



Cooling Towers

Bernd Becher, Hilla Becher

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Bernd and Hilla Becher's photography can be considered conceptual art, typological study, and topological documentation. Their work can be linked to the Neue Sachlichkeit movement of the 1920s and to such masters of German photography as Karl Blossfeldt, August Sander, and Albert Renger-Patzsch. Their photographs documenting the architecture of industrial structures, taken over the course of forty years, make up the most important body of work to be found in independent objective photography. This volume adds cooling towers to a list of photographic projects that includes book-length studies of water towers, blast furnaces, gas tanks, mineheads, and frame houses. Since the end of the nineteenth century, cooling towers have formed a striking part of electricity and steel works. The first cooling towers were wood-clad structures at coal mines; more recent examples are the steel or concrete constructions seen at nuclear power stations. The simplicity of these forms and their hermetically sealed external skins create an impressive, monumental effect. The Bechers have been photographing cooling towers since the 1960s. This volume contains 236 photographs of cooling towers--in all their different shapes and structural forms--from Belgium, England, France, Germany, Holland, and the United States, and includes a short text by the Bechers.

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