

Michael Zeis--Photographer  
Artist's Statement

Even though I keep my eye out for pretty scenery, and even though I have taken shots of rainbows and lighthouses and wildflowers, what drives much of my photography is an interest in how we learn about who we are from the things we use or produce. A hand-made bait sign tells us about the bait seller. Lawn ornaments say things about the homeowner, especially in quantity: lots of pink flamingoes in a yard are of more interest than just one or two. Age increases my interest, too. Weather adds texture to surfaces, as colors fade and paint cracks. The more bluster there was in the message on a roadside sign when it was new, the more ironic the message seems when the sign is in decline.

Abandoned buildings have special appeal. In an abandoned home, dishes left on a kitchen counter and Christmas decorations left behind in a closet signal a rapid departure. Such objects raise all sorts of questions, but provide few answers. Notices tacked on the bulletin board in an abandoned mill give clues about both the mill owners and the mill workers. Rows of sinks and toilets in an abandoned asylum invite us to imagine the lives of patients who once lived there, and the workers who cared for them.

These days, I shoot mostly digital. But I always carry at least one film camera with me. And even though I have examples of some of the finest film cameras and lenses, most often I load film in a Kodak Brownie from the 1950s or a plastic camera I found at a yard sale. Some of these cameras have been modified to add distortion to the photos they take.

You can see my photos on Flickr, at [www.flickr.com/mike\\_z](http://www.flickr.com/mike_z). The basic presentation is in reverse chronological order, but if you want to follow a thread, I have assembled many photos into albums. My web site is [www.zeisphotos.com](http://www.zeisphotos.com). E-mail: [mike@zeisphotos.com](mailto:mike@zeisphotos.com)

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