

Oblivion

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Hotel – *Germany*

Walking around in an abandoned hotel all alone is a rather surreal feeling. Less than 20 years ago, this German hotel was still in business. However, due to unfortunate financial challenges, the owners had to close its doors. After closing, the building experienced a destructive fire. That and the constantly changing weather conditions caused the place to fall into severe decay. Holes in the roof which let in rain have resulted in plants growing inside, which is an unusual sight.



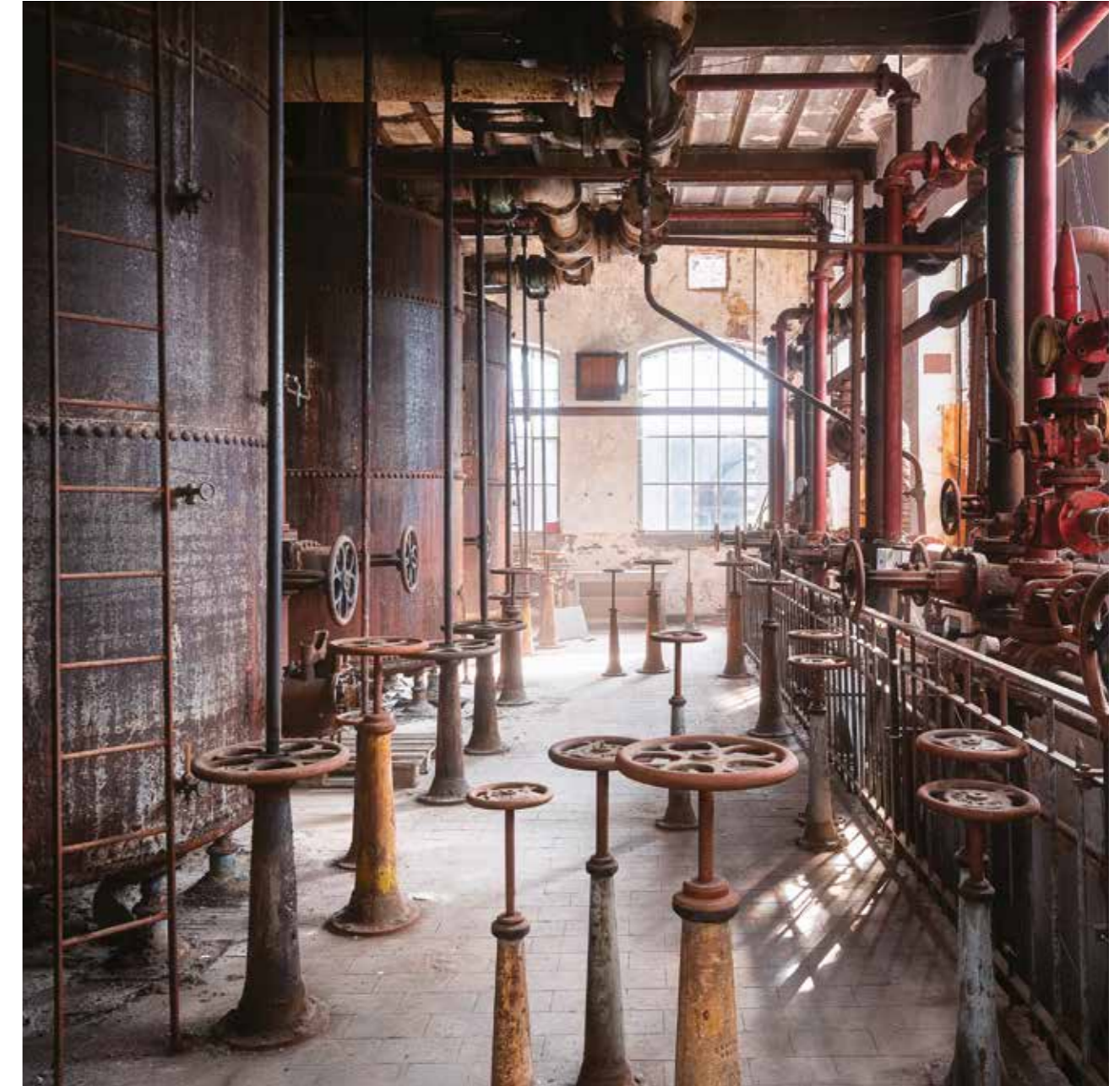
Churches and Chapels

Churches and chapels are among my favourite abandoned buildings to photograph. These buildings are found in Italy, France, and Belgium, and they simply ooze history. Peeking behind closed doors in a building like this feels rather special, and I often find clothing, ancient books, or religious objects that have been left behind. These abandoned houses of God will never be forgotten.



