

Vlachos' Views

Paul Vlachos is a New Yorker who understands The West. He also understands New York. His work celebrates the differences and the similarities.

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Cape Charles, Virginia. A really, really old, but fairly well-preserved gas station. The kind of place Hopper might have painted at night. I have always been fascinated with gas station design. Even now, when you could make a strong argument that there is no more imaginative or whimsical modern gas station design aesthetic, there is a certain glory in the way people build these places. For the record, I think there's a lot more to gas station design now than the simple functional box that most new ones seem to be on the surface. That's for another caption, though. For now, take a moment to glory in the little emotional hiccup that brought this one about. It has weathered the years well, too. The pumps are gone, but it still sits, guarding that tiny crossroads. It's for sale, too. A shame it's zoned commercial only.



It's the fence and the field that are the border. From where I took this, on the Maryland side, there's a really low-rent, discount cigarette place. Kind of rough-and-ready, "maybe they'll cash your paycheck, maybe not" type of place. Get some gas, use the porta-pottie, buy some smokes and get out. Nothing here. Move right along. Take a few steps into the corn rows, though, and you're in Virginia. Not that a whole lot changes – state borders are always limbo zones, places where you can get something cheaper on one side of the line, something legal that's not legal on the other side. Places where legal jurisdiction ends for one person and begins for another. Anyway, I like the colors here.

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Eastern Mojave Desert – 2004. It's actually at the site of Vidal Junction, a busy, but lonely crossroads in the Mojave on the California/Arizona border. Stuff changes here, but very slowly. Every time I pass through, it's a little different. I don't know how long this truck camper was here, but it's long gone now.



Somewhere on the southern tip of the Delmarva Peninsula. The typeface, the colors, the inverted airplane wing shape. It's all there. What the hell would that typeface be, anyway? I see it so often on these ancient sign remnants. "Mid-century American Motel?" I'd love to get a hold of it. Any font people out there who can recommend an analog? I used to be a font person, back in the days of Prestype and Letraset...

Lordsburg, New Mexico

They were not open, Don Juan Burritos. It didn't look like it would take much to get the place going again, though. Perhaps they went away for the season? Probably not. This shot caused me to meditate on why I shoot some places. I think it starts with the light, whether it's daylight or artificial. Either way, it's got to be good. It's not about strict documentation, otherwise you could use any kind of crappy light and not care, just so long as you get the subject. Then it's the colors and the composition. Possibly the weirdness factor. Yes, I have to be honest. Very quickly, though, follows the "what's the deal here?" What's the story? What happened here? If it's really run down, a torrent of false memories, otherwise known as fantasies or fictions or daydreams, will swamp me in a millisecond, a romance of countless encounters and meetings from long ago, things that happened at this one spot. That's probably not the case here, but the longer I look at it, the more I see.

