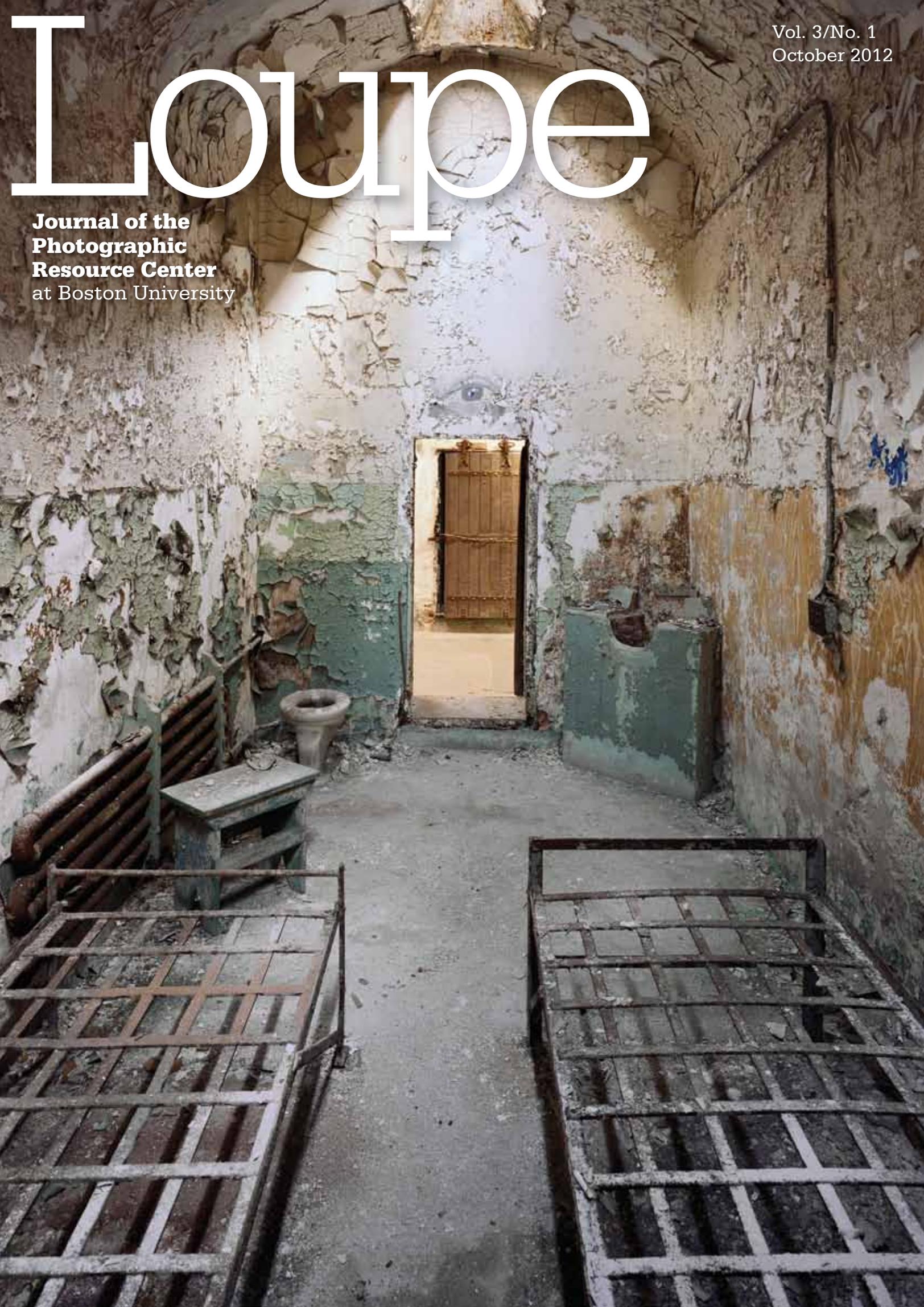


Vol. 3/No. 1
October 2012

Loupe

**Journal of the
Photographic
Resource Center**
at Boston University



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Contents

C.E. Morse: Beyond Recognition.....	2
With his colorful abstractions of rusting car parts and found objects, Morse illustrates that there is undiscovered beauty in unlikely places.	
Kevin Bauman: 100 Abandoned Houses	10
Focusing on his former home of Detroit, Bauman presents a compelling catalogue of deserted and deteriorating houses, each full of character and personality.	
Essay	16
Chasing the Ephemeral: Contemporary Photographers Representing the Process of Decay By Francine Weiss, PhD	
Center Weighted	18
Katherine Westerhout: Winter Light	22
Photographing abandoned factories, churches, theaters, and other public spaces, Westerhout balances light and dark both literally and figuratively.	

COVER PHOTOGRAPH

Katherine Westerhout, *Eastern State Penitentiary V*, 2009, © Katherine Westerhout, 2009.

From the Publisher

I am thrilled to report to our members and readers that on August 1, Francine Weiss began work as the PRC's new Curator and *Loupe* Editor.

Francine comes to this position with unique and distinguished qualifications making her singularly qualified to lead the creative and intellectual direction of the PRC. She recently completed her PhD at Boston University, writing her dissertation on Edward Weston's photographic contribution to Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. Francine brings many years of experience curating exhibitions and writing about contemporary art and photography. Francine has worked at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC in the Department of Photographs as Acting Assistant Curator. She was a curatorial fellow at the deCordova Sculpture Park + Museum, an intern at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and a graduate research assistant at the Fogg Art Museum.

Francine's first task at the PRC was to work on this issue of *Loupe*. It is no small feat that while working part time, and managing numerous other projects, she has done an outstanding job.

