

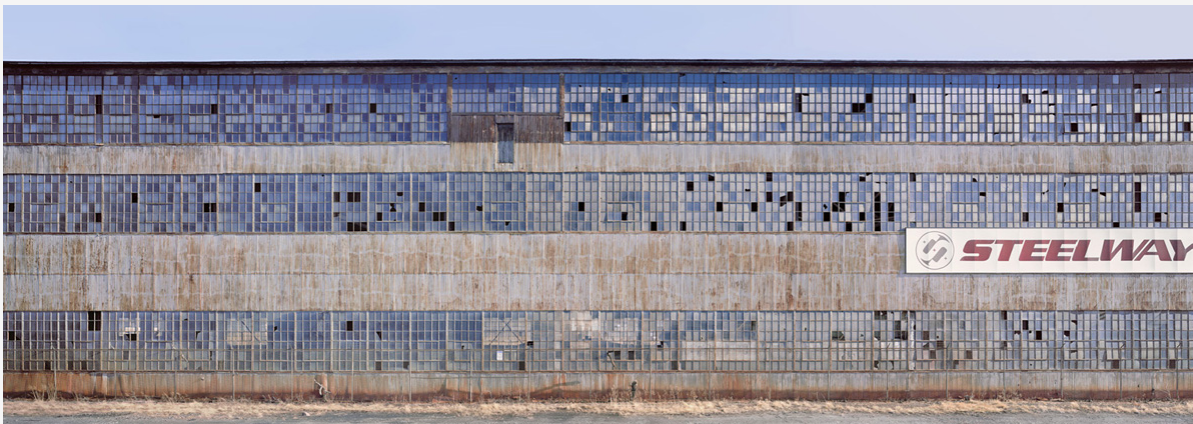
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## On the Rails

### John Sanderson Poetically Documents the United States Whilst Traveling the Northeast and Midwest by Railroad

A result of several years traveling the Northeast and Midwest, self-taught New York photographer, **John Sanderson**, has created this series of images titled *Railroad Landscape II*, which capture America's railroad spirit. The railroad has been an important symbol in American history through time, inspiring countless pieces of art, music and literature.

Here John explores America by railroad, his images haunted by the history they hold.



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*‘Once bustling depots sit forlorn, objects of aesthetic pride were forgotten. Elsewhere, tracks flow through immutable mountain passes.’*

His railroad series have been divided into two parts: part one is in a standard aspect ratio, and we feature part two here, in the panoramic format.



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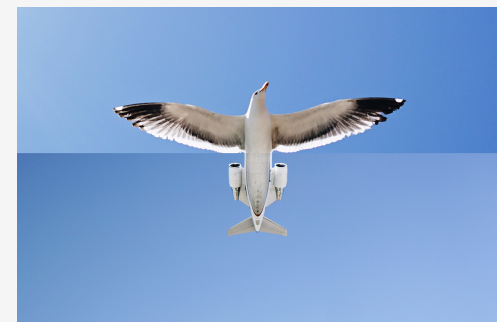
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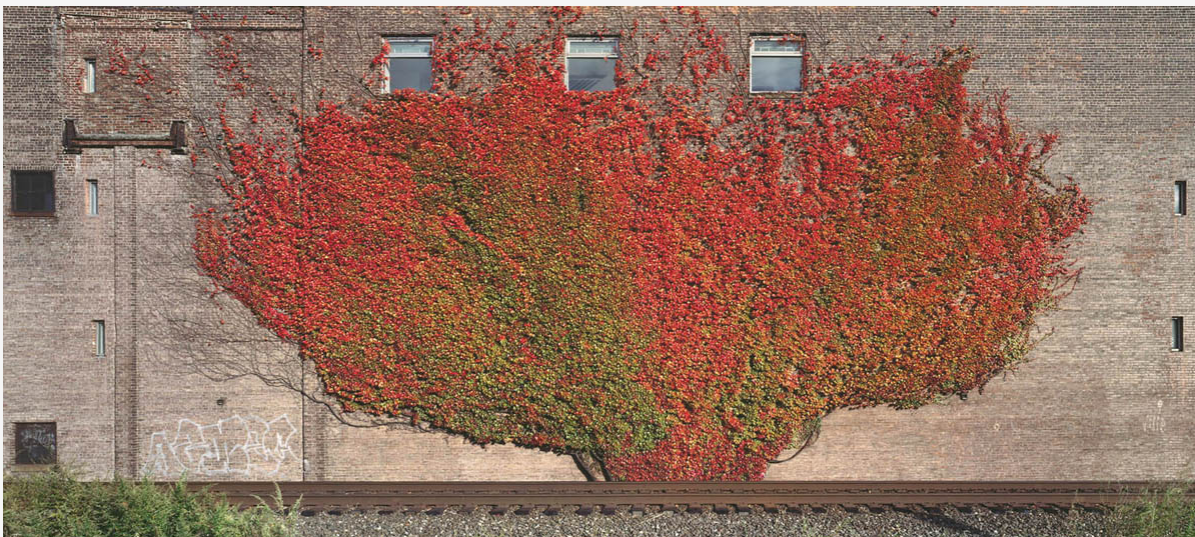