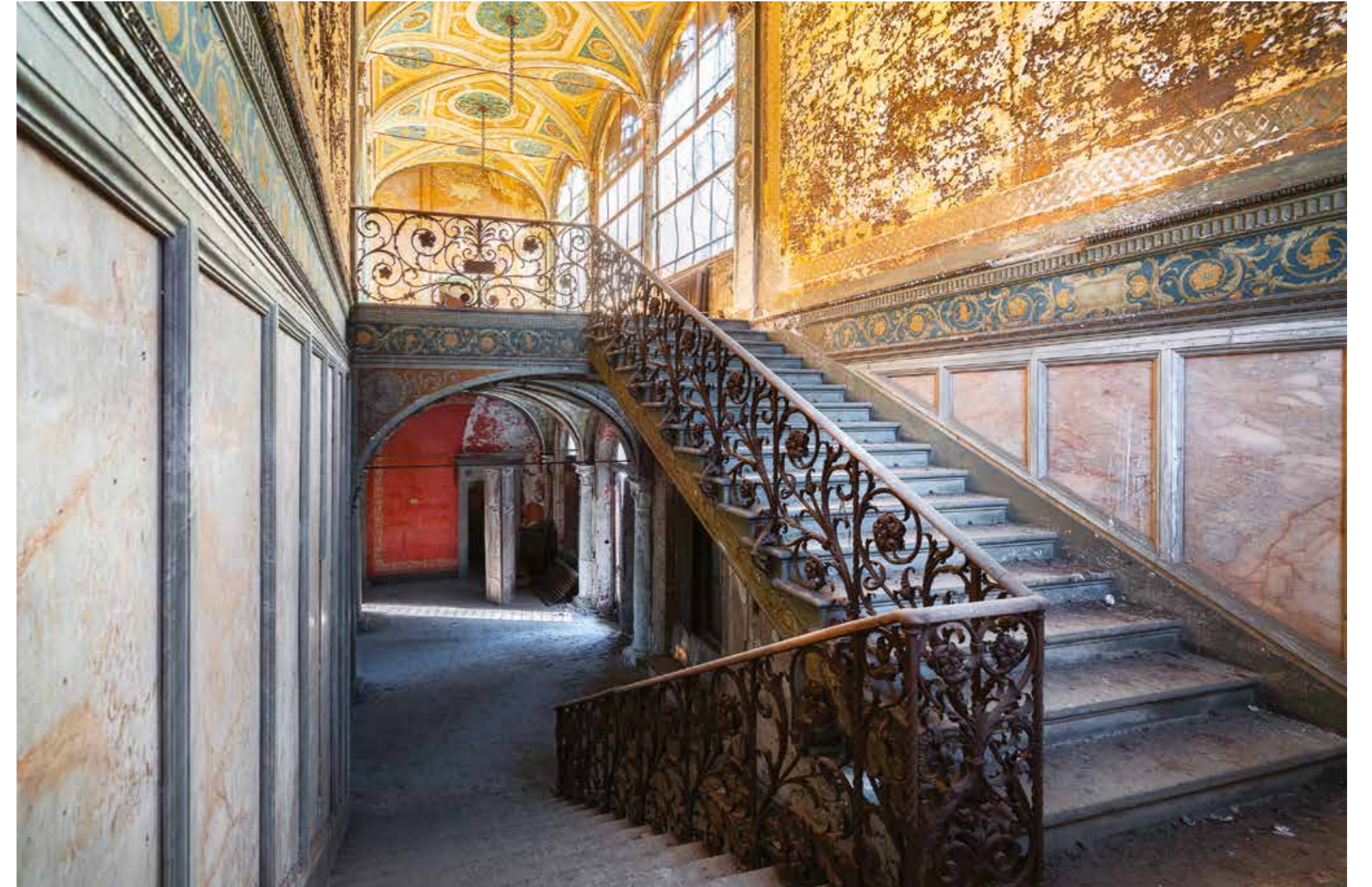
Wool-washing facility plant – *Belgium*

Originally established in 1899, this former wool-washing facility used a new process developed in the United States to degrease and wash wool. This allowed them to recover the by-products such as wool grease. The facility used the water from the river nearby mainly in the steam engines that powered the works. The river water is very pure and contains hardly any chalk. The facility cleaned the wool with hot water and detergent. The lanolin or wool grease would float on the water, and then be drained, filtered, and purified. Lanolin used to be a valuable product used in cosmetics. Some of the steam engines were still in use until the end of the 20th century.



