

Imagining Tina
A Dialogue with Edward Weston

Maryam Eisler

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‘There is only one happiness in life, to love and be loved’.

Amantine Lucile Aurore Dupin
AKA George Sand

Foreword by Kim Weston

written at Edward Weston’s desk

I don’t consider myself a writer, even though I think that at some point in anyone’s life one wishes to be something that they’re not. There are always exceptions, and when I find something truly moving to write about, I turn to the words of Maryam Eisler: ‘What the f**k; give it a try.’

Over the years, I have met many people here on Wildcat Hill, the former home of my grandfather, Edward Weston. Wildcat Hill is where I live with my wonderful wife, lover and muse, Gina, as well as our son, Zach. There is such a deep history here at Wildcat; Gina, Zach and I are just another page in the history book.

Maryam has played an important role in the never-ending passion for art within the community that we strive to keep alive here at Wildcat. When we first met, I listened to her talk about her work and was inspired by the passion she had for what she was doing. Maryam had direction and a story to tell, but all her work with the female figure was remote and isolated in fantastic landscapes, the figure lost in the grandeur of nature. This approach was something relatively new to me, and I wrestled with a way to share my own feelings, direction and passion for the female form. I hoped that sharing a different perspective would not encourage replication, but create a desire to see the genre in a different light. Maryam has succeeded in doing this.

‘I wish I had taken that photograph,’ is what my grandfather would say when seeing the work of a friend or student that he really enjoyed. After seeing the work that Maryam produced at Wildcat, I shared the same sentiment. Maryam’s work showed me a sliver of her heart, and her inner creative connection with the female form was one that I had never experienced before.

This moment is when truth, clarity and honesty in art take on their true meanings. Maryam and I now walk the same road, not as teacher and student, but as passionate observers of time, down a path to endless discoveries. Much like Tina Modotti and Edward Weston, Maryam’s work has shown me that a shared passion and collaboration can result in the creation of timeless magic; this is what art is all about.

Carmel, California, 2018

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by Maryam Eisler

In my search for the Holy Grail of great photography, I found myself visiting Edward Weston's home on Wildcat Hill, near Carmel, in May 2017, searching for location and inspiration. Location, because there's nothing more moving than standing on hallowed ground walked before, tracing giant steps, ready to fall between the cracks, while searching for fact and fiction. How else do you seek to break barriers unless you travel the road trodden by the greats? Presumptuous? Maybe. But art, especially the art of photography, is about presumptions beyond the aesthetic norms.

I stood mesmerised in silence beside Kim Weston, Edward's grandson and an acclaimed photographer in his own right, in Edward's original darkroom. Here, Edward had printed *Pepper No. 30* and his 1936 *Nude in Doorway*, images that have intrigued my aesthetic sensibilities and preoccupied my mind for the majority of my adult artistic life. His handwritten chemical formulas were still plastered to the wall, and his desk, lamp, annotated notes and visitors' book were all as he had left them. Pictures of Edward with his friend Ansel Adams and many other illustrious creatives dotted the room, each object bathed in photographic light and history, offering pure creative inspiration.

This is also where magic happened, under the guiding hand of Kim Weston, for the next four days, as Kim and I talked, baked, ate and walked through Edward's personal spaces at Wildcat.

A pair of Mexican terracotta candlesticks, lit regularly since the 1930s for gatherings of friends and family, sat atop a mantelpiece. Edward had brought these candlesticks back from Mexico in 1926, after ending a passionate affair with activist, artist and accomplished photographer Tina Modotti. These objects, in their original and poignant setting, triggered my own journey and creative fantasy. I began to reimagine Edward and Tina's tumultuous affair, transported in time, space and place.

An Italian firebrand, Tina Modotti (born Assunta Adelaide Luigia Modotti Mondini, called Assuntina, and eventually Tina) emigrated to the United States from Udine, Italy, in 1913. She established herself as an actress before marrying the artist Roubaix de l'Abrie Richey and moving to Los Angeles, where she met Edward.

Tina and Edward shared a very special adventure together, one that went beyond a love for Mexico. They served as important catalysts in each other's artistic development, with Tina introducing Edward to the heart of Mexican intellectual circles and Edward in turn sharing his passion for photography with Tina. They both produced pictures of exceptional beauty in an important time of social reform, the wake of the Mexican Revolution. This was a moment when bohemian intellect met political activism through artistic sentiment.

In their first years in Mexico, Tina organised exhibitions for Edward while widening their circle of friends to include Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera. Rivera in particular, who collaborated with Tina on his mural works (and in bed), introduced the two to radical Communist idealists. Despite a richly passionate and intellectually charged period together, as time passed Tina would bury herself deeper in politics while Edward longed to return to his family and California.

