



Signs and Visions

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- This book of photographs explores abstract beauty and temporal evanescence found in the human imprint left in back alleys and passageways of urban and suburban landscapes of the seventies and eighties

This book of photographs, documenting urban and suburban architecture from the seventies and eighties, uncovers the hidden, abstract, even painterly beauty found in America's often-overlooked, seedy industrial back alleys and passageways. The book is also a record of a time and of real—though now mostly redeveloped—places, provoking an inevitable sense of nostalgia. In many scenes, the images depict not random signs and residues of human activity but intentional messages and visions expressed through architecture, advertising, graffiti, and even art, occasionally imbuing the subject with an unintended surrealism. Leading up to the medium-format photographs of the book, sixteen Polaroid SX-70 photographs move from realistic scenes in ex suburbia to increasingly abstract views of often-overlooked details on city streets, such as close-up building details and the hues of car hoods against graffitied walls. With its soft under-saturated palette and its tendency toward translucency, the SX-70 film/print became a means of turning landscapes and urban scenery into miniature still lifes, evoking earlier snapshot photography.

Bernis and Peter Von Zer Muehlen began photographing in 1972 and have widely exhibited in the US and abroad, in public spaces, private galleries, and museums. Bernis's work has also been published in a dozen anthologies.

