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By Lou Jacobson

Ongoing: “*Seen Better Times*” at Multiple Exposures Gallery



©Tom Sliter, “Time’s Up”

Don’t waste my time with ruin porn, writes **Michael Borek** in his juror statement for the exhibition *Seen Better Times* at Multiple Exposures Gallery. Photographing peeling walls and decay eventually becomes “a bit boring, because there is nothing more behind the surface,” Borek writes. Nonetheless, some of the images Borek selected do dabble in tumbledown scenery, including **Eric Johnson**’s photograph of the exterior of a run-down theater, **Sarah Hood Salomon**’s image of a building being gutted, **Sandy LeBrun–Evans**’ Cuban streetscape featuring a broken-down jalopy and a young child, and **Matt Leedham**’s photograph of a broken TV deposited by an elevator in a run-down apartment building. A few other contributors take the riskier approach of applying the theme of decline to people, including a **Maureen Minehan** image of two men standing on opposite corners of an urban intersection and **Fred Zafran**’s photograph of two men of a certain age conversing street-side. But the exhibit’s most notable works are those that veer in a different direction. Two contributors succeed through abstraction: **Alan Sislen** with a door that has devolved into multiple layers of fading paint and **Francine B. Livaditis** with a constructivist assemblage of boldly hued pieces of metal in a boneyard. Meanwhile, an image by Zafran offers a tableau worthy of **Gregory Crewdson**, in which a man in an old-timey diner wipes his mouth as a waitress behind the counter stares into the unseen distance. A thematic counterpoint, though, is **Soomin Ham**’s understated black-and-white image of a ladder leaning against a wall and rising into a tree-ringed sky. If the rest of the exhibit dwells on deterioration, Ham’s photograph seems to offer a literal escape. *Seen Better Times* runs through April 7 at Multiple Exposures Gallery at the Torpedo Factory Art Center, 105 N. Union St., Alexandria. Daily, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. multipleexposuresgallery.com. Free. —**Louis Jacobson**