It is the passion in their relationship and the role of Tina as muse, temptress, collaborator and instigator that has intrigued me for years.

While photographing at Weston's home surrounded by this history, I found that I began observing the body with an emphasis on purity of form and extracting an essence of the sublime feminine through shadow and light; presenting a more intimate portrait of 'Woman' with a capital W. I found myself constructing a visual interpretation of how I imagined Edward looked at Tina at the height of their passion, travelling the fine line between lust and trust, the untouchable and the intimate. In transposing myself into Edward's imaginative psyche, I may have managed to get to know him just a little bit better. And that in itself was priceless.

London, September 2018

The Art of Platinum Printing

by Martin Axon

I discovered platinum printing through the work of Irving Penn before moving from London to New York City in the early 1980s. Penn's platinum printing impressed me enormously; a print made with this process took on a completely different appearance when compared to the silver gelatin prints I was used to making. Images had a more three-dimensional quality, imprinted directly into the very fibre of the paper. The archival properties of a finished platinum print do not tarnish or fade, allowing the artwork to be on par with etchings, gravures and lithographs, the chosen media of so many fine artists.

The platinum printing process was invented in 1875, with England's last platinum printing studio working before the First World War. As the first truly archival photographic process, platinum printing was popular until 1914. However, when small-format cameras and the modern silver gelatin process gained in popularity, the platinum process became a lost art.

In 1980, I set up a platinum printmaking studio called The Platinum Press, in London's Camden Town, at the print atelier of Terry Wilson from Palm Tree Editions. There, I printed my own images – landscapes of Exmoor that were shown at The Photographers' Gallery and in a touring Arts Council exhibition – as well as photographs for the noted English painter David Inshaw and London photographers Paul Joyce and John Swannell. Then, in 1981, I was invited by photographer Dan Weaks to share a space in New York. By 1982, I had set up my own printmaking studio in Tribeca.

With my experience in platinum prints, I found the paper to be crucial to the process; a raw watercolour paper is required. An assignment in 1991 led me to work with the Arches paper mill in France, resulting in the production of the now famous ARCHES® Platine, a truly special paper used by photographers all over the world today.

In the history of photography, many great figure photographers have chosen platinum printing for their work, including Edward Weston, Edward Steichen, Imogen Cunningham, Alfred Stieglitz, Manuel Álvarez Bravo and Paul Outerbridge, to name just a few.

When one works as a platinum printmaker, it becomes a collaboration with the photographer to help bring his or her vision to life. Ansel Adams once said that taking the photograph is like writing a musical score and making the print is the performance.

I have personally printed many nude figure studies for some truly great photographers, including Robert Mapplethorpe, Bert Stern, Horst P. Horst, Annie Leibovitz, Patrick Demarchelier, Denis Piel and George Holz. Maryam Eisler's work is of the same calibre and is a joy to print.

Only time will tell whether Maryam's images will endure as historical images, but given their platinum print process on the finest ARCHES® Platine paper from France, and their beautiful image quality, they may well do.

Connecticut, September 2018



Wildcat Hill I



Wildcat Hill II



Wildcat Hill III



Wildcat Hill IV



Wildcat Hill V



Wildcat Hill VI



Carmel I



Carmel II



Carmel III



Carmel IV



Carmel V



Carmel VI



Bodie House I



Bodie House II



Bodie House III



Bodie House IV



Bodie House V



Bodie House VI



Big Sur I



Big Sur II



Big Sur III



Big Sur IV



Big Sur V



Big Sur VI



Point Lobos I



Point Lobos II



Point Lobos III



Point Lobos IV



Point Lobos V



Point Lobos VI

Acknowledgements

This book is dedicated to Edward Weston and Tina Modotti, and to the passion that fuelled their relationship while advancing their creativity and activism. This passion has in turn inspired me to produce this series of photographs, both intimate and ethereal in their extremity.

My thanks go to Kim, Gina and Zach Weston, who welcomed me with open arms to their family enclave and home on Wildcat Hill near Carmel, California, which also served as Edward's home from 1938 to 1958. I was inspired by their mentorship, their generosity and the power of their storytelling – not to mention Kim's delicious apple pie!

I used my time spent with the Westons to *live* Edward's life. I lived vicariously through objects belonging to the great photographer: his desk, his archives, his handwritten notes, his lamp, his darkroom and a medley of his photographs.