Following in the format of the last issue of *Loupe* that focused on non-traditional photographic processes, this issue is also thematically based, focusing on the subject of decay and deterioration. The three artists presented on the following pages—C.E. Morse, Kevin Bauman, and Katherine Westerhout—focus on the aesthetic, spiritual, cultural, and socio-economic implications of photographic images of man-made objects and environments in various stages of decay. In the work of C.E. Morse, the images are stunningly beautiful and exist primarily as a formal exercise in aesthetics. With Bauman and Westerhout, the aesthetics of decaying surfaces are counterbalanced with the social and economic implications of what caused this decay and what it says about the people who formerly occupied these spaces and the society that birthed these conditions.

In closing, I would like to thank all the photographers, sponsors, collectors, galleries, benefactors, and volunteers who are supporting the PRC 2012 Benefit Auction that takes place on October 13. Your support of the PRC is greatly appreciated!

Glenn Ruga

PRC Executive Director and *Loupe* Publisher

C.E. Morse

Beyond Recognition

The question is not what you look at—but how you look and whether you see.

— Henry David Thoreau

The colorful abstract photographs in C.E. Morse's *Beyond Recognition* rely upon the encounter or "collusion" of two forces, which he identifies as "Nature and Man." Amidst junkyards and scrap heaps of cast-off metals and automobiles, Morse finds car parts, dumpsters, boat parts, and pieces of metal transformed into a rusty state of decay by the effects of nature and the outdoors. In this "collusion," man and nature create a unique kind of art. Yet as viewers, it is not lost on us that for this art to be captured and preserved requires the sensitivity and skill of the artist, and it is the photographer who is responsible for the alchemy that transforms these deteriorating cars and man-made found objects into works of art of unequivocal beauty.

Part of what compels Morse to photograph car parts and found objects is the impulse to chase that which is ephemeral. Aware that the cars and objects he photographs will be crushed or restored and that salvage yards are frequently closing, he captures them "at the moment of their existence before they disappear." With this knowledge, we viewers may relish in the sweetness of this realization: that we are seeing what is about to disappear or what may have already disappeared.

In pursuit of "this art" that nature and man create, Morse is drawn to the visual landscapes that others might overlook or "deem ugly": "erosion, collision, rust, and rot." By focusing on these subjects close-up, Morse creates compositions of textured elements saturated with a spectrum of vibrant colors created by paint and rust. "Presented without identification," he writes, these subjects "can be beautiful, seductive, and emotionally evocative." To discourage the viewer from approaching his work with preconceived ideas, he enigmatically titles his work and excludes references to recognizable details, save for

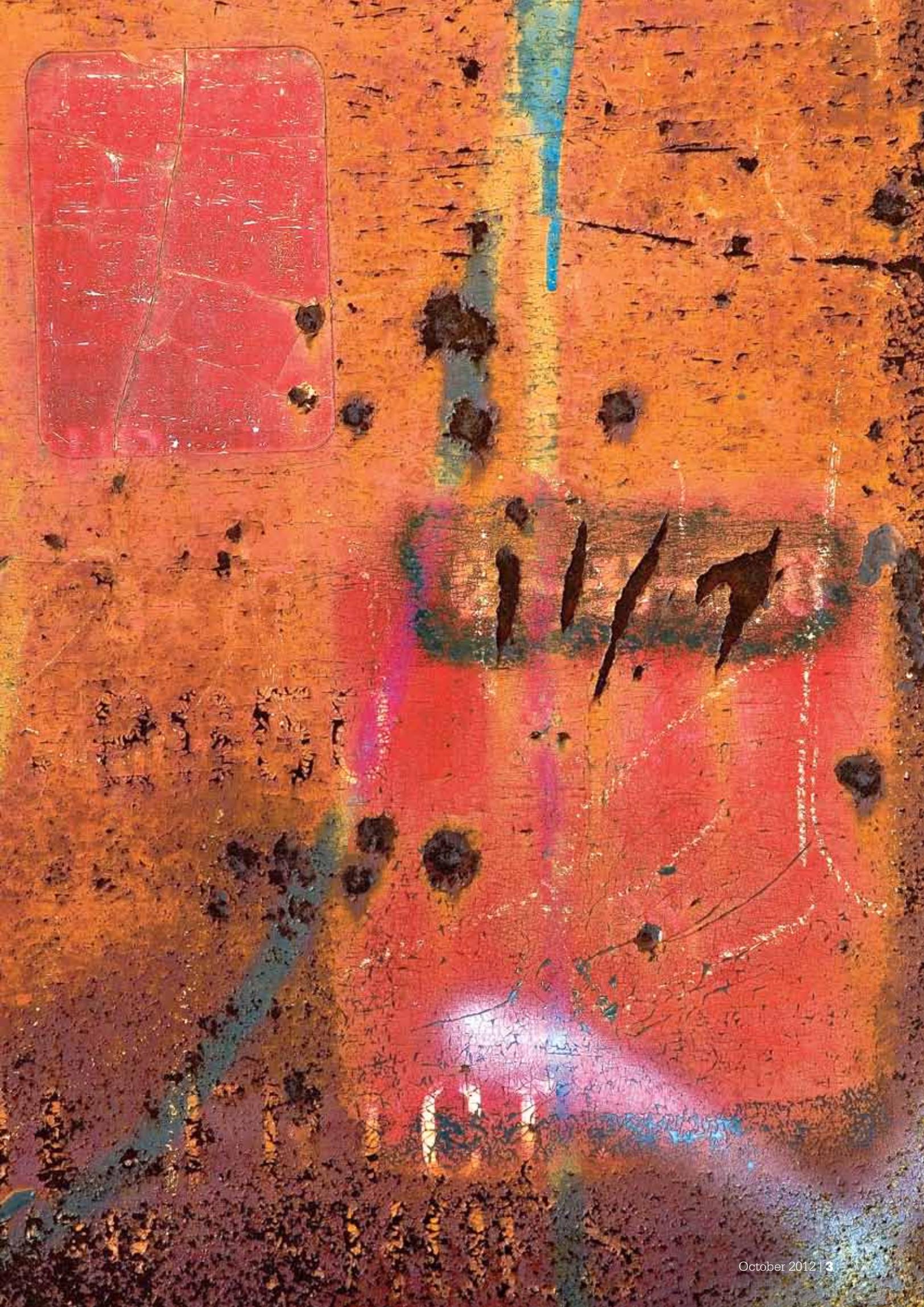
the few times a door handle on a car anchors the image to a recognizable reality. In this way, he encourages the viewer's own subjective response to his work. The viewer undergoes a process of discovery and self-discovery. Quoting Henry David Thoreau, Morse notes: "The question is not what you look at—but how you look and whether you see." I could not think of a quotation that more aptly encapsulates what Morse's photographs do. His work is very much about looking and seeing as a means of experiencing, feeling, and perceiving. His abstract compositions instruct us to UNrecognize the recognizable and to see with more than just our eyes.

