Evocative images of buildings and places, seen from the American road. Like many who grew up during the spread of sprawl—with its predictable landscape of housing developments, shopping malls, interstate highways, and big-box construction—acclaimed photographer Jeff Brouws is drawn to places that still embody the vernacular past as well as to those that starkly portray the soulless, franchised American landscape. What began as cultural geography of Main Streets became a visual critique of the myth of upward mobility that created this car-centered, paved-over universe. Some images look outward to the edges of suburbia where sprawl is encroaching upon nature. Others turn inward, documenting the devastated inner cities. All the stunning color photographs reflect the complex beauty and desolation of visual life in our time. 100 color photographs.

My Personal Review:
They're everywhere and so like the title of this book: nowhere. Wherever the tarmac leads signs of commercial chaos and eventually abandonment will probably appear. In theory nothing wrong with that, businesses come and go but it seems unique to America that a gone business is remarkably reluctant to clean up after itself. The detritus of commerce just litters the landscape and a fortunate by-product of this mess, over recent years, is an increasing visual record created by a small band of brilliant topographic photographers.

Jeff Brouws has spent some years casting his creative eye over urban sprawl, interstate commercial failure and inner city decay. This latest book captures all this so well in these ninety-eight photos. The first thing you'll notice about the book (perhaps portfolio is a better word) is the size, an impressive 12.25 inches deep by 11.5 wide which gives the images the sort of display they deserve, helped also by the excellent layout and 175dpi printing. Divided into three photographic sections: Highway...
Landscape, Discarded Landscape and Impossibility of Ruins, this last section has nineteen remarkable shots of rust-belt inner city decay. Because of the vastness of this city blight there is more chance that the authorities will do something about it while the single abandoned highway gas station will stay just that--abandoned.

The Highway Landscape has the most photos and it is here that frequently a shot will jump off the page, it just seems so right. Page sixty-one has a beautiful night image of the Sands Restaurant in Fresno, a neon sign and other lettering perfectly framed within the image area or the gas station ruins in Vidal Junction, CA, nicely composed into thirds, sky, buildings and an earth foreground. Brouws, like photographers from the Farm Security Administration onwards, has a sharp eye for signage, either neon or painted on exterior walls, most of the photos in the book have a bit of lettering somewhere.

Approaching Nowhere seems a continuation of his two earlier books, 'Highway: America's Endless Dream' 1997 (ISBN 1556706049) which has a few of the same photos and 'Readymades' 2003 (ISBN 0811836770) a remarkable book of several hundred photos of what can be seen from the Nation's roads. All three books capture the contemporary texture of the outside 'nowhere' beautifully.

*Temporary/Obsolete/Abandoned/Derelict

***FOR AN INSIDE LOOK click 'customer images' under the cover.