

Poplar Forest

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROB McDONALD

with an original poem by Sam Witt



In 1806, Thomas Jefferson began construction on a personal retreat near Bedford, Virginia, some ninety miles from his home, Monticello. He transformed nearly five thousand acres of pristine farmland and woods into a modestly equipped estate he called Poplar Forest.

Jefferson visited Poplar Forest regularly during construction and after the house was complete. He found there, as he wrote to a friend, “the solitude of a hermit.” Rob McDonald’s photographs of Poplar Forest explore the notion of retreat, of private space, which we all—even a man so great as Jefferson—require and seek instinctively.

“Purposefully ambiguous in representing a point in time, Rob McDonald’s photographs evoke a remarkable spirit—the conundrum of Mr. Jefferson’s ethos as a traditional classicist and a supreme modernist: cherishing a most profound past, inventing a most optimistic, imaginative future.”— Alan Chimacoff, design architect, photographer, and lecturer at Princeton University

“Although Thomas Jefferson was an amateur architect, he was, without question, the great American interpreter of Palladio, the preeminent Italian architect who built summer retreats in the Ve-neto for Venetian nobles. . . . [S]maller in scale, Jefferson’s Poplar Forest fully expresses the essence of Palladio’s great skill in creating the perfect sanctuary for reflection and restoration. Rob McDonald’s stunning photographs allow us to experience the beauty, light and tranquility of Jefferson’s retreat.”— Thomas A. Saunders III, Recipient of the National Humanities Medal and former Chairman, the Thomas Jefferson Foundation

“Rob McDonald’s photographs echo the balanced order of Thomas Jefferson’s vision. These images allow us to sit in Jefferson’s chair and read his thoughts as the quiet, beautiful light travels across interior surfaces.”— Claudia Smigrod, Professor of Photography, Corcoran College of Art + Design

The fourteenth H&B title, *Poplar Forest* will be published in a limited edition of 300 hand-sewn copies. The photographs are printed on an Indigo press, and all text is letterpress printed by hand. The interior pages are eggshell-finish Mohawk Superfine 80lb text. Each copy of this intimate 32-page book will be signed, numbered, and accompanied by an original print. 🐾 The deluxe edition (copies 1-40) is presented in a handmade slipcase, with an additional exhibition-size original print that is unique to this publication. 🐾 Rob McDonald’s photographs are exhibited nationally and included in several major museum and university collections. His books include *Birdhouses* (Horse & Buggy Press) and *Birth Place* (Nazraeli). He is a professor of English and associate dean of the faculty at Virginia Military Institute. For more about his work, visit www.robmcDonaldphotography.com. 🐾 Sam Witt’s first book, *Everlasting Quail*, won the 2000 Katherine Nason Bakeless Prize, sponsored by Breadloaf, and his second book, *Sunflower Brother*, won the 2006 Cleveland State University Press Open Book Prize. A graduate of the University of Virginia, he earned an MFA at the University of Iowa.



HORSE & BUGGY PRESS

401-B1 Foster Street Durham, North Carolina 27701

Portions of the proceeds from this book’s sale will benefit the non-profit Corporation for Thomas Jefferson’s Poplar Forest and the William J. Stockwell Scholarship at Virginia Military Institute.

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