



# Junk Cars Are Fun

Window #1

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Different photographers are attracted to different subjects. Some enjoy portraits: adorable babies, sweet children, beautiful young women, or benign, smiling old men with beards and a twinkle in the eye. Others like animal life: colorful butterflies, nesting egrets, cuddly kittens, fierce tigers, herds of horses in a cloud of dust, or closeups of zebras. Still others concentrate on the works of man: lighthouses, the Golden Gate Bridge, the Taj Mahal, Venetian canals, or Greek fishing villages. And many specialize in

landscapes: Lake Louise, magnificent mountains, streams with waterfalls, breaking waves, or reflections of fall colors. Of course, many of us photograph a range of these subjects.

I prefer rusted, junked cars. They provide an unparalleled array of fascinating shapes and color schemes. The scales range from several feet on a side to closeups and even macros. Looking at the shapes the photographer can imagine faces, animals, structures, and landscapes, all in a very small area. And there is no need to wait for the decisive moment, the best time of year, or the perfect light. They do not move, look the same year-round (unless there is snow on them), and although diffuse light is best, they can be photographed in full sun, open shade, or under an umbrella with very satisfactory results.



Hood #2



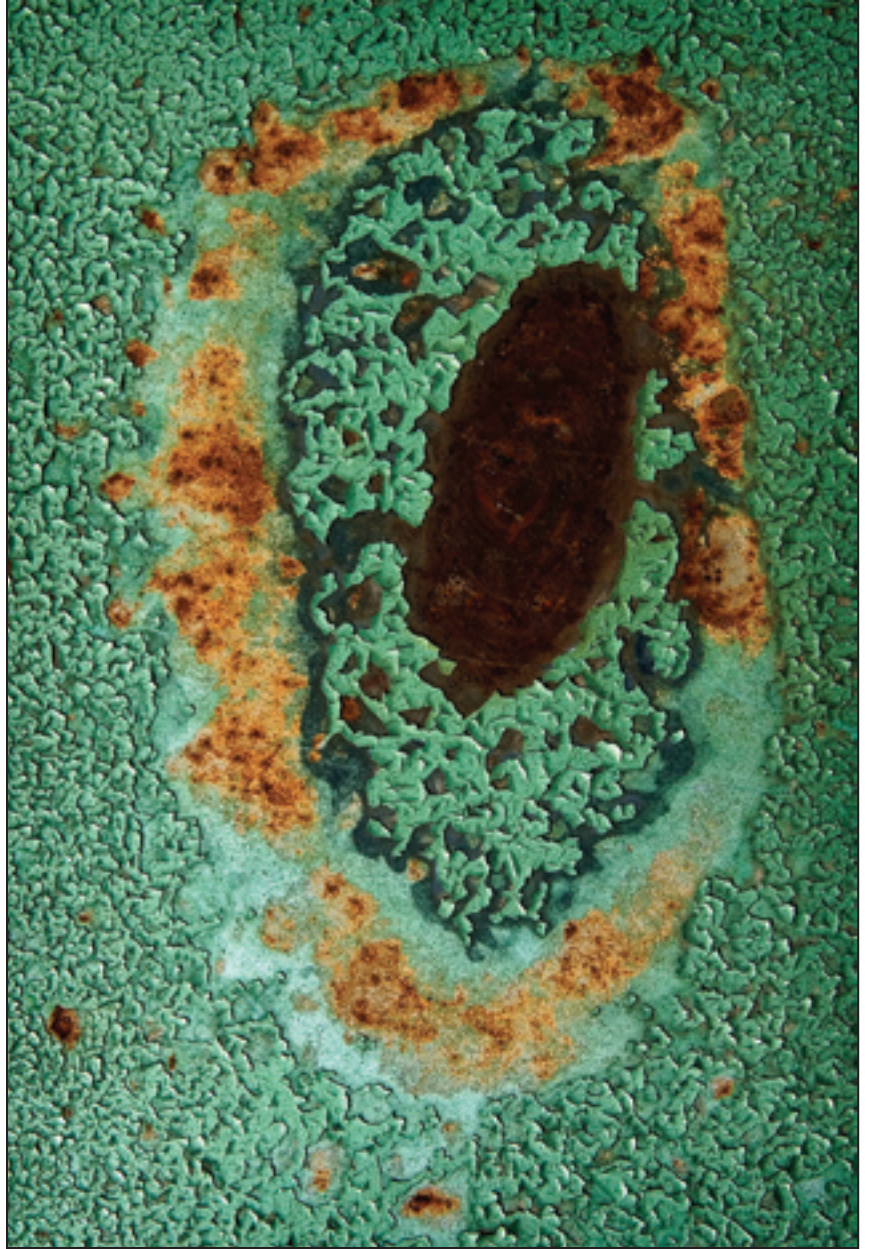
Fender with grass



*Curved line #1*

I first learned of the beauty of junk cars when I attended a lecture by the Canadian photographer Richard Martin in San Francisco in 2003. Among his many striking slides was a series of details of cars in a junkyard near his home in Kingston, Ontario. (I learned later that Ernst Haas had made similar images in the 1970s.) After the lecture I looked for such cars, and found one during a workshop in Santa Fe a few months later, but didn't make much progress until I was able to take a workshop with Richard Martin and Stephen Scott Patterson in the Kingston area. They devoted a whole day to the junkyard, which contains hundreds of cars, and it took me more than an hour to photograph the subtle curves, in hues of pastel blues and pinks, of just one of them.

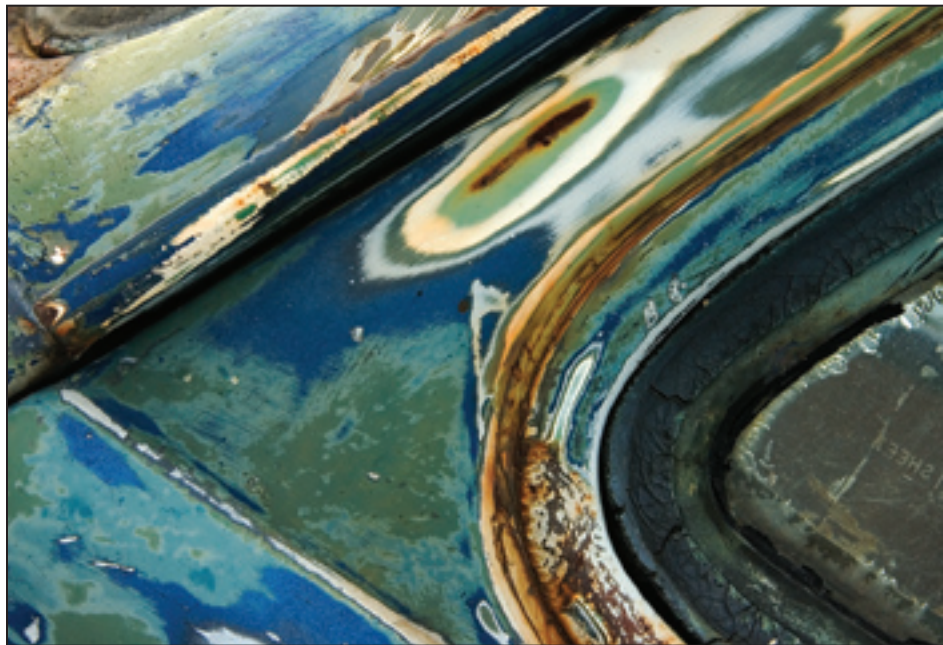
Since then I have been able to find more specimens from time to time. A couple of months ago I was waiting for my wife to have her hair cut in Berkeley, California, and while I was



