

## **BIRD IN FLIGHT**

### **Requiem for industrialization: Portrait of another America**

Not only people die, but entire cities, leaving behind themselves the gloomy rooms of empty factories and houses with traces of generations that once inhabited them. In the monograph North of the City, Tema Stauffer tells Hudson's biography — the story of the rise and fall of a Hudson port.

America is often painted as an eternal beach holiday, salutes for Independence Day and pre-Christmas hype in the style of "Home Alone". About the country completely different, less fabulous shades tell a few, like director Michael Moore, who studies shooting in local schools, political intrigues around September 11 and the consequences of the economic crisis of 2007–2009. Tema Stauffer's project "To the North of the City", a portrait of post-industrial Hudson on the Hudson, seems just as fair and far from the brilliant patriotic facade "for export". Requiem for industrialization, the day after the Great Depression.

#### **Tema Stauffer**

She graduated from college in Oberlin, has a Master of Photography degree, winner of numerous awards and grants, a finalist of a McKnight photographic scholarship, KLM nominee Paul Huf Award and Anonymous Was a Woman Award. Published in The New York Times, Chicago Reader, W Magazine. Her work showed about 50 American galleries, museums and universities, 15 photographs from the American Stills series are in the collection of the Museum of Contemporary Photography at Columbia College (Chicago). She teaches photography at East Tennessee State University (USA).

- Photos from the book "To the North of the City" tell about the history of one of the oldest regions of the USA. The city of Hudson became a port in 1785, and since then it has developed rapidly as an important whaling and merchant marine point. In the 20th century, Hudson's

economy suffered greatly from the aftermath of the Great Depression: the steel mills shut down, workers found themselves on the street. In many ways, the ups and downs of Hudson's cultural and economic landscape reflect the experience of dozens of other post-industrial cities across America.

Why precisely Hudson? It all started in 2012, when I was still living in New York. With my partner, we often went to Germantown, a village near Hudson (several photos from there are also included in the book, for example, a picture of a yellow house). The richness of the region's history and landscape impressed me greatly. I suspected that sooner or later I would start a project that would somehow be connected with it.

Filming began in the fall of 2015 after I had to move to Montreal - I accepted the offer to start teaching at Concordia University. With each return to the United States, during breaks in the school year, the Hudson Valley was my "home base" - as the series gradually developed.

Between the rise and fall of industry on the Hudson there are powerful parallels with the part of the Midwest where I spent the first 32 years of my life. I find similar parallels with the South Appalachian region, where I live now. I grew up in Kalamazoo, Michigan, halfway between Chicago and Detroit, and, of course, the effects of industrial growth and decline and their impact on community life are very much felt there. My earliest memories of America are a gallery of views from a car window, where my family and I drove through small villages and factory towns in the Midwest.

In the photograph, Allen Street is a historic red brick building by the river. Previously, there was a whale oil processing plant, the construction is still invigorating next to two newly built houses covered with boards - a typical dwelling of the working class of New England. Other shots from the project are the exteriors and interiors of centuries-old fishing shacks, until the city's decline, local hunters and fishermen lived there.

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The Hudson River plays a huge role in the history of Hudson (*it was named after her, in English two names have the same spelling - Hudson. - Approx. Translation.*) , In one photo I captured the view from the same point with which the bay was painted by numerous artists local art school. True, the picture today is significantly different in mood: the palette is gloomy, and the opposite bank is littered with factories. The painting of the middle of the XIX century - completely pastoral romance. Other images of industrial facilities surrounding the city (for example, an abandoned cement plant) are evidence of the rise and fall of heavy industry in the region.

Whose visual language inspired me to make such a project? I thought a lot about color, space and feeling lonely in the work of the artist Edward Hopper. Other authors who worked on the theme of the environment in the American landscape are Walker Evans with his photos of folk architecture and emotionally resonant images of rural Alabama by William Christenberry.

Photobook - reflections on the traces left by time and historical changes in the period of the formation of identity and the formation of the economy of America, as well as the heyday of cities at the end of the XVIII century. The pictures reflected my inspiration with the role of Hudson, one of the earliest examples of these phenomena. I studied with interest what the numerous chapters of American history now look like. The book sounds thoughtful and elegiac, not gloomy and hopeless.

The pictures reflect the fall of capitalism and the collapse of the American dream, but along with this criticism I want to pay homage to "relics" - things that were once created by people and with which people interacted. Now they all keep the human experience and the reasons to remember it. In the Hudson Valley, I think it feels the most.

There are three portraits in the book: Reggie, Mike and Peter. A modest gallery of residents of Hudson and the suburbs, although, of course, the local community is much more diverse than what appeared in this series. Recently, there has been an influx of newcomers, many are moving from New York; gentrification also affected the mass of the districts. Warren Street, crossing the center of the city, is full of antique shops, art galleries, boutiques and restaurants, tourists are relaxing in the city. Different segments of the population are significantly different from each other in economic terms. Because in the book I tried to focus on the past, and not on the present city, in the photographs to a greater extent - the lives lived by the factory workers, farmers, fishermen and ordinary people who have moved to the region during the last two centuries.

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Writer Zenet Aliu eloquently conveyed the spirit of the project in the preface to the book: "What I find remarkable in the photos of Staofer is her equally worthy approach to both the past and the present. To take a picture, you need only one moment, but there are always several images in the frame: what was once, what is forgotten, the moment of birth of the photo and, finally, our present. Before the viewer - two stories. The history of loss and the history of what is still in the moment "here and now." Therefore, to call the current Hudson a tragedy would be to ignore what is still there. There is still a lot of meanings between what has disappeared and the fact that, perhaps, sometime this will fill this emptiness."

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