

# Salton Sea: lost lakes and salt dreams



Exhibit dates: February 11—June 18, 2006 • Contact: Jennifer Reynolds, media specialist, (909) 307-2669 ext. 278

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## Silent Sea: Images by Ryann Ford

The history section of “The Salton Sea” exhibit features historical photographs from the museum’s history division archives and recent images by Ryann Ford. Ford is a photographic artist, raised in the mountains above San Bernardino, California. Her interest in photography began in high school and was refined at the prestigious Brooks Institute of Photography in Santa Barbara, where she earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Photography. Still based in Southern California, her work focuses on the artifacts of the abandoned American desert. Her current portfolio, *Silent Sea*, is a series documenting the fading landscape of California’s Salton Sea, a subject she has been intensely interested in for the last 7 years. Ryann’s photographs have been featured in various publications and shown in numerous exhibitions. More information on her work may be found at [www.ryannford.com](http://www.ryannford.com).

“It is still unclear to me whether my first trip to the Salton Sea was reality or a figment of my imagination. There I was in the middle of a dry, hot desert, yet I was surrounded by a vast ocean, complete with crashing waves, salty air, and eager seagulls. There was a scattering of hotels, albeit abandoned, still strikingly glamorous. Pink curtains danced in the windows of derelict trailers. Pigeon droppings caked the docks at the old yacht clubs where famed feet had once tread. It was eerie and magical at the same time.

“With each subsequent trip to the Salton Sea, I witnessed change, though it was not only nature doing the work anymore. With the over-population of California and the desperate need for land, the time had come for the bulldozer to give a final rest to what many deemed as eyesores.

“Unfortunately, many are unable to see that these are not mere eyesores, or decaying shells of insignificant buildings, but rather a dissipating piece of California’s history, a slice of Americana. This place became a sea of dreams and an escape for the both the known and the unknown. American idols such as the Beach Boys, Jerry Lewis, even Frank Sinatra made the Salton Sea their getaway destination.

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**San Bernardino County Museum**

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## Silent Sea: Dyann Ford

“When I first arrived at the Sea, I photographed out of curiosity and intrigue. I had a fallacious perception that these structures had been decaying for decades and would continue to slowly deteriorate for many more decades to come. That was not the case; the end of the Salton Sea’s mystique was not to come at the hand of Mother Nature, but by the devastating blow of a wrecking ball. With the demolition of the Salton Bay Yacht Club, I suddenly felt an urgency and obligation to capture this inimitable point in time. My work was no longer selfish, but rather necessary.

“Through my photography, I strive to record this unique period of loss, rebirth and imminent demise. It is inevitable that these ghost towns, and the stories they keep, will be demolished - their era is over - and such is life. Nevertheless, I find it impossible not to record this bizarre yet beautiful stage of decay and transformation. To me, the relics left embody a powerful slice of human history. While the dilapidated spaces reflect failed dreams, the resilient landscape still manages to hold possibilities for the future.”

All photos were shot on medium format black and white film and drum scanned. A 10-stop neutral density filter was used on-camera to achieve the “smooth water and blurred clouds” effect. The final print is a Chromira type-C print.

