



Telegraph Poles, from "Camera Work"

Date

1915 (published October 1916)

Primary Maker

Paul Strand

Medium

Photogravure on Japan paper

Description

While attending high school in New York City, Paul Strand studied photography under the early American photographer Lewis W. Hine. In 1909, he established himself as a commercial photographer, but six years later, influenced by the works he had seen at the artist and photographer Alfred Stieglitz's gallery 291, he began to create more abstract compositions. The following year, his own photographs were exhibited at 291. *Telegraph Poles* was shot in Texas and published in the October 1916 issue of the journal *Camera Work*, which Stieglitz had founded in 1903. The journal fought for the consideration of pictorial photography as an art form through its articles (often written by practitioners) and its images, introducing European modernism to an American audience years before the historic Armory Show of 1913. The photographs tipped into the journal were executed with great technical care: they were typically printed on very thin, tissue-like Japan paper to ensure that the original negatives' delicate tones were conveyed properly, and thus they were considered original prints. A geometric study of off-kilter telegraph poles and

crisscrossing wires that transcends its antiquated subject, this photograph demonstrates the artist's modernist vision, recording the world before him but identifying within that world the aesthetic structures of shape, pattern, and balance. In the final issue of *Camera Work*, published in 1917, Strand wrote, "The photographer's problem therefore, is to see clearly the limitations and at the same time the potential qualities of his medium, for it is precisely here that honesty no less than intensity of vision, is the prerequisite of a living expression." This photograph was given to the Emerson Gallery by William E. Williams, Class of 1973, in 1993 in honor of Harry "Hank" C. Payne, president of Hamilton College from 1988 to 1993. (SOURCE: Alcauskas, INNOVATIVE APPROACHES, HONORED TRADITIONS, 2017) From the October 16, 1916 issue of *Camera Work* magazine (#48).

Dimensions

Image: 7 15/16 × 5 7/16 in. (20.2 × 13.8 cm) Sheet: 11 1/16 × 7 15/16 in. (28.1 × 20.2 cm)