

# DECAYING



Collapsing Shelter, Tillamook, Oregon Air Force Base, 1996

## SHULI SADÉ

Text by Steve Simmons

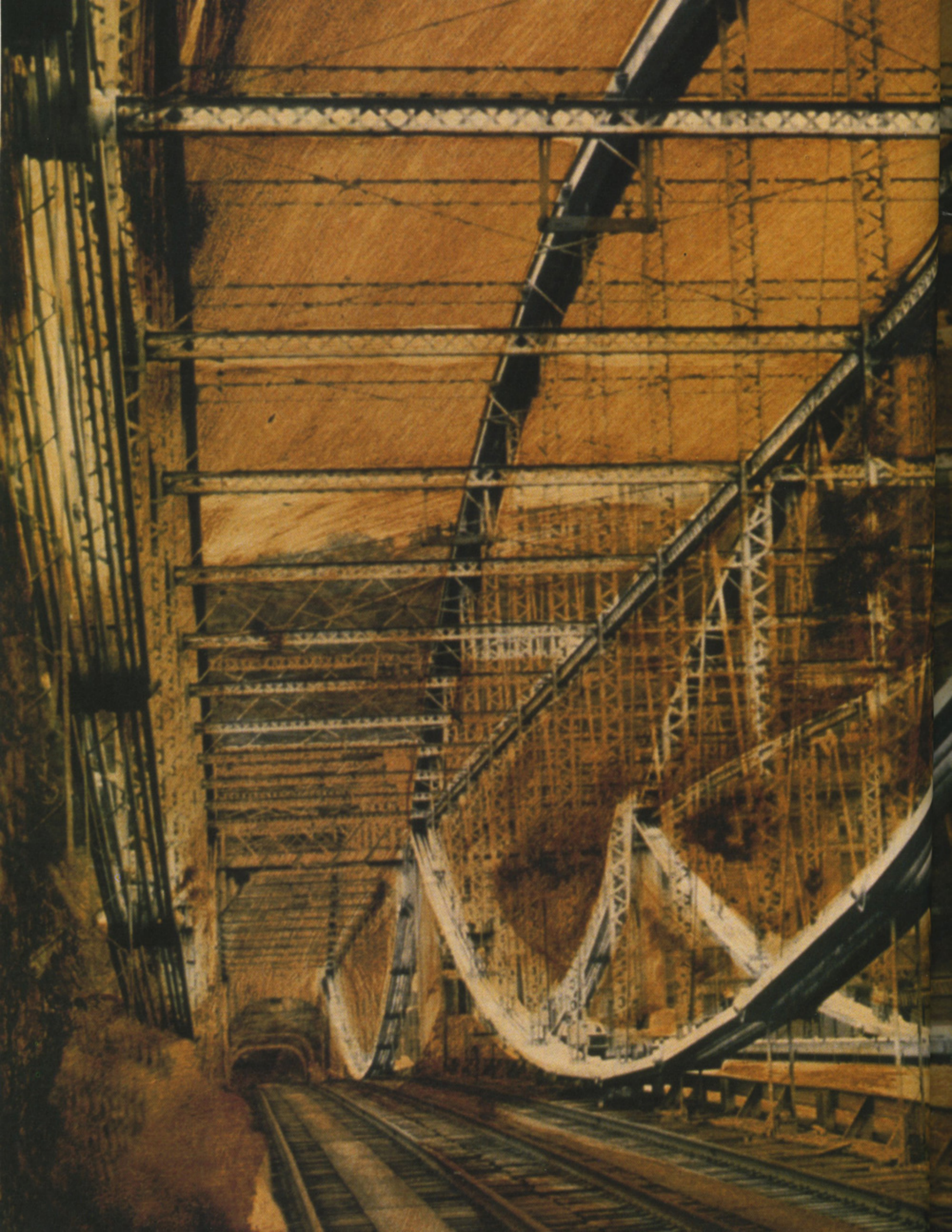
# TEMPLES



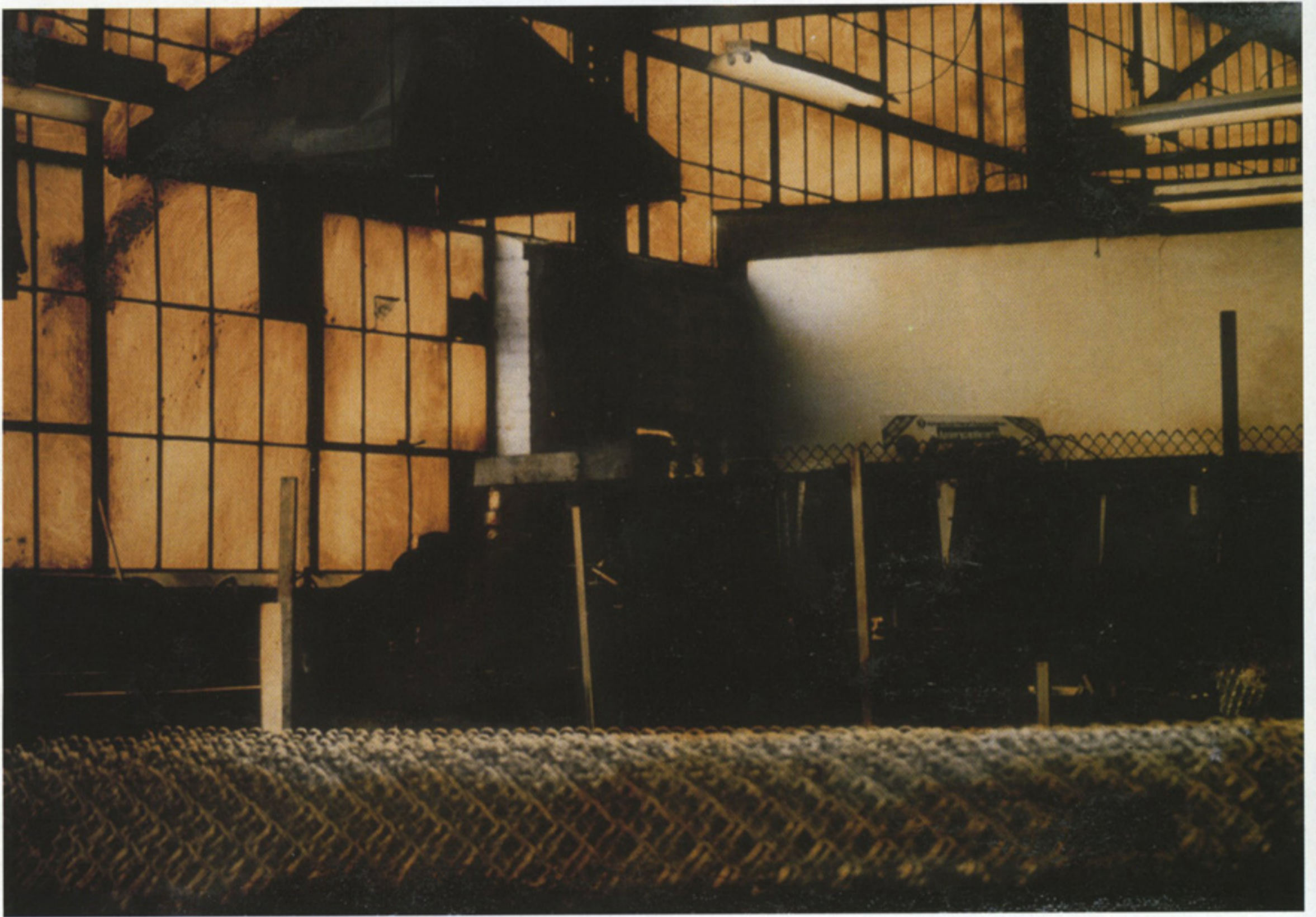
Power House, White River, Oregon, 1996

“My focus is space, where I feel light and time. These elements meet in the best way in the industrial arena, the interiors and exteriors.”

Shuli Sadé, 1998







Fence Weaving, Anchore Fence, Baltimore, Maryland, 1995

“Reviving these fields of chaos begins by noticing them. Empty industrial structures contain light—signals of time and space—all of which outline the void. In a dialogue with fragments—collective memories of debris, shapes, light and surface—a language, a vocabulary of knowledge, is created. At the moment the photograph is taken, a unique reunion of time, light, and space occurs, marking a transient state of being, containing selected fragments of debris within the frame, turning a decomposed language of signs into a useful dictionary of vocables—the infrastructure of the lost.”

Shuli Sadé, 1997



Temples of Industry, Los Angeles, California, 1994

“Industrial architecture creates landmarks, an outcome of its monumentality and unusual isolated placement near roadways or rivers. An aesthetic of decay is overtaking the existing old structures, creating new dialogues of surfaces and constructed elements. Abandoned industrial sites become allegorical landscapes mirroring the remains of the passing industrial culture.”

Shuli Sadé, 1997

Shuli Sadé's subject is the decaying industrial architecture of America. "These are like temples. They are huge spaces that make us feel small and they are relics of our industrial past. This is the end of an era. There is a whole language about our culture that is disappearing," explains Sadé.

Shuli Sadé is an Israeli woman who immigrated to the United States in 1984 because of her interest in decaying industrial architecture. "My country is too new for this type of subject."

She works with black-and-white and color films and a 35mm camera. When documenting her subjects, she focuses on her vision and emotions. In addition to her visual sensitivity and love of her subject, which are the keys to her images, she covers each finished print with tar and then removes it in varying degrees.