Morse earned his B.F.A. in photography at the Rhode Island School of Design studying with notaries Aaron Siskind and Paul Krot and has participated in the Maine Photographic Workshops. Using a digital camera with Hasselblad lenses, Morse makes inkjet prints in different sizes and prefers to make large prints around 24 x 36 to 40 x 60 inches. He cites many influences in his work, from art and popular culture, including his background in watercolor painting and a fondness for Andrew Wyeth's more abstract paintings. Based in Maine, he has shown his work throughout New England and around the country at the Gold/Smith Gallery, ME; Lester Gallery, ME; Center for Fine Art Photography, CO; PHOTOSTOP Gallery, VT; PhotoPlace Gallery, VT; Three Columns Gallery at Harvard University, MA; Etal, CA; and the Owls Head Transportation Museum, ME.

C.E. Morse was selected as the *Loupe* winner for the PRC Staff Award from the *EXPOSURE 2012* submissions.

— Francine Weiss

Sopoty #63, December 10, 2006.





Jonhu #509, June 10, 2012.

Noberron #83, June 26, 2012.





Running Light, October 11, 2011.

Huhtwa #34, March 24, 2005.





'47 Ford Grille, May 6, 2008.

Wateng #138, July 2, 2006.



Kevin Bauman

100 Abandoned Houses

These houses represent a particular moment in the city's history when the housing market crash and economic recession pervaded the architectural landscape of Detroit.

Born and raised in the Detroit area, Kevin Bauman witnessed the gradual changes to the built environment of Detroit over the course of years. He began photographing the abandoned houses, mansions, and buildings of Detroit over a decade ago, and what began as a creative outlet soon evolved into an extensive study of the neglected and deteriorating houses of Detroit culminating in his series *100 Abandoned Houses*.

Initially it was the abandoned houses of Brush Park that captured Bauman's interest; on the outskirts of Detroit's entertainment district, the abandoned houses and mansions of Brush Park stood in stark contrast to Detroit's nearby thriving landmarks and areas, such as the Fox Theater, Wayne State University, Masonic Theater, and the central business district. When some of the Brush Park houses were destroyed in a renewal project around 2000, Bauman turned his camera toward the many other abandoned neighborhoods and houses of Detroit. Deserted or neglected because the owners could not afford upkeep, repairs, or mortgage payments or had to leave in search of work, these houses represent a particular moment in the city's history when the housing market crash and economic recession pervaded the architectural landscape of Detroit.

A former sociology major, the social and human implications of the changes to Detroit's neighborhoods are never lost on Bauman. Yet to think of Bauman's photographs as purely "social" or "documentary" does not fully explain their visual resonance. Skillfully composed, the photographs of *100 Abandoned Houses* are examinations of shape, form, and color. With the idea of creating a catalog of houses—like a product catalog—Bauman focused on one house in each photograph. As a result, each photograph becomes a portrait of an isolated and unique house. In some photographs, vestigial

architectural details hint at the house's style and its original pristine condition while in others the houses are so badly damaged viewers can only imagine how they once appeared. All of the images, however, show the interventions of man and nature over time: damage from fire, graffiti on walls, and vines and trees growing through the remains of houses. Photographed at different times of day and during different seasons (to achieve the desired effects of light), the images in *100 Abandoned Houses* suggest the ongoing process of deterioration. Winter also has the added effect of making houses appear as colorful geometric structures set against a white ground.

Using his old Hasselblad medium format camera, Bauman scans his color negatives and prints the images on inkjet or Lightjet style printers. Each print is 5 x 5 inches, and Bauman has printed some images in larger sizes, such as 8 x 8 inches and even 24 or 36 inches square.

Kevin Bauman currently resides in Denver but continues to photograph Detroit. He is currently working on a series entitled *Detroit's Small Churches*, in which he photographs the reuse of small structures as churches. His other photographic interests include industrial Detroit and Detroit at night. He has shown his work throughout Michigan at the Lawrence Street Gallery, Oakland Community College, Biddle Gallery, Birmingham Bloomfield Art Center, Novi and Livonia Civic Centers, and at Detroit Focus 2000, as well as the Maniscalco Gallery, SC. Bauman has also exhibited his work abroad at the Victor Lope Arte Contemporaneo, Barcelona, Spain.

— Francine Weiss



Untitled #86, February 2008.



Untitled #103, February 2008.



Untitled #19, March 2004.



Untitled #89, December 2004.



Untitled #5, October 2004.

Chasing the Ephemeral

Contemporary Photographers Representing

This issue of *Loupe* features three artists photographing the process of decay or deterioration. While quite a few photographers have focused on the decay of flora and fauna—a famous example being Sally Mann’s photographs for her exhibition at the Corcoran Art Gallery and accompanying book *What Remains* (2003)—a number of photographers are concentrating on the deterioration of the built environment and man-made objects. There are many explanations for this growing trend, the most obvious of which is the abundance of this subject matter. As Kevin Bauman explains (see page 10), he began photographing the abandoned houses of Detroit because they were ubiquitous aspects of the urban landscape. As the built environment suffers the effects of the economic recession, both in the United States and abroad, the number of examples of urban decay multiply. One can find a parallel for this historic and cultural moment in the 1930s and 1940s when photographers joined other tourists and flocked to plantation ruins. Walker Evans, Clarence Laughlin, and Edward Weston to name a few, sought inspiration in these otherworldly sites.

