



Motor City Muse: Detroit Photographs, Then and Now

Nancy W. Barr

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Motor City Muse presents work by photographers inspired by vintage automobiles, working men and women, and the neighborhoods, streets, and architecture of the city of Detroit. The images examine the complex and disparate nature of the history, diverse population, and culture of the city as seen through the personal perceptions of individual artists. It is an eclectic mix of styles and subject matter unique to Detroit, represented by black-and-white as well as color photography. Included in the then section are rare photographs of everyday city life: images by French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson, who passed through Detroit in 1947; photographs by Swiss-born Robert Frank, which were inspired by the factories, drive-ins, and diners of the city from 1955; images of autoworkers and other Detroit laborers in the 1970s and 1980s as remembered by Russ Marshall; and street photographs by Detroiter Bill Rauhauser that capture the city and citizens from 1950 to 1980. The transformation of the city is represented by Dave Jordano, who photographed it in 1973 and then returned to re-shoot the same sites in 2010. Detroit's legendary love affair with the automobiles is evident in early work of commercial photography innovators Jimmy Northmore and Mickey McGuire, among others. More than a generation later, Nicola Kuperus plays with these commercial classics by juxtaposing beautiful cars and models in questionable scenarios. German artist Karin Jobst rounds out the now section of the exhibition with impressionistic studies of familiar Detroit architecture and other sites around the city.

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