

KEITH DE LELLIS
GALLERY

FINE ART PHOTOGRAPHY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**INDUSTRIAL ARCHITECTURE IN PHOTOGRAPHY:
AN HOMAGE TO BERND AND HILLA BECHER**

SEPTEMBER 27 – NOVEMBER 4, 2022

Keith de Lellis Gallery is pleased to present a group exhibition on the subject of photographic images of industrial buildings and structures by American and European photographers in the twentieth century. Inspired by The Metropolitan Museum of Art's *Bernd & Hilla Becher* exhibition now on view at the museum through November 6, *Industrial Architecture in Photography* pays homage to the renowned husband and wife team Bernd and Hilla Becher. The prolific contemporary German artist duo focused on photographing and preserving a visual record of the industrial architecture of Western Europe and North America by methodically recording blast furnaces, water towers, grain elevators and other buildings with meticulous precision.

While the Industrial Revolution started in the eighteenth century, it was the 1920s and 1930s that would become an unprecedented period for industrial modernization as the demand for mechanical mass production grew. Several influential artists created iconic photographs of industrial architecture around this time including Edward Weston, Albert Renger-Patzsch and Charles Sheeler, along with the accomplished female photographers Germaine Krull and Margaret Bourke-White. At just 24 years old, Bourke-White made a name for herself as the preeminent image maker of industrial photographs and became the first staff photographer for *Fortune* magazine. This publication was created by Henry Luce in 1929 with the focus of "[catering] to the men who managed the nation's business. It would be a magazine that would treat in a sophisticated way industrial civilization in all its aspects," and "the camera would act as interpreter, recording what modern industrial civilization is, how it looks, how it meshes." Germaine Krull's artistic breakthrough happened in Paris in 1928 when she was hired by the nascent *VU* magazine, the first major French illustrated weekly. During this period she published her 1928 portfolio *Metal (Métal)*, a collection of 64 pictures of modernist iron giants including cranes, railways, power generators, the Rotterdam transporter bridge and the Eiffel Tower, shot in muscular close-ups and from vertiginous angles (MoMA, 2016).

Many of the photographs on view in the exhibition capture powerful scenes of industrial structures such as Edward Quigley's image of a towering smokestack that appears to reach into the heavens and Gordon Coster's photograph of colossal grain elevators that loom above a passing train in the middle of the night. Other formidable photographs of architectural innovations on display include coal refineries, transmission towers, silos, blast furnaces and power plants. Eric Kastan's geometrical abstraction captures the captivating symmetry of a radio tower from below while another abstract image by an unidentified artist documents a disorienting and complex composition of winding metal stairs inside of a German ocean liner.

Of all the icons of the modern industrial plant, the prototypical example would likely be the Ford Motor Company's 600 acre industrial complex built on the River Rouge in Dearborn, Michigan in 1928. This ultimate symbol of American industry was designated in 1978 as a National Historic Landmark for its architecture and importance to the nation's economy. On exhibit are Ford vintage publicity photographs from the 1940s which are reminiscent of the best work of the previous generation of art photographers, alternating between the romantic and precisionist ideal of image making.

Included in the show is a photograph taken by Margaret Bourke-White from her famous 1931 series of the monumental Rosenbaum Grain Elevators in Chicago before they would be destroyed by a catastrophic fire just eight years later. Along the same wall is an early 1920s pictorialist image by Baltimore artist and industrial photographer Holmes I. Mettee, whose soft focus painterly study depicts a nineteenth century horse-drawn wagon slowly passing in front of a modern industrial plant as a way to juxtapose the old methods against the new systems of mass production. Whether one looks towards industrialization with an eye of amazement or an air of enmity, it goes without question that large-scale manufacturing has continued to remain a vital innovation into the twenty-first century.

Industrial Architecture in Photography is an impressive show that presents the remarkable work of over fifteen artists who played a pivotal role in recording the significant advancements created by the expansion of industrialization throughout the twentieth century. Collectively this exhibition features the work of Margaret Bourke-White, Harry Bowden, Harold Corsini, Harold Haliday Costain, Gordon Coster, Andreas Feininger, Alberto Galducci, Goffis Giuseppe, Eric Kastan, Germaine Krull, Russell Lee, Paul Martial, Holmes I. Mettee, Frank Navara, Edward Quigley, C.F. Ross, Charles E. Rotkin and Paul J. Woolf. *Industrial Architecture in Photography* is on view at Keith de Lellis Gallery from September 27 to November 4, 2022.

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