Abundance is not the only explanation, however. When many of these artists articulate their interests in the theme of deterioration, they mention the delight they find in discovering beauty amidst ruin, or in “the ugly.” Nineteenth-century romantics and advocates of the picturesque wrote extensively about the beauty found in the crumbling architectural ruins of Ancient



Yves Marchand and Romain Meffre, *Ballroom, American Hotel, Detroit*, from *The Ruins of Detroit*, 2007, ultrachrome, © Yves Marchand and Romain Meffre, 2007.

When many of these artists articulate their interests in the theme of deterioration, they mention the delight they find in discovering beauty amidst ruin, or in “the ugly.”

Greece and Medieval Europe that were transformed by time and nature. In the twenty first century, photographers are gravitating to this idea, revisiting this theme, and using their eyes and the camera to expand upon the creative expressions of beauty amidst ruin.

A final explanation for the flourishing interest in photographing decay lies in the medium of photography itself—in its unique and inimitable ability to capture and

preserve a moment while concomitantly reminding us that that moment is already gone (in *Camera Lucida*, critic Roland Barthes once poetically referred to cameras as “clocks for seeing”). Thus, it is no surprise that a number of artists photographing deterioration cite an attraction to “impermanence” and a drive to capture the ephemeral as inspiration for their work.



Ethna O'Regan, *Untitled*, from *After Magdalene*, 2009, c-print, © Ethna O'Regan, 2009.

the Process of Decay



Shaun O'Boyle, *Window Light*, from the *Asylum Series*, 2003, pigment on paper, © Shaun O'Boyle, 2003.

C.E. Morse (see page 2) describes photographing dumpsters and car parts at junkyards and returning a week later to discover his original subject has changed or vanished. He found the perfect term to describe his attachment to the theme of impermanence: *wabi-sabi*. A Japanese philosophy of aesthetics that has undergone many iterations and dates back as far as before the fifteenth century, *wabi-sabi* has had many connotations over the centuries: solitude, simplicity, imperfection. It has also come to mean the beauty of, or in, transience. Like contemporary photographers chasing the continuously changing and ever-vanishing aspects of the man-made world, *wabi-sabi* embraces the changes in simple objects.

In addition to the three photographers whose work is featured in this issue of *Loupe*, many others are using deteriorating places and objects as a starting point for creative expression. Over a five year period, French photographers Yves Marchand and Romain Meffre made images of the deteriorating and abandoned industrial sites, residences, and institutions of Detroit

culminating in their series *The Ruins of Detroit*. Photographing what they call in their artists' statement "the state of ruin," Marchand and Meffre explore the ideas of fragility, permanence, and impermanence. "Photography," they write, "appeared to us as a modest way to keep

a little bit of this ephemeral state." Their photographs also embody a broader view of Detroit as a fallen empire "no less than Pyramids of Egypt, the Coliseum of Rome, or the Acropolis of Athens . . ."

Perhaps not all viewers will perceive Marchand and Meffre's photographs as depictions of a fallen empire, but most will feel that they are viewing the aftermath of a catastrophic event or an elaborate crime scene (one may see irony in their photograph of an abandoned police station in which photographs of criminals and presumably victims lay strewn around the office in piles). With their strong sense of composition and use of color, Marchand and Meffre imbue their subjects with a stillness and beauty—as if disorder and change have been halted for a moment in time. Everywhere in their pictures we see the evidence of human activity—opened books, pulled-out drawers, empty chairs—yet human beings are conspicuously absent from their scenes. Their photographs show a world somewhere between what is real and unreal, but of course these were, and are, *real* places that the pair photographed.

Closer to home, we find the photographs of Shaun O'Boyle from Massachusetts. Visitors to the PRC who saw the *NEPR Showcase* in August will remember O'Boyle's series *Rail Lines*, which included images of the abandoned buildings that once owed their existence to the railroad. "Getting a fix on the present landscape is a challenge," he writes, "It is a complex, continually changing place influenced by many sources." Amongst O'Boyle's extensive photographs of ruins are his intriguing photographs of abandoned asylums largely from the upstate New York area and Massachusetts. Taken both in black and white and color, O'Boyle's melancholic asylum photographs show the empty corridors, rooms, and cells of these abandoned mental institutions. By focusing on the rigid architectural structure of these hospitals, O'Boyle underscores the irony of the present situation of the asylums: whereas they once imposed order on the lives of patients, they have devolved into places of utter chaos and disorder in their deserted states. Naturally, the asylums suggest various social relationships and cultural approaches to mental health. In shambles, they beg the questions: what happened to the patients? Where did they go? And what does this place tell us about changing attitudes toward mental health?

Irish photographer Ethna O'Regan focuses on the ruins of another type of institutional space, one of the many Magdalene Laundries of Ireland. Started in the nineteenth century, and run by nuns, these "laundries" had their most enduring

Continued on page 20.

By Erin Wederbrook Yuskaitis



EXPOSURE 2012. Photo by Helena Goessens.

The PRC's spring and summer seasons were unexpectedly busy, but we continue to bring new and innovative opportunities to our members and the New England photography community. Between our exhibitions, workshops, Nights at the PRC, lectures, and special events, it was one heck of an unusually warm summer!

