“I had visions of four or five ranch hands and Gray, and since it was a family operation, maybe there’d be kids, and I’d just follow them around. I get there and it was none of that…it was just Gray and me…He said ‘Man, I am so glad you are here because I need help with a lot of things today.’ So, I’m like ‘Ok.’”
 Vince Lupo, a Carrizozo Artist in Residence, is describing his experience working on the Gallacher Land and Cattle ranch during his recent stay in Carrizozo. While critics like Barbie Zelizer in “Journalism, Memory, and the Voice of the Visual” argue that the photographer documents a direct representation of an objective reality versus a painter who uses imagination to create an image that is interpretive, Lupo, through his stark black and white photographs, blurs that line. There is a sense of connectedness between the photographer and his subject in his work, evident through his experience as a ranch hand.
 “[Gray] is a good guy, said Lupo. “We are about the same age. We connected. Considering that we came from vastly different backgrounds, we just clicked very well.”
 Lupo’s work allows the viewer to bring his or her experience to the work. As he explained, the story need not be his story.
 “[Viewers] bring their own narrative…to a photograph,” said Lupo. “Some people may not respond at all. Or they look at it in a totally different way. Someone told me that my work is unsettling and that, for me, is good. ‘Your work does nothing

for me’ would be the worst thing…worse than someone saying ‘Your work repulses me.’ I’d be like ‘Good, it provokes something.’ Not that that is the end goal. I’m not doing it to be provocative or be insulting. That is not my goal at all.”
 What he is doing is creating a frame from which a narrative can be created.
 “When I put a frame around that scene, there are certain things that I am including and things that I’m not including. Depending on which way I turn the camera, it can tell a completely different story. If I had turned the camera to the right and something wasn’t there, I’d be telling a totally different story…I don’t know why certain things strike me.”
 “Like driving on [the interstate] and I see something hidden in the brush and down a hillside and I drive another five miles to turn around,” said Lupo, describing glimpsing a model rocket just off the highway, its nose at a 45-degree angle, as if ready to take off. “I’m on I-25 so I put my flashers on quick…I don’t want to be pulled over and get a ticket. I look at this and then there it is, but what is the yin to the yang? That is what I’m looking for: What is the counterpoint? But there is nothing here. I can’t just photograph the rocket. I want to create a narrative. If I’m looking and I don’t see it then I start backing up to bring more things into the scene and then I see something else. Well, now, I have something. I didn’t put them there or touch them. Now I have a story.”
 Only slightly influenced by the New Topographics: Photographs of a Man-Altered Landscape” exhibition in the mid-1970s, Lupo continues to photograph the West in a way that elicits a conversation among disparate elements.
 “I try to look for, consciously or not, things that have relationships, like how humans have imposed themselves or left their mark on the landscape. Just outside of Santa Fe there are the remnants of an old outlet mall [and on a wall was a mural]. I saw horses, and it was amazing to me how real they looked--but they aren’t real, they are painted and they are on this odd-looking wall in this scrubby landscape…So it’s like they are wild horses, but they are not, but they look so real, but they are not, and they are galloping through this scrub. So, for me, this is where I see a relationship.”
 When Lupo does photograph people, they are often individuals working a place that is definitely the West, but the exact location and time is not easily identifiable. There is a spontaneity to his work, almost a snapshot image caught, again, as if out of the corner of his eye, quick, but capturing what it means to live not within an environment but on it, in the frame, the subject of a story for someone else to fill in the blanks…or not.
 At the end of the interview, Lupo photographed the author in an alley behind the Carrizozo Artist in Residence art space. He did not give instruction, he did not ask for a pose: he laid on the ground, his camera looking up and clicked the shutter button a couple of times. The session took maybe 3 minutes, but in those short moments, the distance between the camera and subject disappeared. What was left were two people connected by a camera’s gaze in their desires of trying to figure it all out.
 “I seem to come here because it has become familiar. I have real friends here and, now, I have a few more.”
 “Mapping the West” can be seen online at http://www.directiononeinc.com/mapping-the-west/. More works can be seen at https://www.flickr.com/photos/direction-one-inc/.