



Auto-Reflective

by Robert Hecht



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Commentary

The camera is such an accurate recording device that simulates our vision with amazing fidelity. It does this so well that we rarely find ourselves fooled by a photograph. At first glance, this image looks as though the camera has been pointed up to create the fairly common view of the urban landscape. In fact, we've all seen this kind of photograph many times. We've probably *made* this photograph ourselves. But then, the unexpected! A windshield wiper at the bottom of the frame jars us from the cliché. It takes just a moment before we recognize the visual pun and understand that we are looking *down* at a reflection.

Of course, now that Hecht has taught me to see these reflections, I see them everywhere. I've even made some photographs like these — which I've never shown anyone because they're not really *my* photographs. They are Robert Hecht's. And I'm delighted to give him credit for them.

Travel photography and the lure of exotic locations have been tempting and seducing photographers since, well, the invention of photography. Who doesn't like to travel and photograph such fascinating and novel subjects? There is, however, a clearly demonstrable skill when a photographer can show us their world — perhaps *our* world — with new eyes. Photographing the exotic is, let's be honest, fairly easy. Photographing the familiar is much more difficult — simply because it is so difficult to see the familiar as subject material. It's precisely for

this reason that Robert Hecht has become, for me, a bit of a contemporary hero.

We've published Hecht's work on six separate occasions. Each one of these was a testament to his ability to see — in interesting ways — *everyday life*. His projects have included shadows in his living room, details from his kitchen, tulips in his backyard, light reflections through his drinking glasses, bits of torn posters on the telephone poles in his neighborhood, and this project — the city environment reflected in car bodies. Not one of these projects was photographed more than a few blocks from his home.

Perhaps one of the best compliments I ever received about my own photographs was from a fellow photographer. He had seen my book, *Made of Steel*, and found himself wandering around his local automotive repair garage (while he waited for a flat to be fixed) looking at all the tools and workbenches. He said my photographs had taught him to see these locations "with new eyes." That's precisely how I feel every time I look at Robert Hecht's work.

I've often said that the role of the artist in society is to see for others what they cannot see for themselves. That even more true when that which is unseen is right in front of us.