

# Cleveland: GRITTY & Pretty



a photo essay by *Robert N Brown*



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## CLEVELAND: GRITTY & Pretty

*A city is very much like a living organism. Cities are born, cities grow, cities age, cities become ill, cities heal, and cities regenerate. Although cities rarely die, elements of a city often die, and they are sometimes reborn.*

In the healthiest of cities, elements that become ill are quickly healed, and elements that decay and die are quickly replaced. In less healthy cities, buildings and properties that become vacant often remain in a decayed condition for many years, like dead branches on an otherwise living tree.

For those of us who love cities, we love them not only for their pristine buildings and thriving neighborhoods, but we love them in their fullness, as they age and as they evolve, even when that process produces decay and blight.

*We love cities because they are among the most important and inspirational achievements of humanity. Cities are the physical representations of our desire to live together and work together in communities that enrich our lives and raise our spirits.*



It is not surprising, then, that those of us who truly love cities find beauty not only in their most vibrant elements but also in their blighted and “gritty” elements, for they too are part of the life cycle of the cities that we love. This is particularly true of cities that some call “rust belt” cities and others (myself included) choose to call “legacy” cities.

*Cleveland is a poster child for legacy cities.* It was America’s 5th largest city in 1920, with over 900,000 residents by 1930. Today, with fewer than 400,000 residents and a metro area that ranks 16th in the nation, the city of Cleveland, nevertheless, retains the legacy of what was created at the height of its prosperity. Cleveland’s orchestra, museums, hospitals, universities, libraries, theaters and architecture all remain world-class today, and its institutions and its people continue to grow and to innovate.

On the ground in Cleveland today, signs of the city’s greatness and signs of the city’s decline stand side by side, as testaments to the community’s challenges and aspirations. This photo essay attempts to capture both sides of Cleveland – presented with love, reverence and even a touch of humor.

*Robert N. Brown, FAICP • April 2015*  
<http://www.citybobbrown.com>



cleveland ~~rocks~~ blocks!





tower at sunset

Terminal Tower , built in 1928 as tallest building outside of New York City



cleveland flat iron

Osborn Building apartments at Huron & Prospect, built in 1895  
as medical offices for the then nearby Huron Road Hospital





semi-furnished?





recently redecorated





## art museum fantasy

Accidentally impressionistic image taken outside of Art Museum at 2014 Summer Solstice event



art on art





key to peace

Marshall Fredericks' *Peace Arising from the Flames of War* and Key Tower on Burnham mall



