

Mid-Manhattan Library
welcomes

Marisa Scheinfeld

presenting an illustrated talk on her book



"Susan Sontag famously observed that "all photographs testify to time's relentless melt." One could scarcely imagine a more observant and poetic testimony than Marisa Scheinfeld's eerie photographic record of the crumbling remains of American Jewry's mid-century Xanadu, the Borscht Belt. With an archaeologist's attention to the accumulated layers of history and the passage of time, her melancholic images of ruins, detritus and festering vegetation are haunted by an unseen and undefined presence, providing a visual meditation on abandonment and absence. These photographs invite us to consider the rich history of American Jewish life, the legacy of the Catskills, and the ways in which this complex history is enduringly present and woven into the very fiber of the region."


— Maya Benton, Curator, International Center of Photography

Wednesday, May 17, 2017
6:30 PM on the Sixth Floor

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Today the Borscht Belt is recalled through the nostalgic lens of summer swims, Saturday night dances, and comedy performances. But its current state, like that of many other formerly glorious regions, is nothing like its earlier status. Forgotten about and exhausted, much of its structural environment has been left to decay. This illustrated lecture features **Marisa Scheinfeld's** photographs of abandoned sites where resorts, hotels and bungalow colonies once boomed in the Catskill Mountain region of upstate New York. The images were shot inside and outside locations that once buzzed with life as year-round havens for generations of people. Some of the structures have been lying abandoned for periods ranging from four to twenty years, depending on the specific hotel, or bungalow colony, and the conditions under which it closed. Other sites have since been demolished, or repurposed, making this talk an even more significant documentation of a pivotal era in American Jewish history. This presentation highlights a contemporary view of more than forty hotel and bungalow sites. From entire expanses of abandoned properties to small lots containing drained swimming pools, the remains of the Borscht Belt era now lie forgotten, overgrown, and vacant. In the absence of human activity, nature has reclaimed the sites, having encroached upon or completely overtaken them. Many of the interiors have been vandalized or marked by paintball players and graffiti artists. Each ruin lies radically altered by the elements and effects of time. Her images record all of these developments.

About the presenter:

Marisa Scheinfeld was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1980, and raised in the Catskills. She received a B.A. from the State University at Albany in 2002, and a MFA from San Diego State University in 2011. Her work is highly motivated by her interest in the ruin, or site and the histories embedded within them. Her work has been exhibited nationally and internationally and is among the collections of The Center for Jewish History, The National Yiddish Book Center, The Magnes Collection of Jewish Art & Life, The Simon Wiesenthal Center and The Edmund and Nancy K. Dubois Library at the Museum of Photographic Arts.

Website: <http://www.borschtbeltrevisited.com/>



Photo © Walter Briski Jr.

Elevators access the Sixth Floor after 6 PM.

All programs are FREE and subject to last minute change or cancellation.