PHOTOGRAPHING THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL

I notice a few recent books by photographers who are into abandonment and decay – me monitoring sensitivity to the archaeological, as usual.

I particularly like *ReadyMades: American Roadside Artifacts* by Jeff Brouws.

– here are some drive-in movie screens

Pictures of old pickup trucks, abandoned gas stations (he has a lovely series in black and white), freight cars, signs, old trailers (or caravans as we call them in the UK). He takes a collector's view really. The photos are often about the thing itself, its contribution to his collection and inventory. And an aethetic of rescue

– the old anthropological sentiment that roadside culture, as Brouws calls it, is disappearing, like a tribe on a Pacific island threatened by globalism (see his book *Highways*). This rather than a photographic aesthetic *per se* (framing, composition, etc).

Such a photographic aesthetic dominates Steve Gottlieb's *Abandoned America*

Nice, but – that familiar color saturation and resolution that comes with transparency film – the likes of Fuji Velvia. All qualities beloved of *Amateur Photographer* (does it exist in the US?) and those other guides to good photography. Too contrived. A 'landscape aesthetic' of the picturesque ruin that makes it all quite comforting eye candy (I'll have a url here for my course at Stanford on landscape – at some point).

There is another photographer too, just published in monograph. But we are remodeling at home and the book is lost in a pile of others on the garage floor.

My good friend Bill Rathje recognises all this as part of his field of **garbology**.