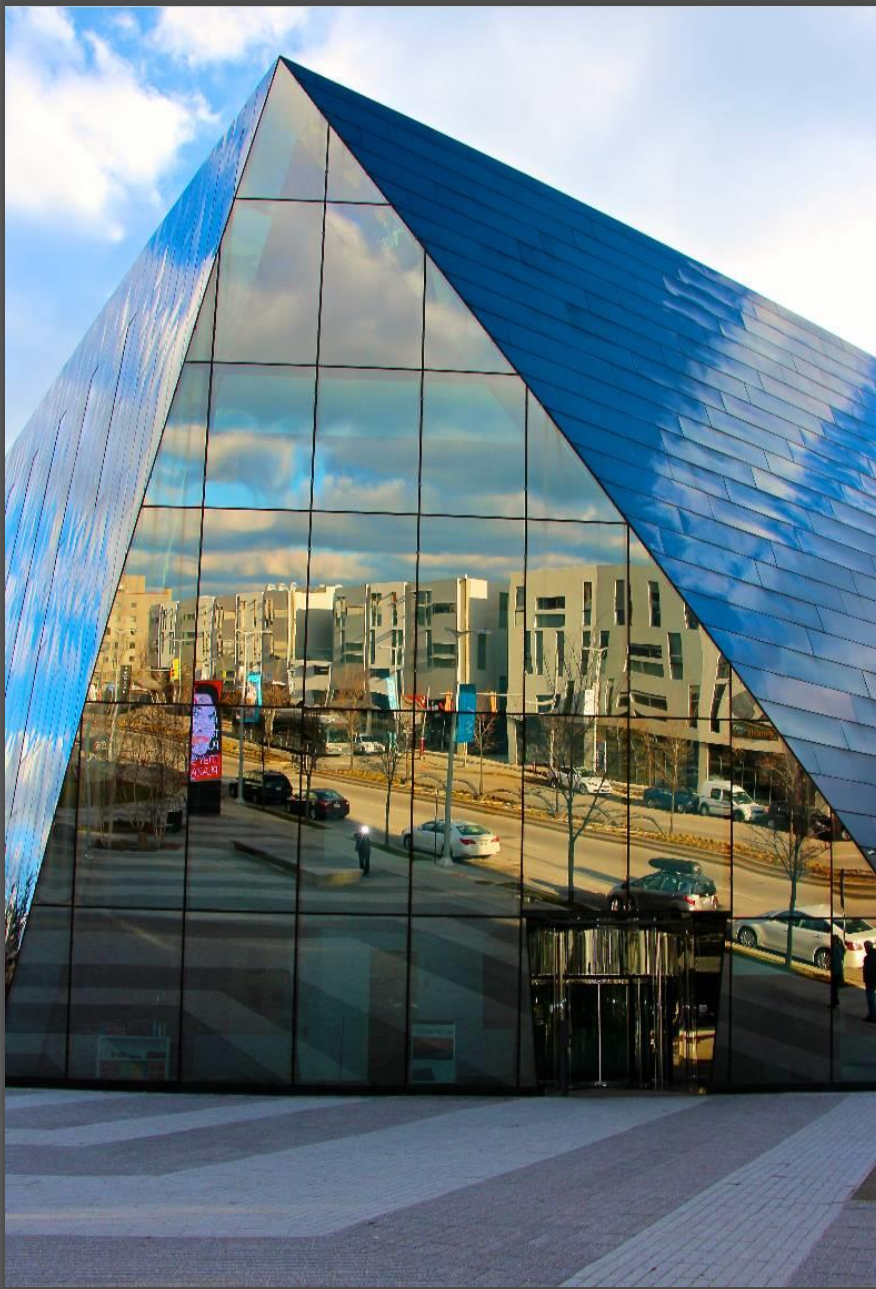
federal reflection

Key Tower and Marriott reflected in new “skin” of Federal Building, installed in 2014





