



Galerie  
**DUMONTEIL**  
NEWYORK • PARIS • SHANGHAI  
杜夢堂

## **PRESSBOOK**

**Henk Van Rensbergen**  
亨克·范·任斯伯格

**WIRED**

October 2011  
2011 10月



PLAY // GHOSTS // ART

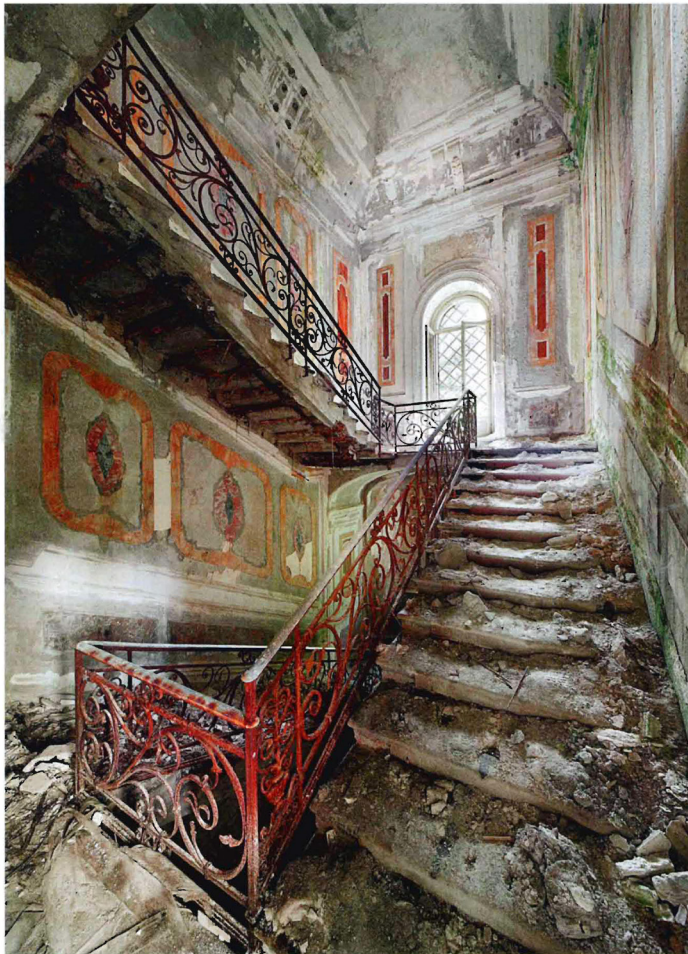
RUINS

## Haunting Houses

Collapsing stairwells, empty workrooms: just artistic fodder for one adventurous photographer.



**B**ELGIAN PILOT and photographer Henk van Rensbergen has been exploring abandoned places all his life—defunct factories, crumbling villas, shuttered hospitals. “I started taking the photos 25 years ago to prove to my friends I had been to such and such a place,” he says. “Today, the quality of the photos has become as important as the exploring itself.” Van Rensbergen is willing to wait as long as it takes to get the right shot—and to soak up the traces of life left behind.



A derelict villa at the foot of the Italian Alps.

At one church in Poland, he spent 10 hours watching the light change on the columns. In more prosaic locales, like old apartments, he searches for clues that might hint at the story of the place. “Look for the wall calendar,” he says. “That tells you how long the building has been abandoned.” If a forsaken flat is tidily cleared out, he envisions that “the memory of the old folks has been erased.”

Recently, while exploring a desolate Italian villa (left), he was struck by how white everything was from the dust of falling plaster. “It adds to the feeling of prestige,” he says. “I imagine well-educated people lived here, occupying their time with literature and music.”

A self-proclaimed pioneer of the urban exploration scene—which includes artists who capture everything from subway tunnels to dilapidated Detroit ballrooms—Rensbergen sells prints of his pieces online, and he’s currently working on his third book of images. Tips for first-timers? Keep your eyes peeled, watch your step, and don’t be stupid—you could fall through a rotted floor at any moment. And don’t forget your cell phone.



ISSUE October

TEXT Sara Bernard