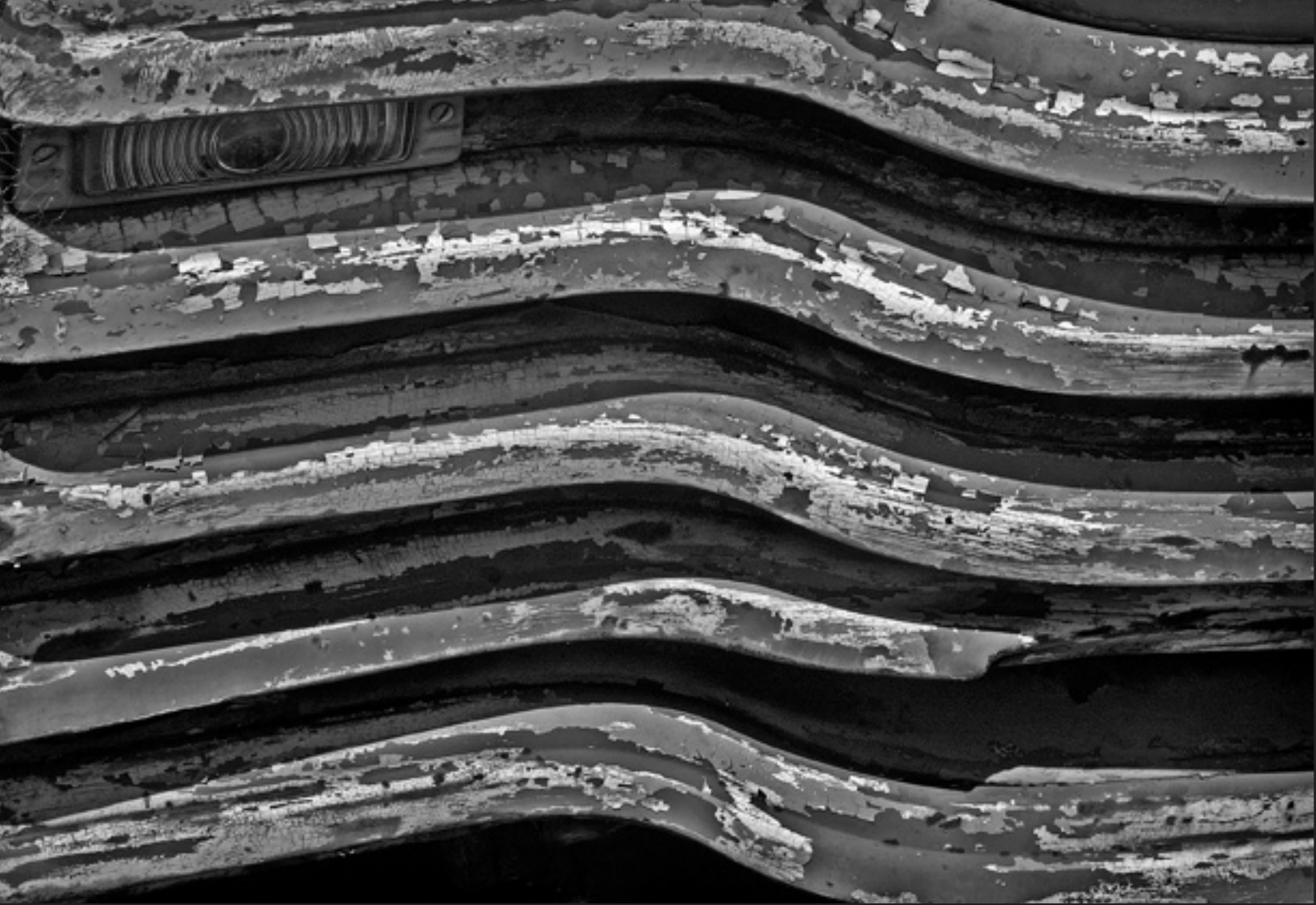
*Junk #8*



*Grille #1*



*Window #2*



Grille #2



**Joe Hearst**

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*Scream*

wandering around I found a wonderful truck that has evidently been parked in the same spot for many months, if not years. Recently I took a workshop in the Palouse, and we stayed in the town of Colfax, WA. During a midday break one of the other photographers told me about a few cars parked behind a restaurant and a motorcycle shop, and again I made a series of images.