hall of mirrors



uptown in moca





playful square



moca flambé





persistence of life

Ivy growing on vacant Woodhill Supply building on East 123<sup>rd</sup>





persistence of humor

One of hundreds of rubber ducks dumped in vacant Woodhill Supply building





## rust and renewal



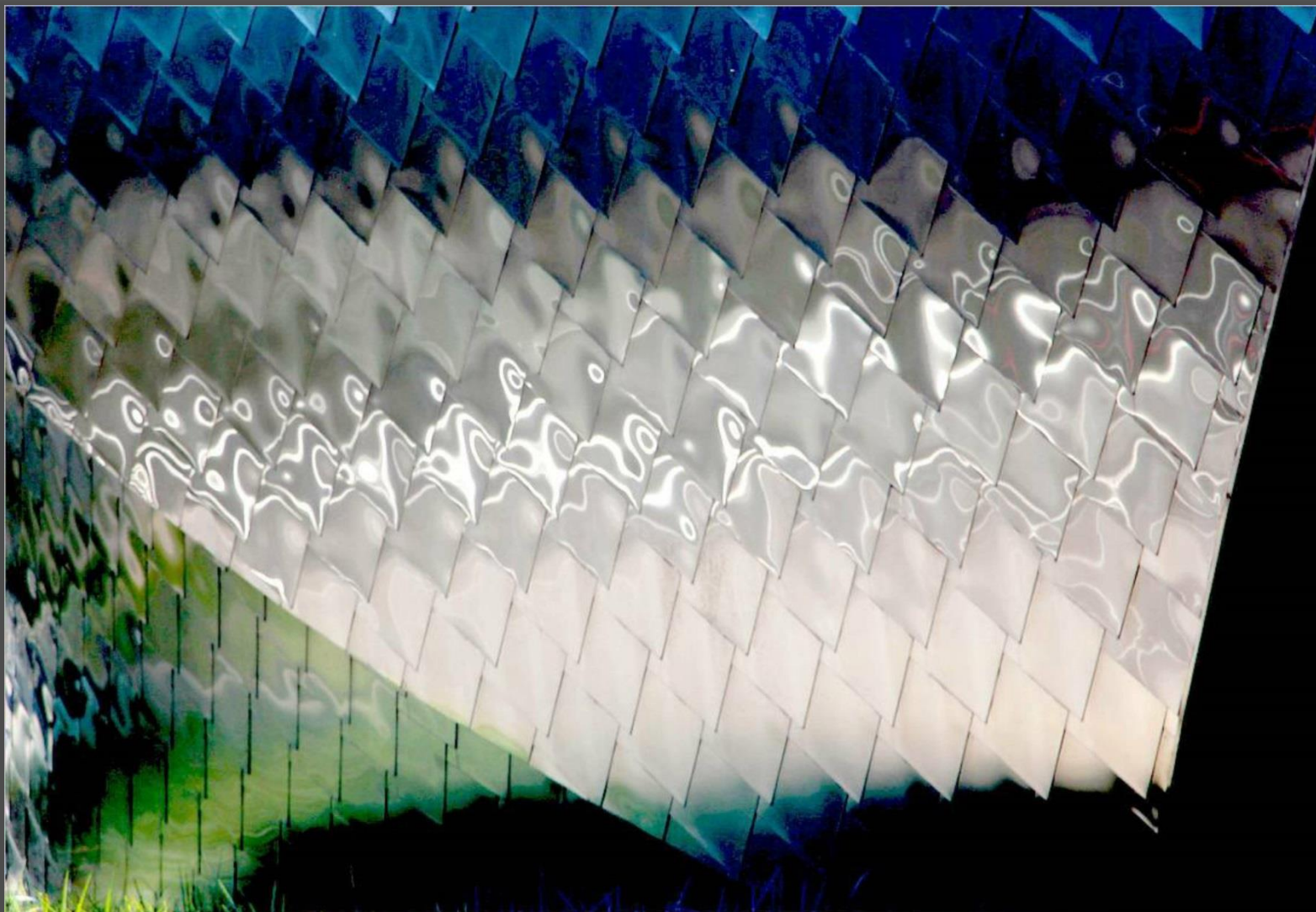


smiling in the face of adversity





on top of business



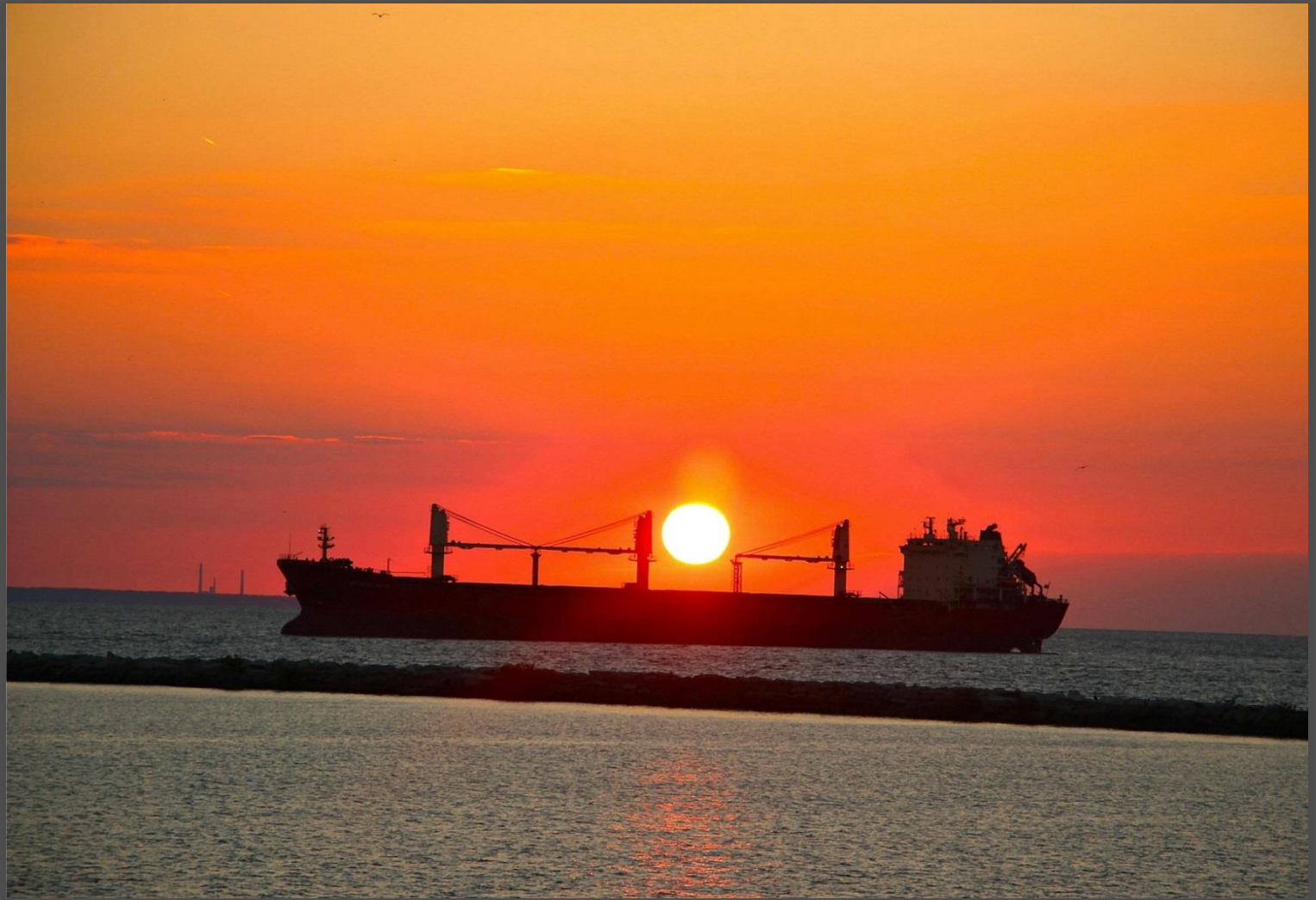
## stainless and grass

Grass and sky reflected in Peter B. Lewis Building at Case Western Reserve University





cleveland rocks



“light cargo” bound for Cleveland





## windows 2.0

View from inside industrial building to adjacent house on East 47<sup>th</sup> Street





no way out





## color commentary

Old building renovated as supportive housing on West 23<sup>rd</sup>, just north of Metro Hospital





## urban orthodoxy





best face forward





life imitates art





rapid fireworks



rails and nails





mixed message





through the  
looking glass?





city life



saturday night,  
still no date!





dot-com bust!





really?





