

## PRESS RELEASE

### THE RUINS OF DETROIT, YVES MARCHAND & ROMAIN MEFFRE

“Ruins are the visible symbols and landmarks of our societies and their changes, small pieces of history in suspension.” Yves Marchand and Romain Meffre

Tristan Hoare and Julien Dobbs-Higginson are pleased to present a selection of photographs from the much acclaimed body of work *The Ruins of Detroit* (published: Steidl, 2010). Photographs from this series have previously been exhibited in *Ville Fertile*, Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine, Paris and *Metropolis*, Noorderlicht Photofestival, Groningen. They will be shown in the UK for the first time.

*The Ruins of Detroit* is a five year collaboration between French photographers Yves Marchand and Romain Meffre. Together they have documented Detroit's abandoned buildings, thus bringing to light the current state of 'Motor City' through a cinematic series of starkly beautiful photographs. Shooting with a large format, custom made camera, taking advantage of natural light and using long exposures, the images embody the unique atmosphere of each location. Marchand and Meffre's work retains a formal quality and is conceived as a document, giving the viewer a surreal glimpse of Detroit's former glory. Like the great civilizations of the past, we interpret them through their remains.

Once one of the wealthiest cities in the world, Detroit produced the single most important consumer product of the modern age; the automobile. At its peak, it was the world capital of car production and home to two million people. One factory, The Ford River Rouge Plant, employed more than 90,000 workers and its assembly line extended for almost a mile. This monumental success attracted the great architects of the period and the eclecticism of the city's building programme reflected every fashion of the day.

Yet the American dream soon turned into a nightmare. The 1950s saw machines replace workers and, in the following decades, hundreds of thousands of jobs were lost as the international car market changed beyond recognition and foreign car manufacturers successfully competed for their share of the US market.

The images bring to mind a Biblical disaster; it is as if all Detroit's citizens had fled. The abandoned factories and buildings, vacant schools and derelict ballrooms, to name but a few, are a poignant reminder of the fragility of the modern world and, possibly on a different scale, of a now 'broken America'. These beautiful, but disturbing, images look un-compromisingly at the remains of the once-astonishing Detroit, as a then global center of capitalism and its following, even more extraordinary, descent into ruin. One is reminded of Detroit's prophetic motto:

*Speramus meliora, resurget cineribus* (“We hope for better things, which shall rise from the ashes”)

#### Notable Press Quotes

“The images constitute a requiem for an American empire in a state of precipitous decline.”

Holly Brubach, *New York Times*

“Many of the images seem post-apocalyptic, as if some sudden catastrophe has struck downtown Detroit, forcing everyone to abandon homes and workplaces and flee the city... A formally brilliant and powerful document of the dramatic disintegration of a once-great American city over the last few decades.”

Sean O'Hagan, *The Guardian*

#### Notable Quote

“No place epitomises the creative and destructive forces of modernity more than Detroit, past and present.”

Thomas J Sugrue, author of *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*

## FOR FURTHER PRESS INFORMATION CONTACT

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High-resolution images are available on request.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

### **Wilmotte Gallery, Lichfield Studios:**

133 Oxford Gardens  
London, W10 6NE

**Hours:** Tue to Sat 11 - 6pm

**Exhibition:** 24th February to 5th April 2012

**Nearest Tube Station:** Ladbroke Grove or Latimer Road

**Public enquiries:** info@tristanhoare.com

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## NOTES TO EDITOR

**Romain Meffre** (b. 1981) and **Yves Marchand** (b. 1987) are both from the suburbs of Paris. They met through their interest in documenting ruins and have been collaborating since 2002. Neither have any formal photographic training. Their work has been exhibited in Paris, Strasbourg, Groningen, Stockholm, Melbourne and New York and has also been subject of a monograph, *The Ruins of Detroit*, published by Steidl in 2010. Since 2006 they have been taking photographs of old theatres across America.

**Tristan Hoare** studied History of Art at Edinburgh University. Following an internship at the Louvre, he spent four years at Christie's Auctioneers, both in London and Paris. During this time he worked in a variety of departments including 18th century French Furniture, Old Masters, Impressionist and Contemporary art, before focusing on photography. After leaving Christie's, Tristan worked for several galleries before setting up his own company advising clients and curating exhibitions. In 2009 he teamed up with architect Jean-Michel Wilmotte to organise a high quality programme of international photography at The Lichfield Studios.

**Julien Dobbs-Higginson** is the founder and editor-in-chief of KultureFlash. Launched in 2002 it was London's first weekly cultural digital newsletter. Julien was educated at Middlebury College in Vermont where he read Political Science and Art History. He started his career in the arts with an internship at the Leo Castelli Gallery in New York, after which he became a cultural reporter and partner at Flavorpill in New York. Julien is also an art consultant and recently did some marketing research on art collectors for Christie's via SCB Partners. *The Ruins Of Detroit* is the first exhibition that he curates.

**Jean-Michel Wilmotte**, architect, urban planner and designer, founded an architectural firm in Paris in 1975. Together with his team of 99 people he is currently working on more than 100 projects in France and abroad. His firm's activities range from industrial design to architecture and include modern re-adaptation of old buildings and museography. Previous projects include redesigning several wings and galleries of the Louvre and the Impressionist galleries at the Musée d'Orsay in Paris.

**Lichfield Studios** was purchased by the Earl of Lichfield in 1984, where he designed and built a state of the art photographic studio. One of the great photographers of his generation, he used the studio to photograph Royals, celebrities and friends and was awarded fellowships of both the British Institute of Professional Photographers and the Royal Photographic Society.