

FRAENKEL

49 GEARY STREET SAN FRANCISCO 94108 415 981 2661

For immediate release:



BERND & HILLA BECHER

January 5–February 25, 2023

Fraenkel Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of photographs by celebrated German artists Bernd and Hilla Becher, their fifth with the gallery. Spanning the Bechers' career, the exhibition features approximately 35 works made between 1967 and 2010, including examples of their pioneering typologies, a selection of early industrial landscapes, and a collection of iconic water towers. The exhibition coincides with a major retrospective of the Bechers' work organized by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, on view at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art from December 17, 2022, until April 2, 2023.

The Bechers' carefully composed black and white photographs depict grain elevators, cooling towers, lime kilns, blast furnaces, and winding towers—examples of large-scale industrial architecture that the artists recognized as being in decline and likely soon gone forever. Using a precisely positioned large format view camera and working on overcast days, the Bechers created photographs with the uniform, neutral appearance of architectural renderings or scientific records, transforming their subjects into what they called “anonymous sculpture.”

The photographs on view—all made during the artists' lifetime—trace the evolution of the Bechers' visual approach, from single images and grids combining small prints to their later style, which brought together “typologies” of larger framed images. The exhibition includes a gallery focused on 20 x 24-inch

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prints of water towers from the U.S., Germany, France, and Belgium. The format was first employed by the Bechers in their seminal 1989 exhibition at the Dia Art Foundation in New York, and showcases the diverse forms of these structures. Elsewhere, water towers are featured in one of the artists' signature typologies, bringing together six photographs of double-tower forms recorded between 1963 and 1972. Also on view are industrial landscapes that depict the surroundings of factories and plants in the U.S. and Germany, including a panoramic view of the steel mill in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, taken from a perspective made famous by Walker Evans in 1935.

In addition to the SFMOMA retrospective, Bernd and Hilla Becher (1931–2007; 1934–2015) have been featured in solo exhibitions at Centre Pompidou, Paris; Dia Art Foundation, New York; J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; Museum of Modern Art, New York; and Die Photographische Sammlung/SK Stiftung Kultur, Cologne, Germany, among others. Their work is in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, among many others. In 1991 the artists won the Golden Lion award for sculpture at the Venice Biennale. The Bechers' work has been the subject of more than two dozen monographs.

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Image: Bernd & Hilla Becher, *Water Tower, Findlay, Ohio, USA, 1977*

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