



# Saltscapes: The Kite Aerial Photography of Cris Benton

*Cris Benton*

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On approach to SFO, a passenger glancing out the window will see the vivid patchwork of the South Bay's salt evaporation ponds. After a century of industrial salt production, over ten thousand acres of this once vast marshland are now being restored to their natural state. Using a kite to fly a radio-controlled camera to heights of up to three hundred feet, photographer Cris Benton brings this much overlooked part of the San Francisco Bay into sharp focus, highlighting one of the greatest landscape transformations underway in America.

With results as unexpected as they are alluring, Benton explores the "exuberant, otherworldly" South Bay salt ponds and marshes in various states of restoration. He reveals saturated colors, subtle textures, and vivid patterns not discernible from the ground. We linger on the lacy elegance of salt mounds; the stark beauty of a rail line running through ripples of bay water; the softness of snowy plovers in flight. Among the most enchanting are images that could be mistaken for Mark Rothko paintings, until closer examination reveals bulldozer tracks across muddy stretches of bay bottom.

Benton's images allow us to slip our earthly bonds and see the world from new heights, his aerial views offering a fresh perspective on familiar landscapes. Surprising and sublime, *Saltscapes* can be enjoyed equally as a collection of art photography and a portrait of ecological transformation and resilience.

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