

# STATE OF THE ART

**S**peed, both lateral and vertical, is the main attraction of Utah's famous salt flats. Homemade hotrods, record-seeking jet cars, and handbuilt rockets share the crystalline plain with their creators and spectators, people whose taste in recreation is eccentric. Yet it was this strange landscape, not a lust for speed, that attracted photographer **Jimmy Katz**.

Katz, who ordinarily shoots the New York City jazz scene for record companies and music publications, went West to document the salt flats with his creative partner (and wife) Dena Katz. His images are sometimes so incongruous that they have the staged feeling of work by husband-and-wife team Robert and Shana ParkeHarrison or the daring duo of Kahn and Selesnick. (It takes two to be surreal, it seems.) But the Katzes' photographs are real, and in their way as wild a Western view as Adams's—Ansel, not Robert.

Assembled in a brilliant new book, *Salt Dreams* (powerHouse, \$60), the images are etched by a hard sun and almost hallucinatory in their color. Pink plastic flamingos are propped in briny pools as if to suggest that this place might be habitable. Orange traffic cones recede into the emptiness, begging for a car to slalom through them. A boy in a red Superman cape contemplates a disembodied green nosecone as big as he is. Girls in bathing suits play croquet on the table-flat salt at dusk, silhouetted against a distant rocket launch. The salt is crisscrossed by tire tracks, power cords, and fuses, all echoed by contrails scrawled across a flat, unmodulated turquoise sky.

The book's bleak subject matter defies the familiar edict not to shoot in mid-day sun. "Unlike most landscape photographers, I don't patiently wait for perfect light," says Katz. For his reasons, see page 20. —RUSSELL HART

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