

Lewis Hine

Power house mechanic working on stream pump, 1920

silver gelatin print
17.4 cm x 12.4 cm

Vancouver Art Gallery
VAG 2002.7.2



Lewis Hine

Power house mechanic working on stream pump, 1920

Artist's Biography

Nationality: American

Born: 1874-09-26, Oshkosh, Wisconsin

Died: 1940-11-04

Lewis Wickes Hine (September 16, 1874 - November 3, 1940), was an American photographer. For Hine, the camera was both a research tool and an instrument of social reform.

Born in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, Hine studied sociology at the University of Chicago, Columbia University, and New York University. He began his career in 1904, photographing immigrants arriving in the United States at Ellis Island in New York Harbor. In 1908, he became the photographer for the National Child Labor Committee (NCLC). Over the next decade, Hine documented child labor in American industry to aid the NCLC's lobbying efforts to end the practice. Between 1906 and 1908, he was a freelance photographer for *The Survey*, a leading social reform magazine.

In 1908, Hine photographed life in the steel-making districts and people of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania for the influential sociological study called *The Pittsburgh Survey*. During and after World War I, he documented American Red Cross relief work in Europe. In the 1920s and early 1930s, Hine made a series of "work portraits," which emphasized the human contribution to modern industry, and included photographs of the workers constructing New York City's Empire State Building. During the Great Depression, he again worked for the Red Cross, photographing drought relief in the American South, and for the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), documenting life in the mountains of eastern Tennessee. He also served as chief photographer for the Works Progress Administration's (WPA) National Research Project, which studied changes in industry and their effect on employment. Hine was also a member of the faculty of the Ethical Culture Fieldston School.

The National Archives holds nearly 2,000 Hine photographs, including examples of his child labor and Red Cross photographs, his work portraits, and his WPA and TVA images.

Source: "Lewis Hine," *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*. www.wikipedia.org. March 27, 2006.

Artistic Context

Nationality: American

Training: Self-Taught

Peers: Jacob Riis

Group: Documentary photography; 20th century

Provenance: purchased from the National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland

Subject: immigrants; industrial scenes; social conditions; construction

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Other Works in the Vancouver Art Gallery Collection

Lewis Wickes Hine
Bolting up a big turbine in a power plane, 1920
silver gelatin print
Vancouver Art Gallery
VAG 2002.7.1

Lewis Wickes Hine
Mechanic in his shrine — heart of the turbine, 1924
silver gelatin print
Vancouver Art Gallery
VAG 2002.7.3

Lewis Wickes Hine
Making a plate for an enormous turbine, 1920
silver gelatin print
Vancouver Art Gallery
VAG 2002.7.4

Lewis Wickes Hine
Working on a core of a large modern turbine, 1930
silver gelatin print
Vancouver Art Gallery
VAG 2002.7.5

Lewis Wickes Hine
Skilled mechanic on big part of huge electric turbine, 1930
silver gelatin print
Vancouver Art Gallery
VAG 2002.7.6

Lewis Wickes Hine
A Young Spinner in a Southern Cotton Mill (boy with men), circa 1910
silver gelatin print on paper
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund
VAG 2004.37.129

Lewis Wickes Hine
Western Union bicycle Messenger, unknown
silver gelatin print on paper
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund
VAG 2004.37.130

Bibliography

The Uncanny: Experiments in Cyborg Culture

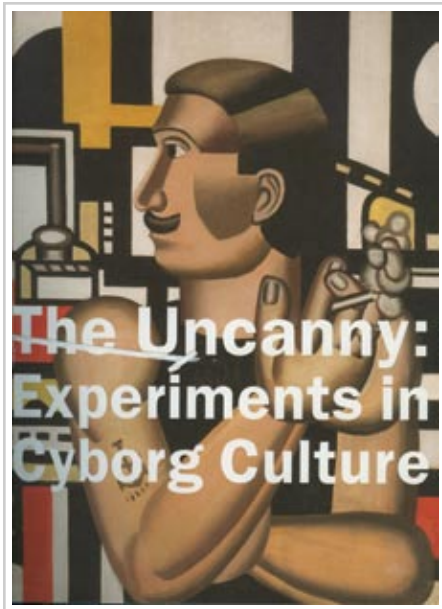
Publication
2002

[transcription of excerpt]

When the robot or cyborg takes a masculine form, it is sometimes identified with a masculine body that labours in aid of the machine. Fernand Leger's *Le mécanicien* (1920, p.55) or Lewis Hine's *Power house mechanic working on steam pump* (1925, p.54) are compelling examples of a symbolic alignment between man and machine. These images signal the existence of a symbiotic

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relationship to the machine in which men (and specifically "man") works in close harmony with the machine, nurturing it and maintaining it while taking on the characteristics of its powerful shape and form...

