



Smithsonian American Art Museum

“I Will Take You Into the Heart of Modern Industry”: Lewis Hine’s Photographic Interpretation of the Machine Age

Julia Dolan

Sara Roby Predoctoral Fellow in Twentieth-Century American Realism
Boston University

During the fellowship period at the Smithsonian Institution I intend to study documents that will help to define Lewis Hine as social reform photographer, artist, and unlikely champion of Machine Age industry in the United States. Although the Smithsonian’s collection of Hine’s imagery is limited, archival documents concerning Hine are plentiful, and various repositories throughout Washington possess Hine’s photographs. The American Red Cross archive at the Library of Congress contains approximately 900 of Hine’s pictures. Hine served as a photographic correspondent for the Red Cross in Europe after World War I, and frequently stated that it was during this phase of his career that he revised his once negative opinions of industrialism. I will study these images in order to ascertain the manner in which Hine’s new attitude toward industry was manifested in his photographs.

The Elizabeth McCausland Papers at the Archives of American Art will also serve as a resource for interpreting Hine’s post-World War I commercial work. McCausland, a well-respected writer on art, was Hine’s close friend and champion. She wrote a number of articles about the photographer and maintained close contact with him during the 1920s and 1930s. In addition, I will study the photographic archive of Charles Rivers at the National Museum of American History in order to determine the manner in which Hine’s photographs may have differed in composition or meaning from those photographs produced by other photographers of the Empire State Building. Finally, the Roy Stryker oral interview at the Archives of American Art will help to illuminate the sometimes tenuous working relationships that the ever-independent Hine forged with his superiors.