"My background is that of a painter and print maker," says Sadé. "Using tar on the photographs is a technique I learned when I did etchings. It adds a physical depth to the photo. Playing with

the surface like this allows the painter in me to come out in each image."

After allowing the tar to stay on the surface for a day or so, Sadé begins rubbing the thick covering off the print. The amount of tar removed from each area of the print is determined as she rubs the surface. She uses her hands, cloth, and wax to remove the tar.

"Each image is given the benefit of a complete reconsideration during this removal process," she illustrated. "The tar really never dries completely and as I remove it, I can reevaluate and interpret the light. No two images are ever the same, even from the same negative.

"The tar conveys the vocabulary of rust. It makes people think of old photographs, even though these places may not be that old. They are just decaying and being replaced by newer industries."

The color of the print, and the areas within the print, vary depending upon how much tar is removed. In some cases she actually leaves a layer of tar

covering part of the image, while in other areas she may remove it completely, creating an essentially traditional black-and-white region within the larger stained photograph.

"I have always been interested in architecture and space," she revealed during this interview in her New York studio. "I have travelled much of the world in search of this type of material. Recent trips have included India and the West Coast of the United States, looking for old power plants.

"I like to find places just before they are closed down or just shortly afterwards. Photography is the documentation of a moment and the layering with another material adds a new dimension."

The comparison of her images to temples and tombs is an inevitable one for most viewers. "Both are monumental structures meant to accommodate a god or machine god; something we have worshipped as part of our culture."

Shuli Sadé's work has been shown at various places in and around New York, in Israel, and in Australia. ▲