Villa on the Hill – *Italy*

These photos depict a beautiful abandoned Italian villa. The villa, built in the early 17th century, has an amazing terrace that offers a panoramic view over the whole city. The location of the villa, strategically on top of a hill, was chosen by the owner in an attempt to escape the plague epidemic. At the worst point, almost a third of the inhabitants of the city died in one year due to this epidemic. The villa has been owned by some of the oldest and most influential families in Italy. Each family added a little something to the site. Because of this, it showcases a variety of different architectural styles.



Ballroom – *Belgium*

This stunning ballroom was built at the end of the 18th century as a prestigious Neoclassical casino. Since the 1930s, the building has had listed status and has been used for multiple purposes, including a military hospital, school, orphanage, and museum. One of the wings of the L-shaped complex required extensive rebuilding after demolition – the building had fallen into disrepair after becoming vacant, and a citizens' initiative won the building a spot on an institutional rescue list in 1993. After that, most of the external parts of the building were restored, but the interior still needs attention.

The ceiling was painted by the Belgium artist Henri Deprez in the 18th century and depicts the Olympian gods.



Burned Castle – *Belgium*

Shortly before this beautiful 15th-century Belgian castle was almost completely destroyed by fire, the most amazing wedding parties were celebrated on the property. The only room still intact is this former bedroom. All the other parts of the building were sadly destroyed and beyond saving.



Bird Cage – *Italy*

Sometimes I come across an abandoned building that has a unique and magical feel to it. This was definitely the case when I explored this beautiful empty house. Located in the countryside of northern Italy, the house appeared at first to be undergoing renovation. However, its state of decay and thick layers of dust told a different story. It stands on top of a hill, and I had the most amazing view with barely any other residential buildings around.

The magical feeling that made this house so unique came largely from the sight of a bird cage hanging on a wire from the ceiling. This poignant scene thrilled me and became the subject of many photographs.



Buzludzha – *Bulgaria*

This building is located on the peak of Mount Buzludzha at an altitude of 1,432 metres. The building was opened in 1981 to celebrate both Bulgarian liberation from Ottoman rule (1891) and the 1944 victory over Hitler's domination of Bulgaria. Russia played a key role in both events. The monument also served as the symbolic headquarters of the Bulgarian Communist Party.

Over 60 different Bulgarian artists collaborated to design the murals you can see in the picture, and thousands of volunteers were involved in the construction process. Some of the murals show the faces of Engels, Marx, and Lenin, while others depict labourers and the construction of the monument itself. The construction project cost about 14 million Bulgarian Lev, which is approximately 8 million US dollars. Citizens donated money to construct the monument, as they were told it was a monument for the people, by the people.

The huge tower you see in the picture is over 100 metres high. It has a huge red star on it, three times as large as the stars on the Kremlin. Some claimed that the red light which used to be emitted from the star could be seen from as far away as Greece and Romania. Bulgarian Communism ended around 1989, at which time the Buzludzha monument was inherited by the state. About six years later in the mid-90s, the process of decay began and the building surrendered to the elements of nature. I was told that the building was protected by security guards until the mid-90s. The roof of the building used to consist entirely of copper and was extremely heavy. Just one night after security guards left, looters made off with the entire copper roof.



Marble Quarry – Italy

Extraction of the marble from this picturesque quarry left behind space for water to gather, creating a stunning reflective pond. Years ago, the discovery of alpine newts blocked excavation in the quarry. Alpine newts are amphibians which are a few centimetres long, and are protected by the WWF.