### **A Winning Combination**

Delightful Series of Juxtaposed Images that Ooze Fun



A recipient of the Center for Railroad Photography & Art's docent scholarship program, John's work is currently on display at the **New York Transit Museum**, New York City. John kindly told us more:



**The Plus: Why are you so fascinated by America as a subject of photography?**

**John Sanderson:** It is interesting to me on many levels. The urban landscapes of the Northeast and Midwest, which describe rapid changes in social structure, is in many ways unique to the United States. This shift from an industrial base of steel manufacturing and other heavy industry, into one of suburban development, create a rich tapestry from which one can create photographs. To look beyond the documentary and

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## **The Spirit In Spectrum**

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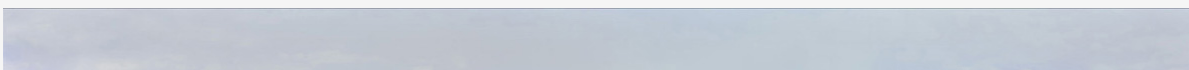
into the quality of space and light, the American landscape is rich in natural features. The openness and feeling of space, so well expressed in Aaron Copland's orchestral music such as Appalachian Spring or Billy the Kid, is something that I find fascinating — as well as deeply spiritual — to explore as a photographer.

**TP: Were there any unexpected locations/views you found during this journey?**

**JS:** Robert Adams once said the most thrilling time in photography is when you're out searching for photographs. While my work references the American landscape as idyllic, my most memorable moments have been in search of beauty in the unexpected and often overlooked sections of the country. To take an example from the Railroad Landscape II series, I find Steelways Shipyard, Newburgh, NY, to be indicative. The parallelism of the tracks and structural elements of the building I found to be arresting.

**TP: Is there a message or feeling you tried to carry forward through this series?**

**JS:** I remember my first impressions of photography, when I was blown away by a picture I'd say to myself "I wish I'd seen that, that way." If my work has that affect to someone, I'd feel very satisfied. Having studied political science and history, and despite the anachronistic notions trains may conjure up in some, I would like people to better appreciate how omnipresent the railroad still is today.





**TP: What is the most beautiful place you visited during this trip?**

**JS:** A large portion of my work has been along the Hudson River. I see beauty in both the industrial and natural heritage of the river and it provides a surplus of both!

**TP: Where else is on your list of places to visit by train?**

**JS:** I have a gnawing desire to expand my Railroad Landscapes into other sections of the country, particularly the Dakotas, Montana, and the Pacific Southwest. I feel this would create a more holistic representation of the project.

**TP: What has been the biggest challenge during this process?**

**JS:** To quote the composer Johannes Brahms, “It is not hard to compose, but what is fabulously hard is to leave the superfluous notes under the table.” I think that says it better than I could. Editing and the discipline required to adhere to intuition is a personal challenge for me.





### Equipment List

large format 4x5 and 8x10 film cameras

10-foot tripod

ladder (in order to gain a more acute perspective)

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