I started shooting these cars with a film camera, but switching to digital just made things easier. I use a tripod when too much contortion is not required, because it makes it easier to get precise compositions, especially if your hand is as unsteady as mine, but if space is limited or time is short, hand-holding is satisfactory. Most of the time I have used my 28-300 mm lens, and I occasionally add a close-up diopter. The histogram is often quite narrow, but can easily be expanded with the RAW converter or a Levels layer in Photoshop, and sometimes I add a little snap with Curves. Otherwise, I don't do much modification except for removing distracting bright spots and edge intrusions.

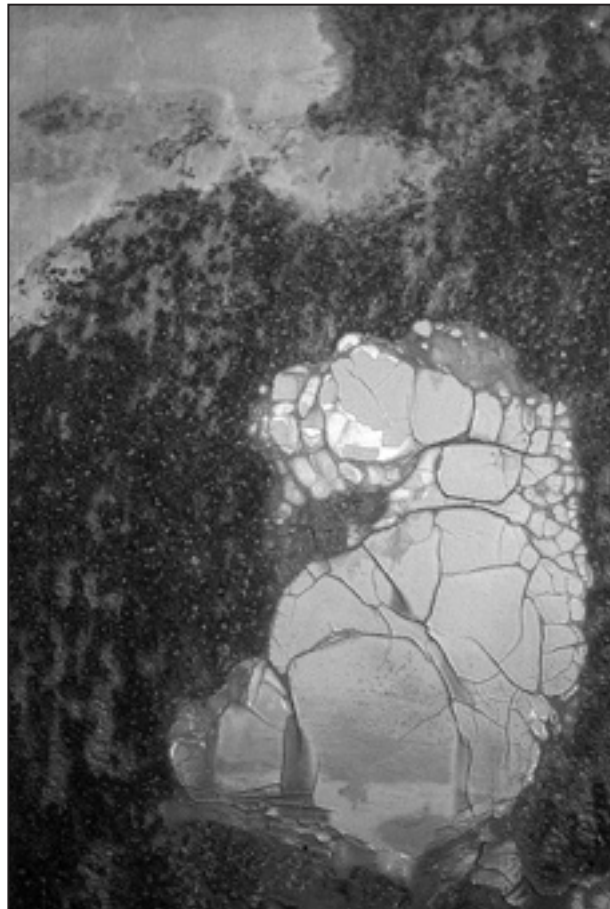
I have found that some viewers (and judges) like pictures that include areas of a car with recognizable features, such as a gas cap or a hood



*Front end*

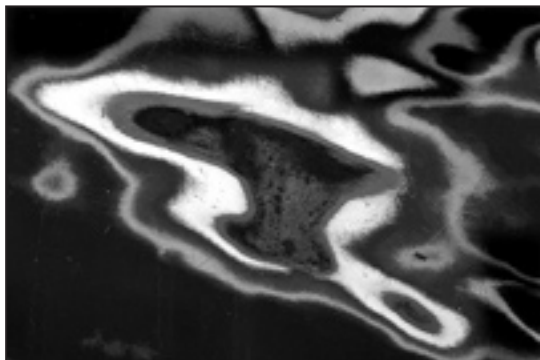
or a door handle. Others are impressed by strong lines and shapes, made by things like the corner of a window or the side of a door. Images that can be interpreted as other things, like a face, or an old woman, or an embryo, or an animal, or an archway are appealing to a number of viewers. Finally, some, the purists, appreciate things that can best be described as pure abstracts of lines, curves, and areas of color. I like them all, and in competitions I mix and match, and all types do well some of the time.

To conclude, a photographer can make wonderful images of many kinds from junk cars, and they are available in many places if you keep your eyes open and your camera available. Good shooting! 📷



*Embryo*

*Photos ©  
Joseph Hearst*



*Junk #7*