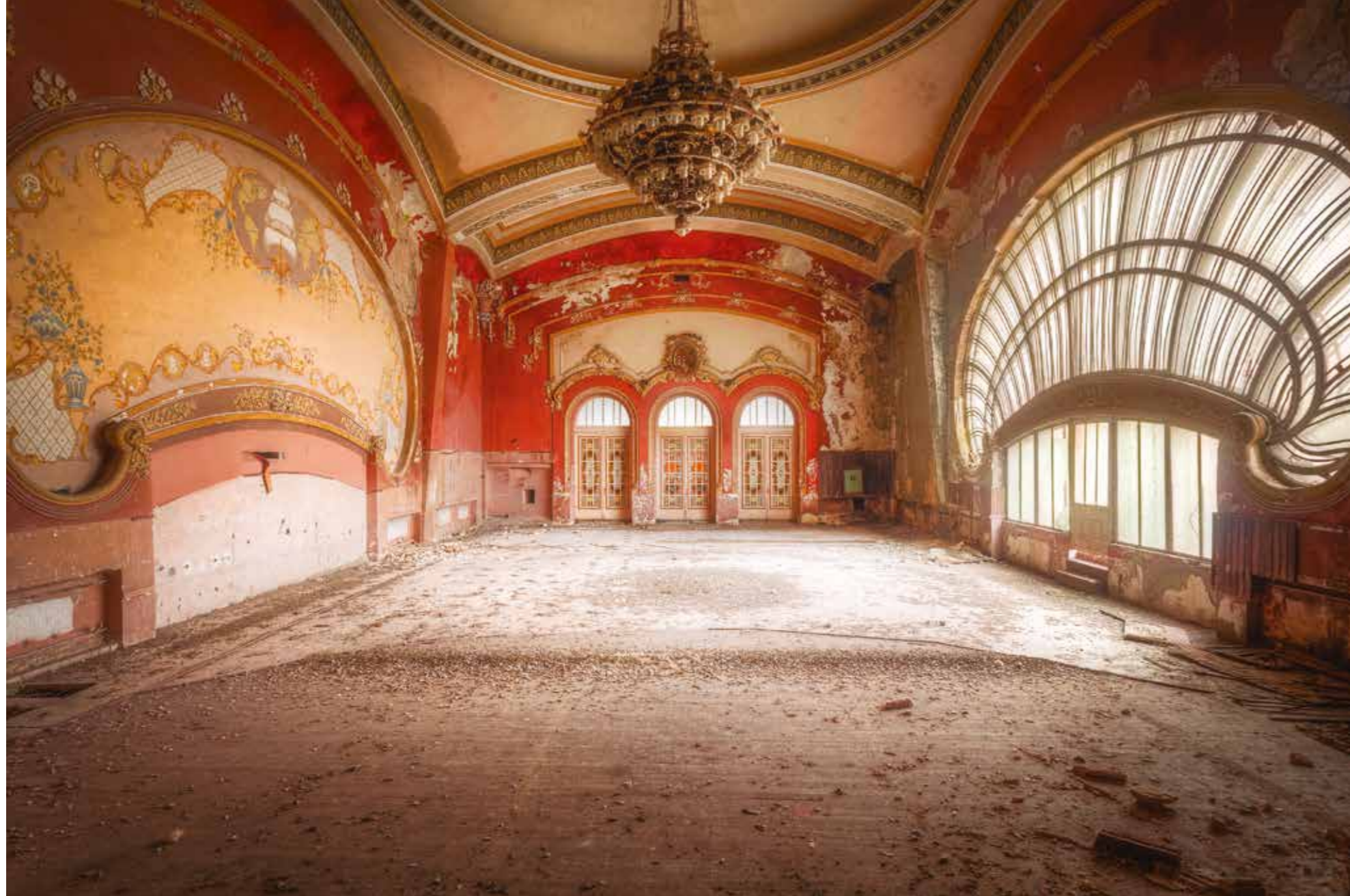


Casino Constanța – *Romania*

Once this was the most glorious building in Romania, but since 1990 it has been abandoned and is slowly falling apart. The building is listed as a historic monument by the Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs of Romania.

The casino was built in Constanța (formerly known as Tomis), Romania. The name of the city comes from the half-sister of the Roman emperor Constantine the Great. Constanța is the oldest continuously inhabited city in Romania. It was founded in approximately 600 BC, is located on the Black Sea and is the largest city in the region. The city itself has nearly 300,000 citizens and attracts a lot of tourists in summer because of its large beaches and warm climate. The casino used to be the main attraction near the port of the city, which is the largest port on the Black Sea, and also one of the largest ports in Europe. The pedestrian area around the casino is a popular destination for couples and families because of its romantic and friendly atmosphere.





Daniel Renard and Petre Antonescu designed the Art Nouveau building with stunning 18th-century Baroque accents, commissioned by the Romanian King Carol I. It was first opened to the public in 1910, and public money funded its construction. The original plan was to pay homage to Romania's artistic traditions, but while construction was in progress, it turned into an Art Nouveau palace for the Belle Epoque. Many wealthy travellers enjoyed their time playing games and dancing in this symbol of the city. The restaurant right across from the casino, which has now been renovated and given another purpose, was the place to enjoy dinner.

The iconic building survived two World Wars. During the 1914 visit of the Russian Imperial Family, the casino played host to a royal gala. Despite diplomatic negotiations, Grand Duchess Olga rejected the proposed marriage to Prince Carol of Romania and the Russians sailed away. Olga and the rest of her family were later killed by the Bolsheviks. During the Second World War, the building was used as a hospital. Under the post-war communist regime, it even operated as a restaurant for a time. Maintaining the structure quickly became too expensive, and in 1990 the building was closed and has remained so since then.