Gallery Exhibitions

In between the 2012 Student Exhibition and EXPOSURE 2012, the PRC's gallery hosted a small exhibition for one week in May titled *What I want to say is ...* presented by Take 5 Foundation. The exhibition featured the work of five middle school students from Epiphany School in Dorchester who were given cameras for a year. With the guidance of a professional photographer, they developed photographic work to tell their stories, which culminated in a gallery show at the PRC celebrating the children. The Take 5 Foundation is an organization that provides quality time, attention, and instruction to five children per project, utilizing the expertise and talent of individuals in the community. For the foundation's inaugural program, PRC member and photographer Brenda Bancel worked with Alonzo, Devon, Shantez, Wendy, and Tayla to foster their

creative potential and to recognize their ability to contribute to society through their photography. According to Bancel, "These kids come from difficult circumstances and almost all have recently witnessed violence. I'm so proud of them, and in the process, they are the ones who taught me a lot."

From June 5 – July 18, EXPOSURE 2012 occupied the PRC's gallery. Alison Nordström, Curator of Photographs and Director of Exhibitions at George Eastman House, served as the juror for the 17th iteration of the PRC's annual juried exhibition, honoring in on work that demonstrated the

human tendency to sort, organize, compare, and contrast types within a visual category. From an original submission pool of 270 artists, the ten selected artists whose outstanding work clearly encompassed the diversity in the photographic medium today included:

Mary Ellen Bartley (Wainscott, NY),
Standing Open

Thomas Brennan (Hinesburg, VT)
Collecting Feathers

Nan Brown (Quincy, CA)
Trailers Collected

Odette England (Providence, RI)
Thrice Upon a Time

Tony Loreti (Belmont, MA)
Working Portraits – BEST OF SHOW

Mark Lyon (Marlboro, NY)
Landscapes for the People

Robert Moran (Bar Harbor, ME)
Relics

Garie Waltzer (Cleveland Heights, OH)
Living City

David Wolf (San Francisco, CA)
Nurturing Time, Life in a Backyard Garden

Diana Zlatanovski (Arlington, MA),
Wrench Typology

For more information about each artist and project, to view a virtual tour of this stellar exhibition, or to read the review by Mark Feeny in *The Boston Globe* and an interview



Beth Hanks in front of her installation at the NEPR Showcase with PRC staff members Erin Wederbrook Yuskaitis and Julie Kukharenko. Photo by Helena Goessens.



Pelle Casse, Christopher Chadbourne, and Glenn Ruga at the opening reception for *PRC in NYC*. Photo by Matthew Lomano.

with Alison Nordström on the PRC's blog, please go to www.prcboston.org/exposure.

This August, the PRC hosted the *NEPR Showcase*, an exhibition that featured work by photographers who participated in at least one review at the New England Portfolio Reviews (NEPR) in May and who presented their work at the Portfolio Walk. The PRC and the Griffin Museum of Photography partner together each year to offer NEPR in the spring. The PRC staff selected six photographers at the Portfolio Walk and then team curated *NEPR Showcase* to provide yet another opportunity to promote the talented photographers of the region. The exhibition included an interesting variety of work, ranging from a site-specific photo installation dealing with the arc of passionate experience to investigations of changing industrial landscapes to fragmented prints on airmail paper assembled into collages. Photographers included:

Beth Hankes, (Cambridge, MA)
Unrelenting Silence

Phillip Jones, (Boston, MA)
Shooting in the Dark

Anita Licis-Ribak, (Amherst, MA)
Time Still and Letters Between the (Coast) Lines

Shaun O'Boyle, (Dalton, MA)
Rail Lines

David Ricci, (Lee, MA)
Edge of Chaos

David Torcoletti, (Norwell, MA)
Soldiers

For more information about each artist and project, to view a virtual tour of this unique exhibition, or to read the review by Mark Feeney in *The Boston Globe* and the Photo Nights Boston blog post by Liz Devlin, please go to www.prcboston.org/exhibit/exhibit2012_NEPR_showcase.

Satellite Exhibitions

The PRC expanded its reach beyond the gallery walls by presenting satellite exhibits in two different locations. *PRC in NYC*, curated by Executive Director Glenn Ruga and juried by PRC board members Neal Rantoul and Chehalis Hegner, took place at the New York Photo Festival in Brooklyn's DUMBO neighborhood in May. Held in the well-known gallery building at 111 Front Street, *PRC in NYC* allowed the PRC to show off the vibrant photography community in New England to an international audience at this four-day festival. Artists included in this exciting satellite show were: Noah David Bau, Pelle Cass, Christopher Chadbourne, Dominic Chavez, Vivien Goldman, Nancy Grace Horton, Toni Pepe, Esther Pullman, William Scully, and Tom Young.

Additionally, the PRC hosted a local satellite exhibit from June 12 – September 18 at the Boston Society of Architects featuring the work of PRC founder Chris Enos. The exhibition, entitled *Chris Enos: The Remaking of Boston*, included a series of nineteen photographs taken by Enos from 1975 to 1980. She documented the Leather District and Fort Point Channel at a time of tremendous urban revitalization in Boston. During this time, the industrial neighborhood transformed from gritty artist studios into the polished financial and cultural centers it is today.

Jacquelyn Canevari provided invaluable support for both satellite exhibits as Associate Curator.



Students make top quality prints during Neal Rantoul's workshop in June. Photo by Marisol Marquez.

Both satellite exhibits are viewable as virtual tours on the PRC's Flickr site.

Professional Development Opportunities

In conjunction with *EXPOSURE 2012*, Juror Alison Nordström and *EXPOSURE 2011* photographer Rania Matar, along with PRC Executive Director Glenn Ruga, led a two-hour interactive seminar on strategies and techniques to advance your development as an artist and your career as a creative professional. Attendees had the opportunity to discuss artistic vision, critiques and portfolio reviews, juried competitions, exhibitions, galleries, portfolio preparation, artist statements, resumes, publishing, and choices of subject matter and technique.

Local photographer, educator, respected printer, and PRC board member Neal Rantoul offered a one-day workshop on digital printing on Saturday, June 9. This intensive workshop was divided into morning and afternoon sessions, each focusing on a specific facet of printing: the morning session covered monitor calibration and color correcting, output file size, dpi requirements, file management, storage, and effective

Continued on next page.

