

Matthew Temple: Biography

I've loved photography for as long as I can remember, felt its ability to capture people, places, beauty and ugliness. Until I acquired my first digital SLR camera in 2006, I was primarily a consumer. At the time my aspirations were still unclear but I found myself increasingly drawn to the worn, isolated, and abandoned places I encountered on driving trips or walking in towns, places that were subject to demolition, or renovation. What began for me as isolated, almost accidental rambles, evolved into intentional searches: long, mindful drives on narrow New England roads, exploration of bypassed blue highways and side roads in the West, actively seeking out abandoned mills and factories, searching on foot and online for older, ungentrified streets and forlorn places in towns, cities, and suburbs. These places spoke to me of history, loss, and transition. They have gained the sort of patina that comes from time's passage.

Over time I joined the Boston Camera Club. I entered their competitions, which was a new world for me. I learned technical skills from the varied friends and judges I met there. Beyond the club, were exchanges of locations within my expanding network of trusted, like-minded photographers. I joined several Facebook groups devoted to my favorite photographic themes, where I received inspiration, camaraderie, encouragement and critiquing. Under the auspices of Silver Crescent Photography and After the Final curtain, I've also participated in many hosted photo shoots, these in locations that would have otherwise been unavailable to me.

In my photographic pursuits, I've found myself lying face up in gritty buildings, walking on less-than-stable floors, catching the last daylight from the broken windows, finding ways to peer inside spaces when entry is impossible, pushing the limits of my camera. In abandoned factories, I felt the presence of the workers who once toiled for long hours, saw the rusting machinery they commanded, the notes they scrawled on the walls, the footworn floorboards. A found house might contain the letters, or phonograph records, or stick-on labels, pieces of discarded clothing, the worn chair of a departed owner. Urban zones yielded hand-painted storefronts and lovingly made, but homespun repairs. In these "haunted" places, people no longer had voices, but what remained spoke for them, and to me.

There is, of course, an undeniable, heart-stopping excitement from finding a new and forbidden site. I've turned corners in hallways and found myself breathless from what was before my eyes -- gigantic machines, floors full of threatening holes, cavernous rooms full of light from green side windows.

On a technical level, after working with Canon APS-C series cameras, I bought my first full-frame camera, a Sony A7R3, in 2019. Primarily, I use only a small number of high-quality zoom lenses. Over time, I've learned the power of Lightroom to give impact and depth to my work. For the most part, I make my own prints. I've found that my photography and I have evolved together -- while my work is still documentary at its core, I can create images that are able to draw viewers into my languishing spaces, evoking their history and their sad, muted, tranquil beauty. It is an ongoing thrill to be able to share my vision with wider audiences.

My work has been shown at the Griffin Museum of Photography, the Attleboro Museum of Art, the Photographic Resource Center, the Galatea Art Gallery, Plymouth Center for the Arts, the Praxis Gallery, the Wickford Art Association, the Duxbury Art Complex, and Mass Arts Morini Gallery. My photos have received a number of awards including the Juror's Choice Award for "Invading Armies," in the "Empty Places" exhibit, 2023, Praxis Gallery. "Officers' Quarters" received a 3rd place photography award in the 2024 Duxbury Winter Show. "Stop" received the Director's Choice Award, in the 10th International Exhibition at the Rhode Island Center for Photographic Arts, 2024. Five of my photographs were featured in the fifth RICPA Spotlight exhibit in 2024