

52 *TWA (Bridge)*

2004

Chromogenic print on paper on Sintra

71 1/2 x 85 3/4 in. (sheet); 58 1/8 x 73 1/4 in. (image)

Museum Purchase, 2005.0003

WHEN EERO SAARINEN RECEIVED THE COMMISSION TO DESIGN THE TRANS WORLD AIRLINES (TWA) TERMINAL AT NEW YORK'S IDYLWILD (now John F. Kennedy International) Airport in 1956, he was asked to create a building that would, in his words, express "the drama and specialness and excitement of travel."¹ He succeeded. Completed in 1962, a year after the architect's death, it remains both an icon of modern architecture and the supreme architectural embodiment of the idea of flight. Ironically, however, what was once a marvel of contemporary design has now become an embattled relic, occupying the oxymoronic category of "modern antique." Although it is on the National Register of Historic Places, the building ceased operating as a terminal in 2001 and is at the center of a continuing controversy over how best to preserve and use it. (In 2005, after modifications, one section was incorporated as part of a new terminal.)

The interior of the TWA terminal, described by the architect Robert A. M. Stern as the "Grand Central of the jet age," is a space of steel, concrete, and glass, the primary materials of modern architecture.² It seems, therefore, aptly recorded by the modern medium of photography. Architectural photography is often overlooked – except, of course, by architects. It is no easy matter to catch three dimensions in two, to create a sense of space and place by capturing something of the physical, not just visual, experience of a building.

Christoph Morlinghaus, who started out as a still-life photographer, brings to his architectural images a keen sense of composition, form, color, and light. His rendering of the TWA terminal's great central space has a subdued tone. Working with traditional photographic film, Morlinghaus relies only on natural light and on the illumination provided by the building's indirect artificial lighting. (He does not introduce additional lights of his own or use digital manipulation after the fact.)

The vantage point beautifully serves the complexity and drama of Saarinen's design: the symmetry of the domelike ceiling forms is set against the asymmetry and almost baroque curves of the shapes beneath, just as the strength of the unadorned, sculptural concrete surfaces is offset by the delicate railing that frames the gallery-level bridge.

From his very first architectural project, a study of the abandoned Frankfurt headquarters of the once-gigantic IG Farben chemical company, Morlinghaus has been fascinated by the tension between the forward-looking character of modernism and the now-retrospective aspect of the surviving buildings. Although his photographs usually suggest a calm and deliberate gaze, this particular image, showing a vast public area devoid of people, feels rather disturbing, even spooky. It is as if the clock suspended in the center of the image has been stopped – not by the photographic process but by time itself, standing still as the building awaits its fate.

Robert Silberman

1. Aline B. Saarinen, ed., *Eero Saarinen on His Work*, rev. ed. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1968), 68.

2. Stern quoted in Herbert Muschamp, "Architecture View: Stay of Execution for a Dazzling Airline Terminal," *New York Times*, November 6, 1994.



Art OF OUR TIME

SELECTIONS FROM THE | ULRICH MUSEUM OF ART
WICHITA STATE UNIVERSITY

Patricia McDonnell AND *Emily Stamey*

WITH CONTRIBUTIONS BY

Toby Kamps, Laura Moriarty,

Antonya Nelson, Timothy R. Rodgers,

AND *Robert Silberman*

PHOTO-ESSAY BY *Larry Schwarm*

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Patricia McDonnell is director of the Ulrich Museum of Art. Her scholarly focus is upon European and American modernism, and she is a leading specialist on the painter Marsden Hartley. Her publications include *Marsden Hartley: American Modern* (1997), *On the Edge of Your Seat: Popular Theater and Film in Early Twentieth-Century American Art* (2002), and *Painting Berlin Stories* (2003).

Laura Moriarty is the author of three novels and the recipient of several literary awards. Before becoming a full-time writer, she was a social worker. Moriarty lives in Lawrence, Kansas, where she teaches creative writing at the University of Kansas.

Antonya Nelson has written three novels and published six short-story collections. She contributes often to the *New Yorker* and the *New York Times Book Review*. Nelson holds the Cullen Chair in Creative Writing at the University of Houston. Her award-winning novel, *Living to Tell* (2000), takes place in her hometown of Wichita, and her forthcoming novel, *Bound*, is set there as well.

Timothy R. Rodgers is director of the Scottsdale (Arizona) Museum of Contemporary Art. Formerly chief curator at the New Mexico Museum of Art, Santa Fe, he is involved in a range of writing and curatorial projects. His scholarly concentration is on American early modernism.

Robert Silberman is an associate professor of art history at the University of Minnesota's Twin Cities campus. His chief scholarly interests have been photography, film, and contemporary art. Silberman collaborated with former *New York Times* photography critic Vicki Goldberg on the companion volume for the 1999 PBS series *American Photography: A Century of Images*.

Larry Schwarm is a professor of art at Emporia State University, Emporia, Kansas, and a nationally regarded photographer whose work has been shown at the Art Institute of Chicago and the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C. His 2003 book, *On Fire: Larry Schwarm*, won the Honickman Book Award and Prize.

Emily Stamey, the Ulrich Museum's curator of modern and contemporary art, is the author of *Jolan Gross-Bettelheim: The American Prints* (2001) and *The Prints of Roger Shimomura: A Catalogue Raisonné, 1968–2005* (2006). Her scholarship centers on ethnic identities and social themes in American art.

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