Center Weighted

Continued from previous page.

sharpening, with the objective of learning the process of making excellent prints; and the afternoon session focused on using Rantoul's workflow and preparing files for printing. Students completed the workshop by creating prints of their own work.

Fostering a Photography Community

On May 2, Shelby Lee Adams presented work from his new book *Salt & Truth*, featuring black and white images of people from the hollers of Adams' native eastern Kentucky. As a MassArt graduate, current resident of western Massachusetts, and former professor at Salem State University, Adams's ties to the New England photography community run deep amidst the national attention that his work receives. His slide presentation included informal photos made with his friends and subjects as well as quotes and observations made by his people to share with and inform the viewer of his process and the collaborative nature of his work.

The PRC continued its popular Nights at the PRC program in May and June before taking a brief hiatus for the summer months in July and August. On May 30, Christopher Churchill hosted Large Format Night, open to all photographers using large format cameras. Churchill presented his own work from his new book *American Faith* and facilitated discussion amongst the other four presenters and the sizeable group of attendees who all came together to celebrate local work being done in large format.

On June 20, Jesseca Ferguson hosted Alt Night, open to all artists using "alternative" or "original" processes, from handmade to anti-quarian to pinhole, in celebration of photography's wonderful eccentricities. Ferguson presented her own work, featured in the previous issue



Shelby Lee Adams fields questions from the audience after his lecture in May. Photo by Helena Goessens.

of *Loupe* (June 2012, Vol. 2/No. 3), and commented on the truly unique work of the other five presenters. The work presented at Alt Night included hand-applied gelatin silver photo emulsion on duck eggs, life size body photograms, Polaroid transfers, gum bichromate prints, and scratched and wood stained prints. What a refreshing variety of "alternative" processes!

First Annual Members' Celebration

On Tuesday, August 21, the PRC hosted its first annual Members' Celebration, a mix-and-mingle party designed to honor our most prized constituents, our members! This exciting evening featured refreshments, door prizes, discounts on PRC memberships, and an opportunity to meet the PRC's new Curator and *Loupe* Editor, Francine Weiss. While there are many benefits to being a PRC member, we hope this new annual event will become a highlight for many years to come. Please contact Julie Kukharenko, PRC's Membership, Finance & Operations Manager, if you are interested in individual, institutional, or library memberships.

Chasing the Ephemeral

Continued from page 17.

presence in Ireland. The laundries were homes in convents where women designated as immoral by society were sent to live. Forced into a daily regiment that involved mass and then long hours of work in

laundries run by the convents—the core principal being that these women would wash away their own sins by washing the soiled laundry of others—women lived and died in these institutions. In her series *After Magdalene*, O'Regan photographed the last of these laundries to close in Dublin; run by Sisters of Our

Lady of Charity, it closed in 1996. The colorful yet lonely and deserted rooms in O'Regan's photographs hint at the doleful existences of the women who lived in them. Details, such as faded pink wallpaper and floral upholstery become metaphors for the wear and tear of their lives while televisions, linens, and crucifixes remind us of their recent labor. Through her photographs, O'Regan aims to document the cruelty of the Magadalene Laundries while also restoring the dignity of the women imprisoned there.

As the photographers mentioned in this issue of *Loupe* remind us, everything is in constant flux, changing and vanishing, and photography is a medium uniquely equipped, at least for a time, to capture and preserve the ephemeral, the places and objects that are deteriorating and vanishing. Nineteenth-century photographer Julia Margaret Cameron wrote of her photographic practice in her autobiography: "I longed to arrest all the beauty that came before me." Perhaps not all photographers see beauty before them all the time; many have to search for it. Others discover it amongst the mundane or the ugly. But the photographers discussed here, like Cameron and the many others who have gone before them, all seek to "arrest" what they find that is transient, interesting, and beautiful, and thank goodness for all of us that they do.

A YEAR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

at the Peabody Essex Museum
pem.org/photography

How do
photographs
portray your
imagination?

How do
photographs
reveal emotion
in everyday
circumstances?

How do
photographs
capture moments
in nature that
can't be seen?

Join the visual conversation!

Learn more about the photographers whose work is on view during PEM's Year of Photography. Take your own inspired photos, email them to PEM and share them with your friends on Facebook. We'll also post selections on PEM's Pinterest page!

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Katherine Wester

Winter Light

For fifteen years, Katherine Westerhout has photographed the interior spaces of abandoned and deteriorating nineteenth and twentieth-century buildings. She first photographed these structures in the San Francisco Bay area and then moved on to other parts of the country and world, such as Louisiana, Pennsylvania, Buffalo, Michigan, and Southeast Asia. She has captured places as diverse as the churches, synagogues, hotels, and theaters of Detroit, monumental grain elevators along the Buffalo River, buildings at Bethlehem Steel in Lackawanna, Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia, mental hospitals in New York, and temples in Asia.

With so many photographers documenting urban decay, my first question for Westerhout was what attracted her to abandoned buildings. Her answer was unexpected: “They are a reflection of the psyche.” Elaborating, Westerhout explained that she began photographing them as a response to a profound loss and period of transition in her life. Thus, in Westerhout’s work, interiority is both literal and figurative as her interior life finds its fullest expression in the external world of the empty buildings that she photographs. The use of artistic expression to cope with loss is a Jungian concept, she reminded me. The psychologist Carl Jung advocated the idea of healing through artistic expression.

Nevertheless, Westerhout’s photographs in her series *Winter Light* are not gloomy ruminations on destruction and loss. Rather they embody a range of qualities and emotions; they are at once melancholic and uplifting, elegiac and magical. These qualities are part of the photographer’s conscious aim to balance what she refers to as the “psychic dark and light,” so that her photographs encompass both. Her keen senses of light and composition play integral roles in achieving this harmony. Interested in “how light falls into these buildings,” Westerhout observes

the light and figures out the best way to represent it. From the green luminescent glow of rooms in the historic Belle Isle Aquarium to the warm rays of light streaming through the windows of a deserted Protestant church, Westerhout’s representations of light and space result in hauntingly beautiful photographs.