## brickwork

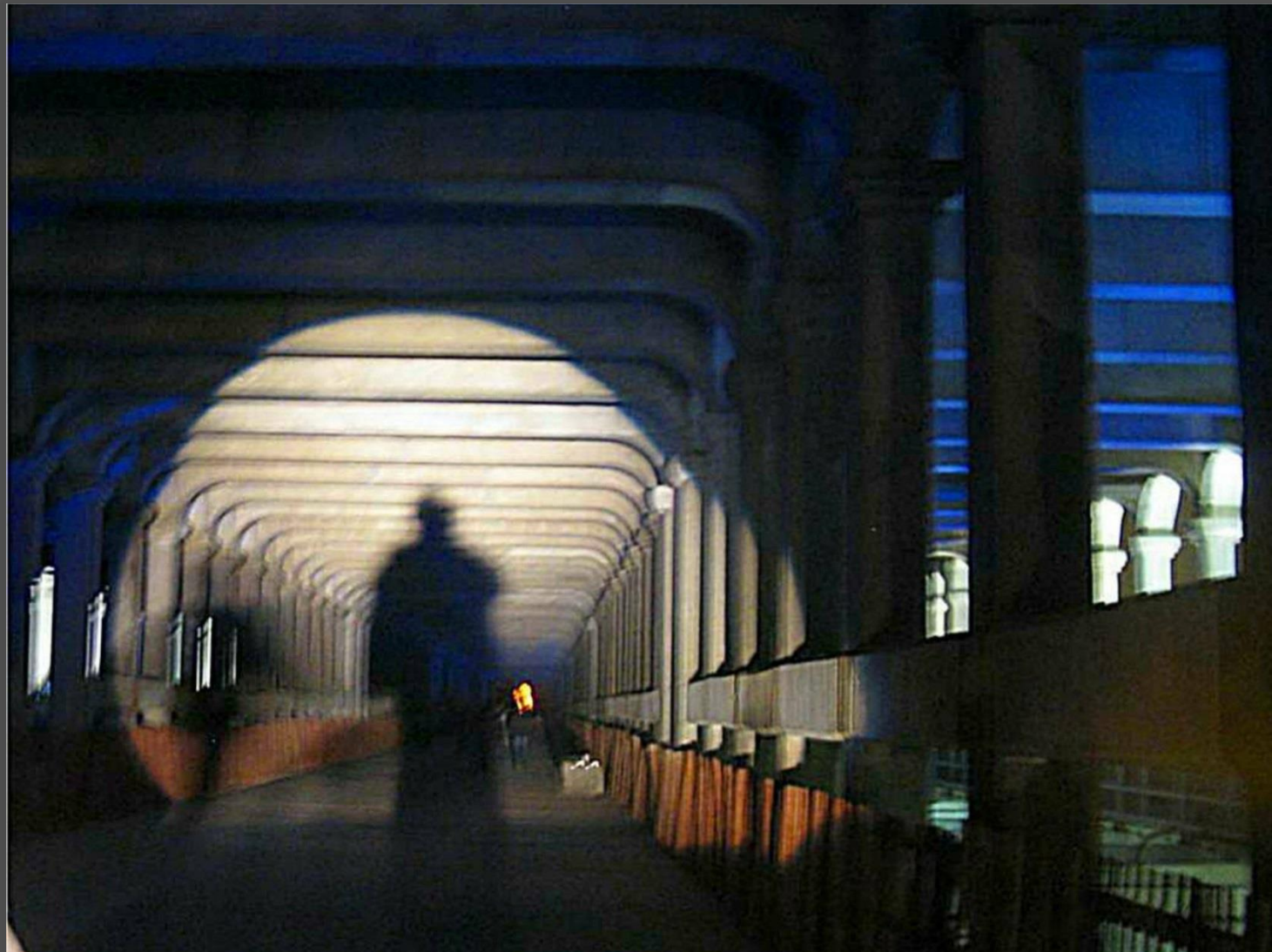
West side of building at 668 Euclid Avenue, being converted to housing





utility player





## phantom of the bridge

Underside of Detroit-Superior Bridge during Ingenuity Fest in 2011



## dark day in cleveland

Sunset behind downtown Cleveland buildings





rainbow alley



accidental art





escalating





awesome atrium





great lakes dogs





## alley art

Community public art project in 2013 to "re-imagine" Hyde Court alley in Clark-Fulton neighborhood





big city, big light!





in food we trust!



Stunning transformation of long-vacant Cleveland Trust rotunda into Heinen's downtown supermarket



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

After working as a city planner for the past forty years, Robert Brown recently retired as Director of City Planning for the City of Cleveland. Until now, Bob's urban photography was limited to images taken for city planning presentations, where aesthetic considerations took a back seat to the pragmatism of illustrating the text of the presentation.



Now, in semi-retirement, Bob is returning to the streets of his adopted hometown to photograph Cleveland from a different perspective, where aesthetic considerations have taken their rightful place in the front seat!

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