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## Lewis Baltz' *Prototypes* to be Presented at the National Gallery of Art, Washington March 20–July 31, 2011



Lewis Baltz, *Monterey*, 1967  
gelatin silver print  
The Art Institute of Chicago, Gift of Lewis Baltz, 1972.218  
© Lewis Baltz

Washington, DC— Lewis Baltz' black-and-white series of photographs called *Prototypes* will be featured at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, from March 20 through July 31, 2011, in the West Building. ***Lewis Baltz: Prototypes/Ronde de Nuit*** includes some 60 works that question the transformation of the postwar industrial landscape of America. The exhibition also includes works by Donald Judd, Sol LeWitt, and Richard Serra—artists who inspired Baltz—as well as Baltz' remarkable 12-panel color mural *Ronde de Nuit* (1991–1992).

"The *Prototypes* are among the first photographs to capture the stark forms of minimal and post-minimal art in the world at large and we are pleased to augment the exhibition with key minimalist works from our own collection," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art.

### **Exhibition Organization and Support**

***Lewis Baltz: Prototypes/Ronde de Nuit*** was organized by The Art Institute of Chicago, where it was on view from September 25, 2010, to January 17, 2011.

The exhibition in Washington is made possible through the generous support of the Trellis Fund.

## **The Exhibition**

From 1967 through the early 1970s, the Californian artist Lewis Baltz (born 1945) made a series of photographs that focuses on the sides of warehouse sheds, stucco walls, empty billboards, and other geometric forms; he titled these works *Prototypes*. Organized throughout five galleries, the exhibition presents the *Prototypes* as a group for the first time.

Baltz rendered doors, automobiles, and walls strictly parallel to the picture plane, transforming them into shadowless surfaces. Although he made prints with subtle, rich tones, he suppressed details through over- and underexposure. Baltz' titles provide locations, yet are vague: multiple works are titled *Corona del Mar*, *Laguna Beach*, and *Monterey*: each depicts elements of anonymous commercial architecture.

Baltz inked the edges of many of his prints and mounted them so that they project forward from their mat board rather than recede behind it. With this technique, he minimized the illusion of his photographs as "windows on the world" and stressed instead their nature as independent objects.

As a student in the late 1960s, Baltz admired minimal, post-minimal, and conceptual art. Judd, LeWitt, and Serra—three key artists associated with these movements—emphasized the material qualities of a work, seen in the textured surface of the prints *Clara Clara I* (1985) and *Muddy Waters* (1986) by Serra, and the sculpture *Untitled* (1965) by Judd. In the cubic structure *Serial Project No. 1 B5* (1969), LeWitt incorporated actual space, calling it and other works "open" because the viewer can see through and around them. The goals of abstraction as well as an awareness of the space surrounding a work of art are also at the root of Baltz' *Prototypes*.

Dramatically different in scale and appearance from the *Prototypes*, *Ronde de Nuit* (1991–1992) is a 12-part mural-sized tableau of surveillance sites and the people who work in them. For *Ronde de Nuit*, Baltz was given access to a rural French police station and allowed to direct its multiple surveillance cameras. The title for this 35-foot-long piece, originally shown in a darkened passageway in the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, is the French translation of Rembrandt's title for his monumental painting *Night Watch* (1642). The work reveals Baltz' continued preoccupation with industrially manufactured environments and how they are used

to control contemporary society.

## **Lewis Baltz**

Baltz is best known for the 1974 book *New Industrial Parks* (published by the Leo Castelli Gallery) and is generally associated with the New Topographics movement, christened after a 1975 photography exhibition of that title at the George Eastman House. He studied at the San Francisco Art Institute and received a master of fine arts from Claremont Graduate School in 1971. He is currently based in Paris and Venice.

## **Curators and Catalogue**

The exhibition is curated by Matthew S. Witkovsky, curator and chair, department of photography at the Art Institute of Chicago. It is coordinated at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, by Sarah Greenough, senior curator and head, department of photographs.

Published by Steidl, in association with the Art Institute of Chicago, the exhibition catalogue includes an essay by Witkovsky. The 188-page catalogue is available for purchase in the Gallery Shops in hardcover. To order, please visit our website at [shop.nga.gov](http://shop.nga.gov); call (800) 697-9350 or (202) 842-6002; fax (202) 789-3047; or e-mail [mailorder@nga.gov](mailto:mailorder@nga.gov).

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## **General Information**

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets at Constitution Avenue NW, and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's Web site at [www.nga.gov](http://www.nga.gov). Follow the Gallery on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt](http://www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt) and on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/ngadc>.

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering.

Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 by 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

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