

For Immediate Release

**Baltz, Becher, Ruscha**

April 21 – May 27, 2011

Opening Reception: Thursday, April 21, 2011



The Yancey Richardson Gallery is pleased to present *Baltz, Becher, Ruscha*, an exhibition of photographs by four seminal and highly influential conceptual photographers whose approach to shooting the man-altered landscape in the 1960s and 1970s conflated the notion of photography as art and as document. The exhibition includes historically significant works by each artist, such as Ed Ruscha's *Gasoline Stations* portfolio, Lewis Baltz's *New Industrial Parks Near Irvine, California* portfolio and a nine-part *Water Towers* typology by Bernd and Hilla Becher, among other works.

A shared preoccupation with topography, systems and a stylistic anonymity characterize the selections, as well as a conceptual formalism and an uninflected, deadpan way of documenting the landscape. The artists' systematic approach was a response to the rise of the industrial complex, amounting to an indexing of the ubiquitous yet anonymous architecture of particular structures: gasoline stations, industrial warehouses, municipal water towers.

The exhibited works place an emphasis on serial rather than singular images, along with a procedure or system that governed their production. "Seriality is defined by a particular interrelationship, rigorously consistent of structure and syntax," writes critic John Coplans. "Serial structures are produced by a single indivisible process that links the internal structure of a work to that of other works within a differentiated whole."

Bernd and Hilla Becher photographed coalmines, blast furnaces, grain elevators, water towers and other industrial structures throughout Western Europe, England and the United States for over four decades. In *Water Towers (USA Kugel unten Offen)*, the typological form emphasizes a reading of the functionality of these municipal structures, as well as an appreciation of subtle details – based on regional or stylistic preference – that distinguish individual structures from one another.

Similarly, in Lewis Baltz's *New Industrial Parks Near Irvine, California*, the artist presents a series of 51 images that illustrate subtle variations of geometry and texture within the vast monotony of this man-made environment. The images resist a singular point of focus in favor of presenting the flattened scene as a whole, further emphasizing the image's role as catalogued document. According to Baltz, "the ideal photographic document would appear to be without author or art."

A decade before Baltz, Ed Ruscha had also been responding to the environment of automobiles, roadways and suburban sprawl that was redefining the American landscape. Describing himself as a "reporter of facts," Ruscha photographed in an offhand, observational style, emphasizing the emptiness and banality of his subjects: gasoline stations along Route 66, uninhabited pools, or urban parking lots seen from a helicopter. Ruscha's photographs were originally released only as artist's books – mass-produced and widely distributed – illustrative of a democratizing force behind the work. His 1962 publication *Twenty-Six Gasoline Stations* is widely considered the first modern artist book, and later became the ten images of the *Gasoline Stations* portfolio.

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