Certainly Leger and Hine were both well aware of the horrific toll that the modern machine had extracted from its labourers and yet both identified an underlying belief that the machine could not only provide the means to a better life but could in fact provide the model for a new worker.

Lewis Hine, *Power house mechanic working on steam pump, 1925*
Gelatin silver print (posthumous), 11.8 x 16.2 cm.
National Archives and Records Administration, Washington (69-RH, 4L-2).

Further Reading

Bannon, Anthony et. al. eds. *Lewis Hine: Passionate Journey : Photographs 1905-1937*. Zurich: Edition Stemmler, 1997.

Freedman, Russell. *Kids at Work : Lewis Hine and the Crusade Against Child Labor*. Boston: Clarion Books, 1998.

Goldberg, Vikki. *Lewis W. Hine: Children at Work*. New York: Prestel Publishing, 1999.

Hine, Lewis W. *Men at Work*. New York: Dover Publications, 1977.

Langer, Freddy. *Lewis W. Hine: The Empire State Building*. New York: Prestel Publishing, 1998.

Panzer, Mary. *Lewis Hine*. Oxford: Phaidon Press, 2002.

Rosenblum, Walter et. al. *America and Lewis Hine : Photographs, 1904-1940*. New York: Aperture, 1997.

Exhibition History

Exhibitions at the Vancouver Art Gallery

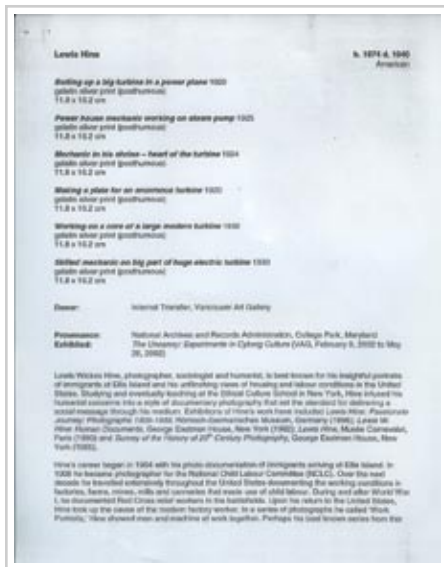
The Uncanny: Experiments in Cyborg Culture. February 9, 2002 - May 26, 2002.

The Shadow of Production: Work from the Collection. October 30, 2004 - January 16, 2005.

75 Years of Collecting: Portrait of a Citizen. September 23, 2006 - January 1, 2007.

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Archival History

Acquisitions Justification

Acquisition Record
2002

[transcription]

Lewis Hine
b. 1874 d. 1940
American

***Bolting up a big turbine in a power plane* 1920**

gelatin silver print (posthumous)
11.8 x 16.2 cm

***Power house mechanic working on steam pump* 1925**

gelatin silver print (posthumous)
11.8 x 16.2 cm

***Mechanic in his shrine — heart of the turbine* 1924**

gelatin silver print (posthumous)
11.8 x 16.2 cm

***Making a plate for an enormous turbine* 1920**

gelatin silver print (posthumous)
11.8 x 16.2 cm

***Working on a core of a large modern turbine* 1930**

gelatin silver print (posthumous)
11.8 x 16.2 cm

***Skilled mechanic on big part of huge electric turbine* 1930**

gelatin silver print (posthumous)
11.8 x 16.2 cm

Donor: Internal Transfer, Vancouver Art Gallery

Provenance: National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland **Exhibited:** *The Uncanny: Experiments in Cyborg Culture* (VAG, February 9, 2002 to May 26, 2002)

