



Image: *Vanity Ballroom*

Motor City's stage for Tommy Dorsey, Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman and other musical giants: The Vanity Ballroom's now hollow dance floor suggests the opulence provided by the manufacturing spoils of the 1930s and 40s.

Detroit Forsaken

These are not the ruins of Rome, nor the tombs of Egypt. While the echoes of the past resonate, this community is extinguishing in the present. The story of Detroit is one of the most significant representations of a nation in transition. As a photographer, it is the place where I began an anthropological exploration in the spring of 2009, and continue today through a kind of architectural archaeology. This is a story about things left behind painted with a heavy heart by dim and murky light - a story told amidst the death of the American Industrial Revolution.

Like the structures depicted, the photographs are intended as artifacts of beauty, time, and consequence. For that reason, I chose to capture this body of work using film and cameras that, like their subject, were built without any planned obsolescence. Ironically, both have found themselves in a world that struggles to justify practical uses for them. I find this turn intriguing and discover solace in knowing that some of the last images made of these buildings will have been created with an archival permanence in mind through a medium and mechanism befitting their vintage. Nearly devoid of the human form, these photographs leverage the language of anonymity and metaphor to unveil the Arsenal of Democracy as it remains in the wake of unsustainable business practices following the aftermath of World War Two.

For generations, the American society has attempted to outrun a much-needed correction to its expectations, economy, and way of life. Short-term thinking and its consequences has caused the country to prematurely end its industrial revolution leaving behind a systemic stigma that there is little honor left in working with one's hands as an American. If this story is symbolic of a country's misspent youth, then the revelation of peak oil, and the long overdue correction to the bubbles that formed following the Great War mark the harsh wakeup call that is adulthood.

Detroit was a monolith of human achievement. Few cities have had more influence on the growth of a civilization. Few cities have so rapidly fallen from grace. As an economic bellwether, she now lives a cautionary tale for all those great cities that danced to Motown's lead, and are most likely doomed to follow in her footsteps. What remains is a drained and evaporated city landscape - one that is haunting, seductive and alive with ghosts.

-Ryan Spencer Reed

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5-7 pm

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by Thursday, March 15, 2012



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Gallery Hours: Noon – 4:30 p.m., daily

(Closed during Holidays and University breaks)

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Photographs by

Ryan Spencer Reed

March 26 - May 20, 2012

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