

My photographic practice is focused and disciplined on Baltimore's architecture, which is informed by my evidence-based research by years of studying the complicated and multi-faceted history of this city. My intuition and curiosity have brought me to understand how Baltimore became the unique place we live in today. This obsessive collection of mapping, archiving, and memorializing Baltimore began 13 years ago while I was a graduate student at the Maryland Institute College of Art.

My graduate thesis was encapsulated in the form of a self published book titled, *Old Town, East Baltimore*, which specifically focused on the failed urban renewal project in East Baltimore known as Old Town Mall, formerly Gay Street. The failure of this project left the area a desolate two block pedestrian mall. By photographing each of the buildings on the mall, I essentially created a historical document of what is left of the neighborhood after decades of decline. In addition to my archival research, it was important to me that I speak with life-long residents and business owners in order to fully understand the mall's visceral history, providing an opportunity to learn what hopes the residents placed in its renewal. I view this field-based outreach as an integral part of my work as I hope for my photographs to become a catalyst for communication between the diverse and many times divided communities of Baltimore.

Since 2011, I've independently expanded my work into a larger project entitled, *Baltimore: A History, Block by Block*, photographing ten main streets in Baltimore and over 100 city blocks to date including: Howard Street, Eutaw Street, Baltimore Street, Lexington Street, Fayette Street, East Monument Street, Pennsylvania Avenue, Greenmount Avenue, North Avenue, and Broadway. By tactfully utilizing a 4x5 view camera and Fujichrome Velvia slide film, I aim to heighten the conceptual notion of my work in supplementing my commentary, melancholic nostalgia, romanticization, and ramification of the obsolete. The combination of bright, warm sunlight light and the saturated color of the slide film provides an intimate experience for a kind of momentary time-travel to see a glimpse of what these buildings and neighborhoods once were and could be.

The long-term goal is to publish a series of books along with several exhibitions, ideally in the neighborhoods I've been photographing. My goal is to also create a comprehensive, open source digital archive where all of the photographs and research can be accessible and available to the public for free for future generations.

Through this project I aim to leave the audience not only with a sense of the condition of our city, but also a feeling of urgency to see that it is preserved and improved, and that the rich history behind the architecture and the community is not lost, but rather embraced.

-James Singewald
www.jsingewald.com
bmoreblockbyblock.tumblr.com