Though she resisted digital technology at first, Westerhout eventually began using it when she felt it could achieve the full range of light to dark that she wanted. As the work grew larger in her mind, so did her scale. Currently using a Phase One digital camera, Westerhout makes large-scale inkjet prints in the range of 4 ½ x 6 feet. This print size, Westerhout explains, “facilitates [the viewer’s] entry into the space.”

Westerhout earned her B.A. in art/photography from San Francisco State University. She has exhibited her work extensively throughout California with shows at the Electric Works Gallery, Mark Horton Architecture, University of California Davis, Fresno Museum of Art, Swarm Gallery, Museum of Quilts and Textiles, Atrium Gallery of the State Building, Latham Building, and SFMoMA Artists Gallery, as well as in New York City at the Sepia International Gallery and A.I.R. Gallery. She has also exhibited her work in Berlin and London and has work in collections at the San Jose Museum of Art, CA; Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers University, NJ; and Adobe Systems, CA. Commissioned by the Architects for Humanity, Westerhout is traveling internationally this fall to photograph abandoned military sites slated for re-use. Westerhout is based in California.

— Francine Weiss



Woodward Presbyterian Church, Detroit, 2009.



National Theatre I, Detroit, 2007.

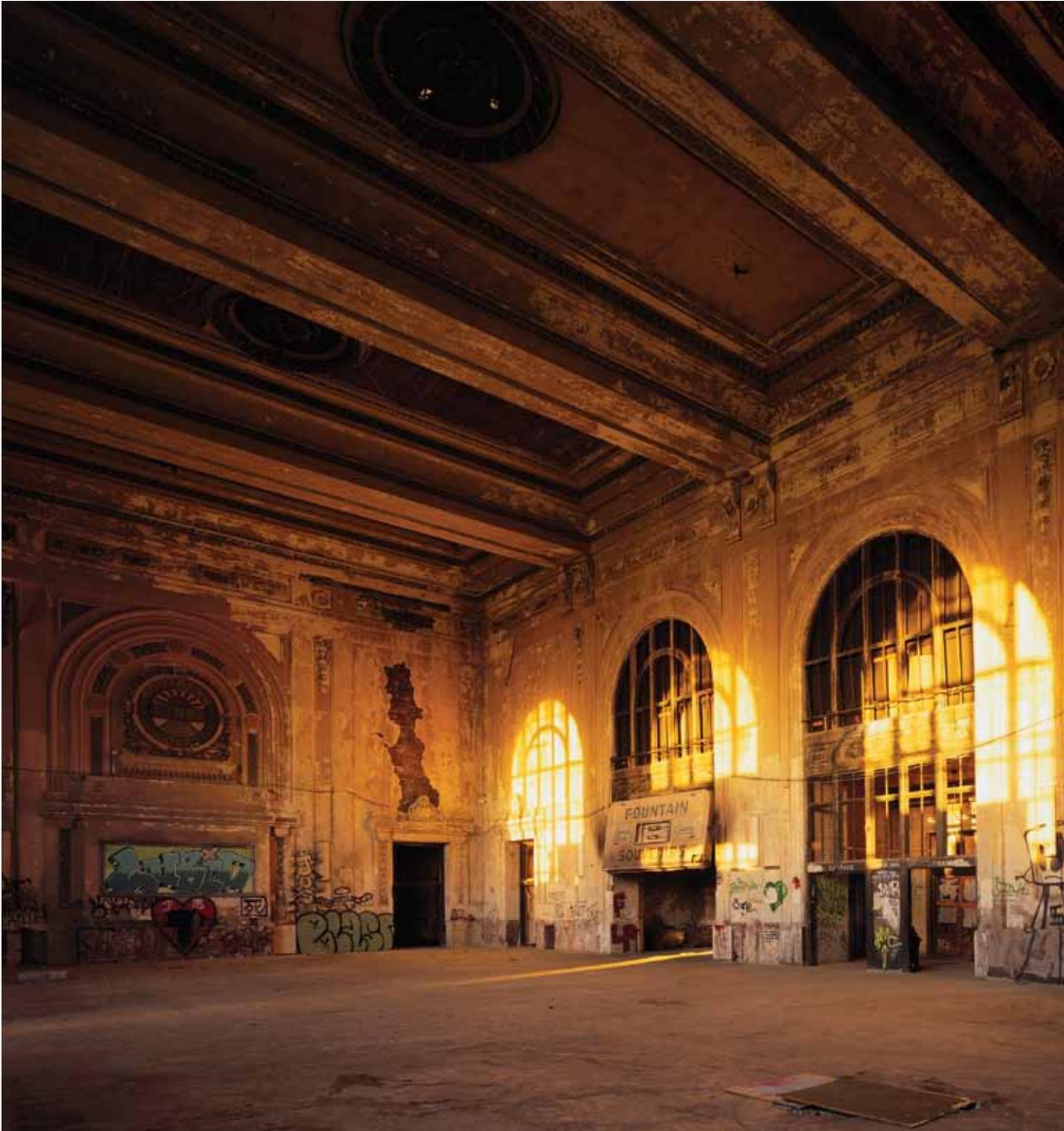
Wards VI, Oakland, 2001.



Katherine Westerhout







16th Street Train Station I, Oakland, 2009.

Page 26-27: *Bethlehem Steel I, Lackawanna, 2008.*



Aquarium, Belle Isle I, 2007.



Grossingers Pool I, 2011.