Lewis Wickes Hine, photographer, sociologist and humanist, is best known for his insightful portraits of immigrants at Ellis Island and his unflinching views of housing and labour conditions in the United States. Studying and eventually teaching at the Ethical Culture School in New York, Hine infused his humanist concerns into a style of documentary photography that set the standard for delivering a social message through his medium. Exhibitions of Hine's work have included *Lewis Hine: Passionate Journey; Photographs 1905-1939*, Römisch-Germanisches Museum, Germany (1996); *Lewis W. Hine: Human Documents*, George Eastman House, New York (1992); *Lewis Hine*, Musée Carnavalet, Paris (1990) and *Survey of the History of 20th Century Photography*, George Eastman House, New York (1985).

Hine's career began in 1904 with his photo documentation of immigrants arriving at Ellis Island. In 1908 he became photographer for the National Child Labour Committee (NCLC). Over the next decade he travelled extensively throughout the United States documenting the working conditions in factories,

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farms, mines, mills and canneries that made use of child labour. During and after World War I, he documented Red Cross relief workers in the battlefields. Upon his return to the United States, Hine took up the cause of the modern factory worker. In a series of photographs he called 'Work Portraits,' Hine showed man and machine at work together. Perhaps his best known series from this

group was his commission to document the construction of the Empire State Building.

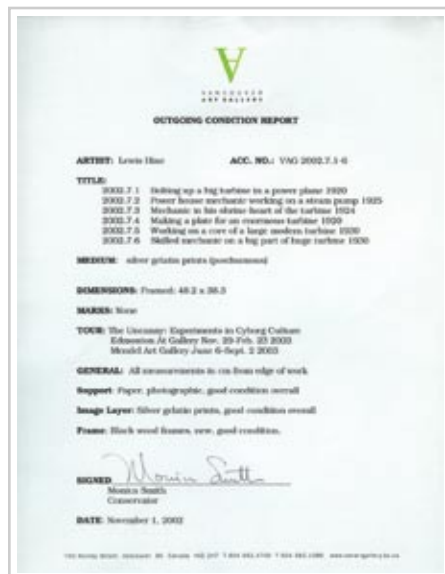
The series of photographs under consideration for acquisition were taken from 1920 to 1930. For the most part, Hine has situated the subject worker in a carefully posed position that mimics the oversized machinery he serves. The viewer is offered the image of a powerful human body working in the service of the machine and in doing so it takes on some of the character of that machine. Although the majority of Hine's work documents the exploitation of human labour, these particular photographs point to the existence of an ideal, symbiotic relationship between man and machine.

The acquisition of the 'Work Portrait' photographs will serve to highlight Hine's later work and his reconception of the working subject. These 6 photographs are posthumous prints. Their acquisition allows us to represent the work of this important photographer and to build a historical background for the acquisition of modern and contemporary photography, one of the new strategic initiatives for our collection.

Recommend transfer.

Bruce Grenville
Senior Curator

Research: Leah Best
Assistant Curator



Outgoing Condition Report

Conservation
2002-11-01

[transcription]

VANCOUVER
ART GALLERY

OUTGOING CONDITION REPORT

ARTIST: Lewis Hine **ACC. NO.:** VAG 2002.7.1-6

TITLE:

2002.7.1 Bolting up a big turbine in a power plane 1920
2002.7.2 Power house mechanic working on a steam pump 1925
2002.7.3 Mechanic in his shrine-heart of the turbine 1924
2002.7.4 Making a plate for an enormous turbine 1920
2002.7.5 Working on a core of a large modern turbine 1930
2002.7.6 Skilled mechanic on a big part of huge turbine 1930

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MEDIUM: silver gelatin prints (posthumous)

DIMENSIONS: Framed: 48.2 x 38.3

MARKS: None

TOUR: *The Uncanny: Experiments in Cyborg Culture*
Edmonton Art Gallery Nov. 29-Feb. 23 2003
Mendel Art Gallery June 6-Sept. 2 2003

GENERAL: All measurements in cm from edge of work

Support: Paper, photographic, good condition overall

Image Layer: Silver gelatin prints, good condition overall

Frame: Black wood frames, new, good condition.

SIGNED [signed Monica Smith]
Monica Smith
Conservator

DATE: November 1, 2002

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