

Ron Tarver
Artist statement

A couple of years ago I was assigned to photograph the Dad Vail Regatta for the Philadelphia Inquirer. I managed to get on one of the piers in the middle of the Schuylkill river supporting the Strawberry Mansion Bridge, in order to shoot down on the racers as they came by. I was struck by what bad condition it was in. It was amazing that such a graceful structure, when seen from afar, was such a rusted mess up close.

A few days later, the bridge was closed to traffic due to structural problems.

I began to notice the condition of other bridges, specifically the Columbia train bridge and the Manayunk bridge- it seemed many of these incredible structures had reached some sort of undefined end of life- dilapidated but still functioning.

Others such as the Benjamin Franklin stand as majestic reminders of a time when Philadelphia could boast - if only for two years between 1926 to 1929- as having the longest bridge in the world. The years continue to accumulate on the 300 year-old Frankford Avenue bridge which holds the record as the oldest in the United States.

We often zoom over, through, and by these structures hardly aware of their subtle beauty. In these photographs, I have attempted to resurrect the glory years of these works of art. I have intentionally excluded most hints of our times and attempted to place them in another era. Whether that time be the past or the future is unclear. If this project does anything at all, it is my goal that the images give cause to stop and cherish the craftsmanship bestowed upon the city.

This is the second of a series of projects exploring Philadelphia's landscape beyond the Liberty Bell.

Warren,

This is not my full artist statement but hopefully it will give you enough to go on for the press release. Also I believe I gave you the a print titled "Schuylkill Train Bridge", if its not too late could I change that title to "Columbia Bridge".

Thanks,
Ron Tarver

Artist Statement-

Bridges have always intrigued me. From the hot summer days when my friends and I used to jump off the bridge a few blocks from my home in Ft. Gibson Oklahoma into the Grand River to escape the sticky heat. Until the first time I saw the Benjamin Franklin Bridge, they have always been held in amazement.

Even in the frailest of forms bridges represent solidarity. Whether they are made of rope, wood, stone or steel they off forays into new lands, joining otherwise estranged peoples.

We are fortunate in Philadelphia to have some of the most interesting and beautiful art given to the subject. It is my intention through this project to photograph these bridges in a way that they transcend the material they are made of to become romantic suggestions of eras past.

This project is part of a larger mission to reinterpret Philadelphia's landscape.