

City Gallery
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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SHOW CONTACT:
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AT A GLANCE

Exhibition:	RUINS OF A HOLY LAND
Artists:	Joy Bush
Where:	City Gallery, 994 State Street, New Haven, CT
When:	Friday, April 5 - Sunday, April 28, 2024
Artist Reception:	Saturday, April 13, 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.
Gallery Hours:	Friday - Sunday, 12 p.m. - 4 p.m., or by appointment

RUINS OF A HOLY LAND: A Photography Exhibit by Joy Bush

Connecticut natives, fans of roadside attractions, and followers of *Atlas Obscura* have no doubt heard of Waterbury's Holy Land USA. But not many have as intimate knowledge of the famed location as photographer Joy Bush. Since 1987, Bush has been photographing this folk art treasure, the result of which can be seen in RUINS OF A HOLY LAND, on exhibit at City Gallery from April 5 - April 28, with an Opening Reception Saturday, April 13, 2 p.m. to 5 p.m..

Holy Land USA was constructed under the direction of Waterbury attorney John Greco and dedicated in 1958. The complex had some 200 separate structures inspired by selected passages from the Bible. It officially closed in 1984, and became the property of a Roman Catholic religious order. In 2013, Mayor Neil O'Leary and car dealer Fred "Fritz" Balsius purchased Holy Land, announcing a plan to clean up and revitalize the site as part of a community effort. Today, it is overseen by Holy Land USA - Waterbury, a non-profit organization.

Bush first discovered Holy Land USA in 1977 when she saw the popular cross lit up on Waterbury's Pine Hill. "It was ten years later that I made my first pilgrimage," she says. What she discovered was an 18-acre tract of land devoted to a small-scale, homemade reproduction of Bethlehem. "Filled with objects that a folk artist would find irresistible, it was crude, sweet, and strange in ways that make familiar things exotic. At the same time, it had a peculiar and

disquieting sense of spirituality that was impossible to dismiss. Holy Land has changed since then, falling into a state of elegant disrepair that only heightens its incongruity. Photographing it is much like embarking on an archeological dig in a place I've watched gradually slip away."

Bush's evolving collection of these photographs was featured in a solo exhibit at the Mattatuck Museum in Waterbury, and in the book *Ruins of a Holy Land: Photographs by Joy Bush*. Writing about it in *Art New England*, Stephen Kobasa said "To the particular melancholy of an abandoned amusement park she has brought the grieving clarity of a war photographer. Her work identifies these manufactured relics as examples of a sentimental history like those 18th-century English garden monuments built to look as if they had crumbled in place.... What Bush identifies so well is the way in which the surviving wreckage of the place makes sense; she captures an unconscious intention that all this might well have been meant for a ruin, its power magnified by slow vanishing." There will be approximately 30 images from Bush's collection on view at City Gallery, with loose 8x10 prints for sale.

Bush's photography work was featured in *Unbeatable Women* at the Lyman Allyn Art Museum (2022), and *HOME VIEWS* at the Griffin Museum of Photography in Massachusetts. (2021). Her photographs have appeared in *The Village Voice*, *The New York Times*, *Connecticut Review*, and many other publications. She has exhibited in solo and group exhibits, nationally and internationally, including shows at the International Center for Photography (NYC), Mattatuck Museum, Lyman Allyn Art Museum, Copley Society (Boston, MA), Drawing Rooms (NJ), Garrison Art Center (NY), Umbrella Arts (NYC), the Westport Arts Center, and Artspace (New Haven, CT). Bush is represented in the permanent collections of the Mattatuck Museum (Waterbury, CT), Cincinnati Art Museum, Monetfiore Hospital (Bronx, NY), the Baseball Hall of Fame, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, Yale Medical Group Art Place, and many private collections. She is a member of City Gallery, and lives and works in the Greater New Haven area.

RUINS OF A HOLY LAND is free and open to the public. It will be on exhibit at City Gallery from April 5 - April 28, with an Opening Reception Saturday, April 13, 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.. City Gallery is located at 994 State Street, New Haven, CT 06511. Gallery hours are Friday - Sunday, 12 p.m. - 4 p.m., or by appointment. For further information please contact City Gallery, info@city-gallery.org, www.city-gallery.org.

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IMAGE

Holy, 16x20" archival pigment print, 1997
Magi, 16x20", archival pigment print, 2000
Pyramid, 16x20," silver print, 2000
Temple, 17x14", silver print, 2000

CALENDAR:

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