

Sasha Agins

My perception of Hartford is that it is an empty city that needs more life at its core. Therefore, when taking photographs, I looked for an implication of emptiness. I find that showing people the austerity of a given place in Hartford through photography may compel a desire within them to create a more effervescent city. The one thing that I think Hartford is missing is activity throughout, because traveling through the city made me realize that the majority of social activity was not downtown.

There were two pictures that I took in the North End. One is "The Mannequin," and the other is "Ascent." While walking down Albany Avenue, I saw more people than I had anywhere else in the city. People were sitting outside socializing, and others were running their businesses. I went into a shoe store, and saw the figure that became the focal point of "The Mannequin." Everyday, she stares out the window and watches people go by. Only the store owner can change the mannequin displayed in the window. I strongly want the people of Hartford to change the city's overall display, not just the "store owner," the government. The people of Hartford have the opportunity to make the city a brilliant display.

"Ascent" appealed to me as an image because it looks like an endless pathway. It also reminds me that Hartford has an endless pathway itself: the pathway of change.

Taken downtown were the photographs "Empty Stairway" and "In the Twenty-ninth Year of Her Age." I wanted "Empty Stairway" to portray the emptiness of such an important part of the city, and how it can be changed by a flow of people. The Marriott is where travelers come when staying in Hartford. The emptiness of it that day signifies to me that more appeal has to be given to the city so that the stairway could be full of people.

The photograph that I think most summarizes my perception of Hartford is "In the Twenty-ninth Year of Her Age." One day during my lunch break, I ventured into the Ancient Burial Ground across the street from the Wadsworth Atheneum. I came across the tombstone that inspired this photograph. Almost all the stone has crumbled away. All that remains are the words "the 29th year of her age." I was immediately saddened by the fact that this woman no longer has an identity. Then, I compared her tombstone to Hartford. What caused the other portion of the stone to crumble? What caused the city of Hartford's vibrancy to crumble? Her identity is most likely lost forever, but the residents, workers, and visitors of Hartford can re-shape the city's identity.