

EXCERPTS FROM *THE BORSCHT BELT*:

"The chairs. Oh, those chairs. One floats in the weeds of a local watering hole, bringing to mind the baby Moses adrift in the bulrushes; another stares out the window... Elsewhere, they form a straight line or huddle in a circle. But there's more here than visual provocation. There's history, too... Every one of them tells of a time, some fifty to sixty years in duration, when American Jews, largely from the East Coast, ventured to the Catskills, to its hundreds of bungalow colonies and equally large number of resorts, for fun and games, for a respite from the summer heat and the pressures of daily life. But that's all gone now and what remains are Scheinfeld's canny images, which bear witness to both change and stasis. Her artistry makes us see that the past doesn't vanish so much as startle. Just when you think there's nothing left from an earlier era, you happen upon something that stops you in your tracks, some quirky detail that puts you in mind, ruefully, perhaps, of the odd juxtaposition of human and natural history." — [Jenna Weissman Joselit](#)

"Gazing at the orphaned objects of Marisa Scheinfeld's pellucid lens, it seems hard to believe that they were once the evidence of immigrant triumph. As Scheinfeld demonstrates in her evocative and haunting pictures, nature is green in tooth and claw. Vegetation has come to reclaim its turf. Weeds grow out of the cracks in empty swimming pools—surely the most poignant of all ruins. In one of Scheinfeld's most memorable works, a row of bar stools awaits customers who will never return, at the edge of a counter long since removed by jobbers or vandals. The seats recall the foreground of an Edward Hopper painting enveloped in a clamorous silence... Let your fingers do the walking through this exhibit of ruins. You will not be the same person as the one who first opened this magical volume." — [Stefan Kanfer](#)

ADVANCE PRAISE FOR *THE BORSCHT BELT*:

I was there in the glory days of The Catskills and the audiences were tough and demanding. They really sharpened your act. It was do or die. No Borscht Belt, no Mel Brooks." — [Mel Brooks](#)

"I will never forget my childhood in Brooklyn and my days visiting the Catskill Mountains. I worked one summer at Grossinger's as a busboy and it was a memorable experience in my life. It is sad to see these pictures of what once was and what will never be again. They are brilliant photographs and the memories will be indelible in my mind. This is sadly joyful." — [Larry King](#)

"The book notes Woody Allen's quip, no doubt delivered at some point from a Borscht Belt stage: "Eighty percent of success is showing up." Some might say that Scheinfeld arrived half a century too late, but her photos reveal that she showed up just in time to discover mutable beauty in tumbledown dreams." — [R.C. Baker for The Village Voice](#)

"Great. Weird. Sad." — [Marc Maron, Comedian](#)

"These photographs capture the decay of what once a rich cultural tapestry. I can even visualize it all coming back to life...the fun, the joy...places where I grew up, as a woman and a performer." — [Marilyn Michaels, Comedian](#)

"Susan Sontag famously observed that "all photographs testify to time's relentless melt." One could scarcely imagine a more observant and poetic testimony than Marisa Scheinfeld's eerie photographic record of the crumbling remains of American Jewry's mid-century Xanadu, the Borscht Belt. With an archaeologist's attention to the accumulated layers of history and the passage of time, her melancholic images of ruins, detritus and festering vegetation are haunted by an unseen and undefined presence, providing a visual meditation on abandonment and absence. These photographs invite us to consider the rich history of American Jewish life, the legacy of the Catskills, and the ways in which this complex history is enduringly present and woven into the very fiber of the region." — [Maya Benton, Curator, International Center of Photography](#)

"Marisa Scheinfeld's "Borscht Belt" pictures capture that sweet spot between the exquisite pain and the beauty of decay – Brava to Scheinfeld for giving us this skillfully composed archive of what remains of the splendors of the Catskills past. My own family history with the Catskills spans many generations. My mother spent childhood summers at the Tempel Inn at Shandeleer. My father was a counselor at Camp Ranger in Bethel. My sisters and I were taken to The Laurels and the Nevele, and straight out of art school I lived with a group of friends in Roscoe, where I first picked up my own camera. Years later my husband and I decamped to Beaverkill to escape the city when our eldest daughter was born. I've always been hyper-conscious of both the repurposing and eventual destruction of the magnificent places I knew so well. Scheinfeld's documentation sensitively shows us the innate elegance and grace within impermanence." — [Laurie Simmons, Artist](#)

"In New York's Catskill Mountains, a party began in the 20th century that lasted decades. Party pictures filled thousands of scrapbooks - but now, the party's over, and the guests are gone, never to return. Enter Marisa Scheinfeld, whose camera finds profound eloquence in the silence that remains, and hope in new life emerging from the ruins. The story was already ancient when Shelley penned Ozymandias: that all things grand eventually fall. But Scheinfeld's work is all the more moving, because these things are ours, now." — [Alan Weisman, Author, Countdown & The World Without Us](#)

"Lord Action famously wrote that history is not a burden on the memory but an illumination of the soul. That sentiment comes alive in the photographs of Marisa Scheinfeld. This collection tells the fascinating story of the history of the once-vaunted Catskill resort industry that at its peak included more than 500 hotels and 50,000 bungalows. This is the story of a paradise lost, and these photos are an invaluable tool in preserving the past for those who were not fortunate enough to have experienced it." — [John Conway, Sullivan County Historian](#)

"In photographing the ruins of the great Jewish resort area, Marisa Scheinfeld taps our memories of the great Golden Age of the Catskills, and fills our hearts with recollections. In their whirlwinds of color, these photographs sing the history of the hotels and bungalow colonies, putting us at ease by the pool, at sport on the handball courts, and always at the table in the dining room. It's a joy to step into these vivid images and relive such an important historical phenomenon." — [Phil Brown, Ph.D., Founder & President of the Catskills Institute](#)