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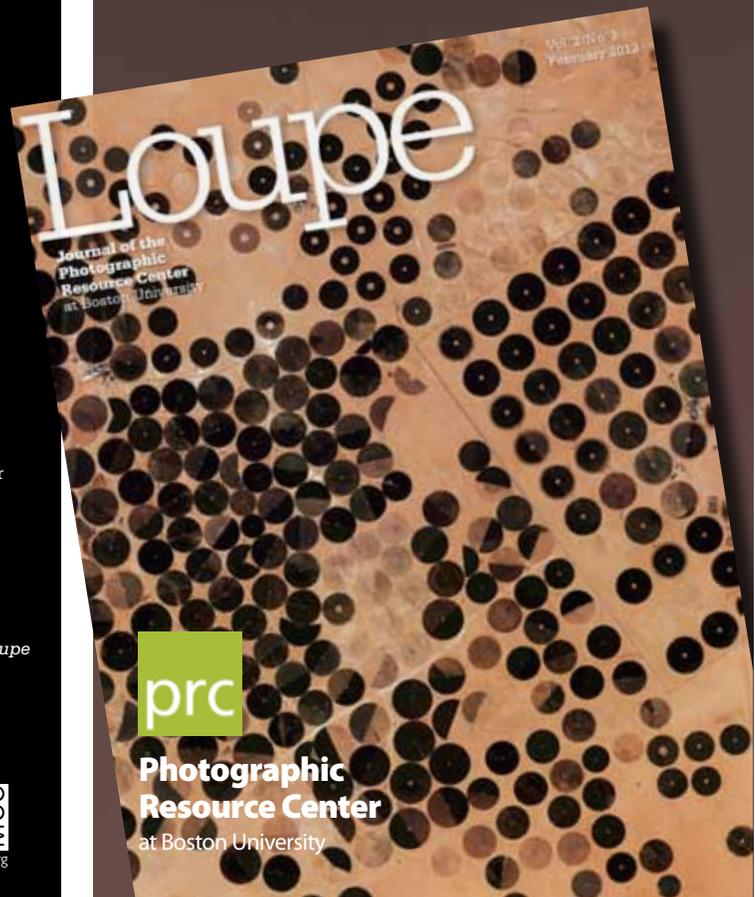
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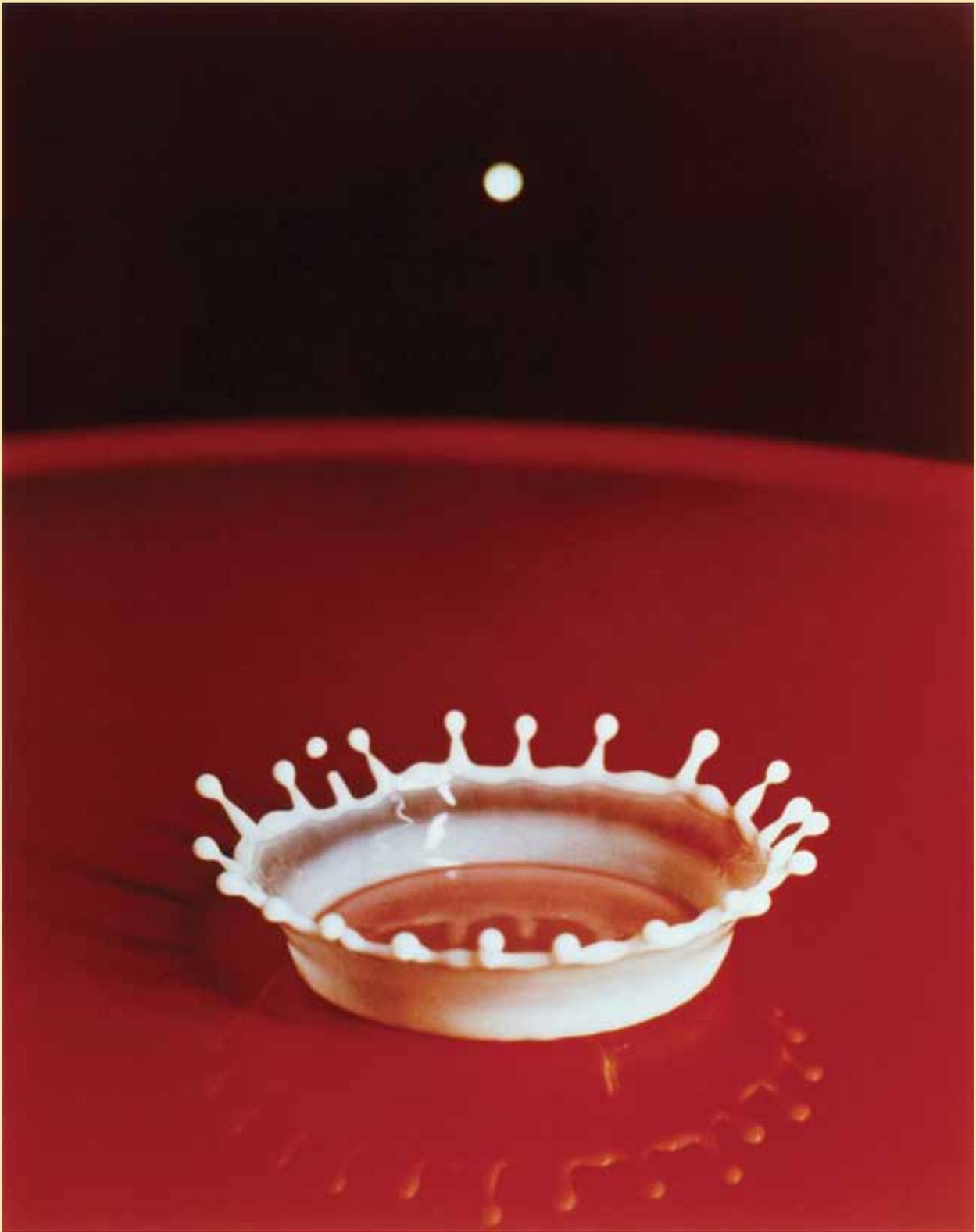
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