn't exile or extravaganza, just ripe with small rewards. Rise before dawn to watch the sunrise splash pastels across the sky and drape the mountains with drama. Or just revel in the rich strata of local history.

"I think this town is magical, but then I tend to like places not everyone does," says Martha Watkins, a longtime resident. "I think when you live in the city for a long time, your senses become dulled. But they come back."





**H**istory drives Shoshone, and sometimes Shoshonians drive history. It litters the roads they travel and embeds the ground they traverse. Drive to the town's outskirts and you'll find the former haunts of hobos, who dug housing right out of the ground, to avoid the heat. A half-century ago, miners moved in and blasted out bigger quarters, which became known as the "castles in clay." Some had wood floors and stoves, and legend has it one miner who hit it big even dug out storage space for his new Cadillac. Behold the birth of the underground parking garage.

It may be true that beauty is superficial, but Shoshonians know that ingenuity runs deep.









“As children, we occupy a limitless present with an infinite power to transform.

...Walks are dizzying adventures; the days tingle with unknowns, waiting to be made into wonders.”

– Alastair Reid Scottish poet, essayist

The smallest shall lead Shoshone into the future. The town’s children are not big in numbers, but they descend from hearty pioneer stock. Some undoubtedly will leave to pursue the world’s many wonders, though if they’re like their parents, they’ll come back. After all, they are the inheritors of history and the bearers of possibility. Who knows what castles they will build?



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