My gratitude also extends to George Holz, who, along with Kim Weston, guided my creative journey through its extensions, culminating in the creation of this oeuvre. Some of these photographs were taken on the beautiful grounds of Holz Farm in the Catskill Mountains of upstate New York.

Major thanks are due to my creative partner in crime, Martin Axon, generously introduced to me by my friend and accomplished curator, Carrie Scott. Martin's platinum prints are

a testament to the strength of his craftsmanship. This is a disappearing art form, and few today can produce prints like this to such an exacting standard and quality. Our shared conversations informed my thinking and entertained me on topics varying from photographic history to anecdotes on some of the giants of photography.

I would particularly like to express my thanks to Tristan Hoare and to his London Gallery. Thanks also go to Harper Levine and Harper's Books in New York for their continuous support and platforming of my work.

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Maryam Eisler, December 2018

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Wildcat Hill

Book One



Wildcat Hill I



Wildcat Hill II



Wildcat Hill III







Wildcat Hill VI



Maryam Eisler

Carmel

Book Two





Carmel II

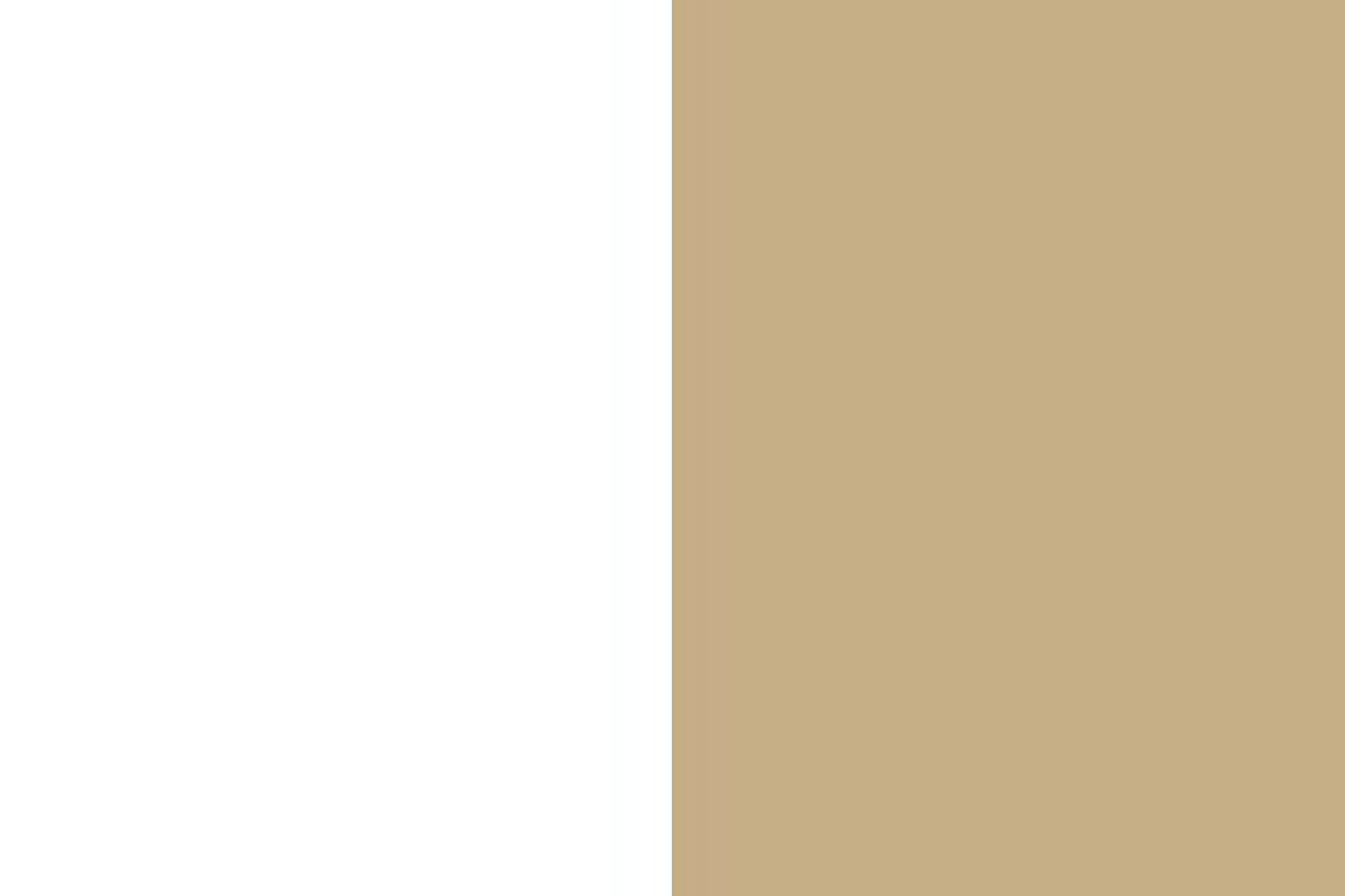


Carmel III









Bodie House

Book Three





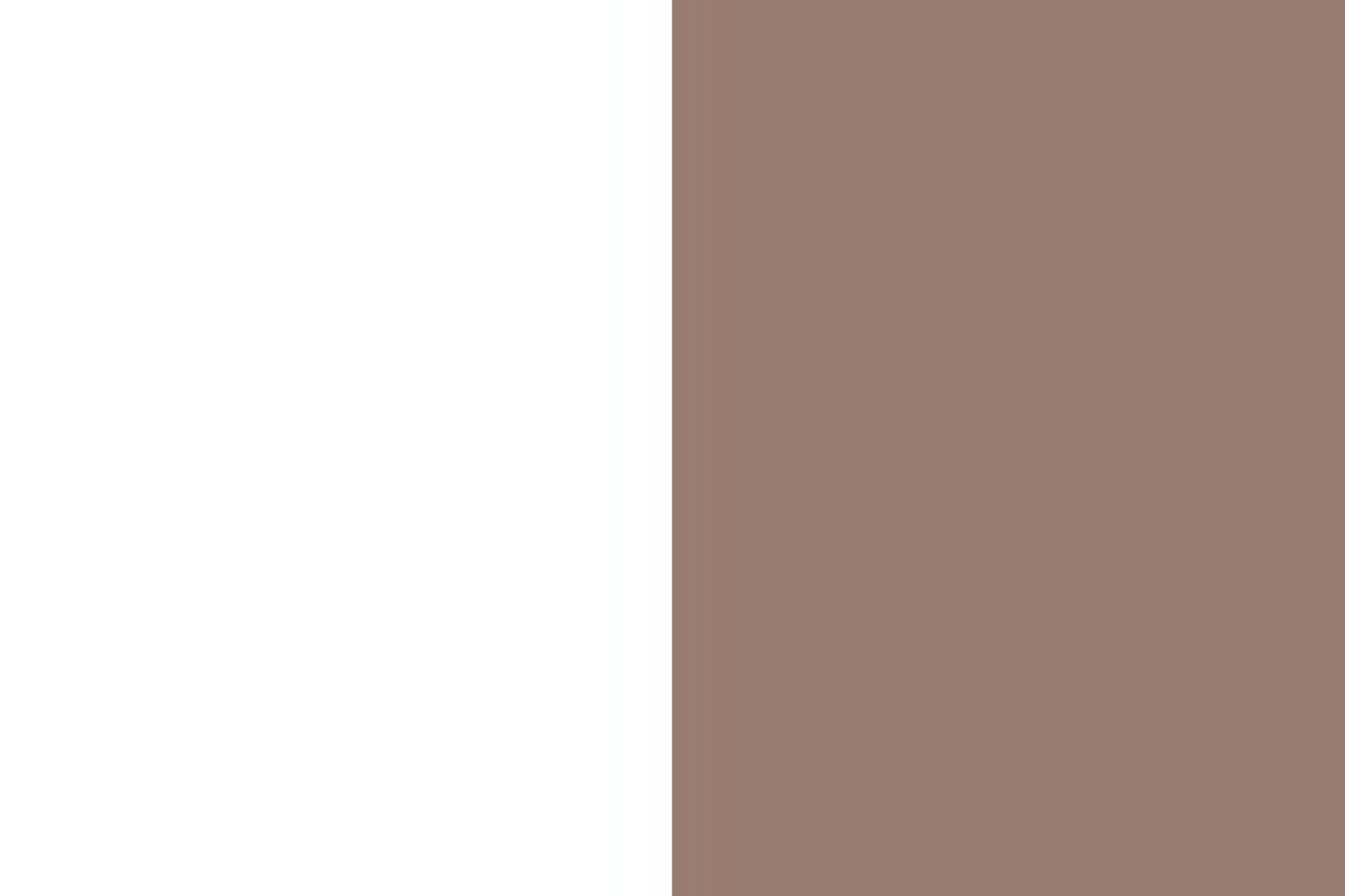




Bodie House IV







Big Sur

Book Four







Big Sur III









Point Lobos

Book Five



Point Lobos I



Point Lobos II



Point Lobos III



Point Lobos IV



Point Lobos V



Point Lobos VI



