



WASHINGTON
seldom scenes

Photographs by Colin Winterbottom



Cover: Lincoln Memorial, looking down from memorial attic space.
Above: Disused water filtration plant.
Right: St Elizabeths Mental Hospital, historic west campus.

A Visual fusion of Symbol and Substance

This booklet presents the core of an emerging and unprecedented collection of photographs of the nation's capitol. With continued development, I believe it could come to be an essential portrait of the nation's capitol.

I am the only fine-art photographer who has created images at the very tip of the Washington Monument; inside and atop the U.S. Capitol dome; and above, below, behind, and at the left hand of Abe Lincoln's chair at the Lincoln Memorial. The resulting images of these and other rarely accessed vantages within well-known landmarks offer an opportunity to enjoy the city's symbols of power from rare perspectives.

But monuments and landmarks are only an element of our urban landscape. To make "Washington Seldom Scenes" a rich, exciting, and historic series of photographs, I intend to juxtapose rare images of the city's symbolic high points with rarely seen elements of infrastructure and industry.





Many fine photo collections have honored the great national landmarks; other series have studied infrastructure and industry. But such photographic series have generally been separate studies. This bifurcation suggests elements of separation worlds: the grand here, the gritty there (and never shall they meet). A photo essay that sets



these elements side-by-side is certainly rare. Juxtaposed here are ornamental detail on the US Capitol Dome (left), and a study of the mechanics within a clock tower at the St. Elizabeths Mental Hospital. Both sites are rarely photographed; but their contexts couldn't be more different.



The tip of the Washington Monument

One would expect this juxtaposition to show significant contrast: our monumental symbols are majestic and grand; infrastructure and industry are rough and gritty. While this is at often the case (as on the pair of preceding images), the truth is at times more complex. In the image above, the seldom-photographed pyramid of aluminum atop the Washington Monument shows graceful inscriptions from the 1884 setting of the capstone, but also considerable rough-textured corrosion.



Disused water filtration facility.

Similarly, this photograph of the underground water filtration chambers at the disused, civil war-era McMillan Sand Filtration Plant challenges expectations. The texture of poured concrete in the foreground offers the kind of rough grit one might expect in an industrial site; but the repetition of vaulted curves going off to the distance provide an unexpected elegance reminiscent of cathedral architecture.

Revealing these similarities and contrasts is key to the juxtapositions in this series. As dissimilar as monuments and utilities may seem, the “symbols” and “substance” of DC each include aspects that few have the fortune to see; each is an element critical to society; and most of all that each of these are fascinating places to see.



The US Capitol with catwalk scaffold

My purpose in directing this brochure to you is twofold. As experts and leaders on Washington DC, historic preservation, architecture, and administration of government and private institutions, I seek: (1) your help in identifying a “wish list” of important and lesser known sites to photograph; and (2) special access to those places. My wish list currently includes utility sites, the Old Executive Office Building, the White House, the Holt House and disused industrial sites such as the old Wonder Bread Factory in Shaw.

As this collection already includes some very rare and exciting images, I think the potential to build it into an important historic record is great. I look forward to your help in shaping this unique portrait of a most important city at a most compelling and historic time.

--Colin Winterbottom

Preview of additional photographs

from the seldom scenes series



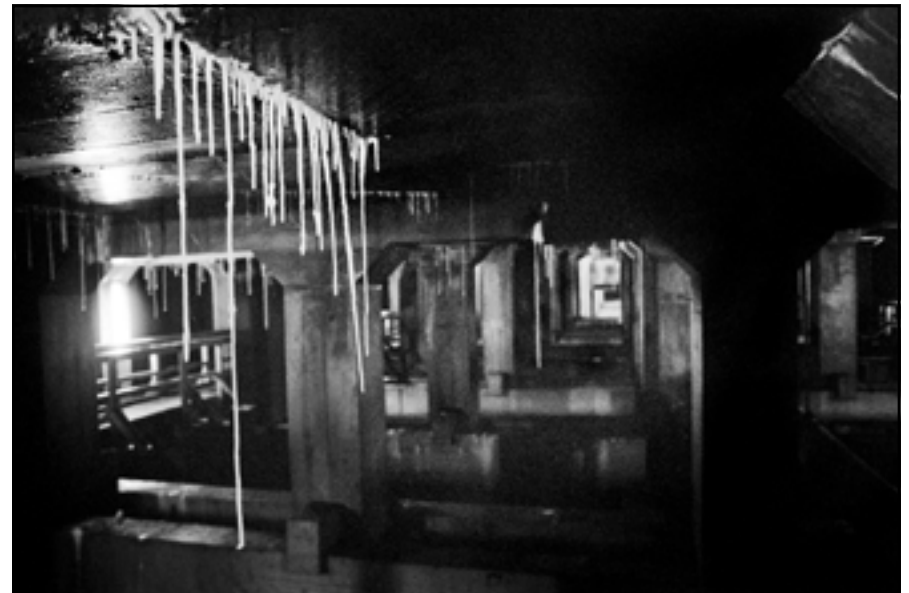
View to the Tidal Basin from the Washington Monument scaffold, 1999.



Statue of Freedom atop the US Capitol Dome



US Capitol Dome interstitial space



Foundation of the Lincoln Memorial



The National Archives



The Lincoln Memorial



Water Filtration Plant



Peeling paint and fixtures at disused bakery.



The Jefferson Memorial



Washington National Cathedral

All images Copyright © Colin Winterbottom, 2009.
All rights reserved.

Colin Winterbottom Photography

www.winterbottom.com

colin@winterbottom.com

2101 New Hampshire Ave., NW #407 Washington DC 20009