In honor of the 150th anniversary of the iconic architect’s birth, Frank Lloyd Wright will be celebrated in numerous ways this month: MoMA will open “Frank Lloyd Wright at 150: Unpacking the Archive” this month, the Guggenheim is planning a series of events marking Wright’s birthday on June 8, and fabric house Schumacher has even released a new line of textiles created from Wright’s archival designs. For those more partial to photographs, this summer Chelsea’s Yossi Milo Gallery is staging Ezra Stoller Photographs Frank Lloyd Wright Architecture, a stunning array of black-and-white images of the architect’s work.
Architect and photographer, by all accounts, had a unique relationship of mutual creative respect. "Stoller was no mere photographer, and Wright trusted that he had both the skill and vision to capture his creations as he wanted them to be seen, experienced, and especially remembered," Milo explains. Once, in response to an editor's query on whether Wright would instruct Stoller on how he'd like his buildings documented, Wright replied: "Ezra will know."

In 1945, Stoller was commissioned by Architectural Forum to photograph Wright's own homes in Taliesin in Wisconsin and Taliesin West in Scottsdale. From there he went on to capture virtually all of Wright's most iconic structures, many of which have been designated National Historic Landmarks. The 20 gelatin silver prints featured in Yossi Milo's exhibition include the Guggenheim Museum, Fallingwater, and the Johnson Research Tower in Racine, Wisconsin.

“What makes Stoller so distinctive is his unparalleled skills in offering up a three-dimensional experience of architecture,” points out Yossi Milo. Rather than presenting routine images, Stoller sought out a singular vantage point while emphasizing volume, line, color, and even the texture of the materials used such as the reinforced concrete of the Guggenheim. “Stoller's images are always carefully composed and give a sense of the sculptural nature of Wright's projects,” adds Milo.

Photographing Wright's buildings was no simple task, and Stoller spoke of the challenges of presenting the Johnson Research Tower's façade as well as its interior in one single image. As a solution, Stoller photographed the building backlit by the rising sun. “In fact, Philip Johnson coined the [term] 'Stollerized' to describe the complete, thorough, and artistic manner in which Stoller documented the building,” points out Milo.

A number of the images in the exhibition are signed by Stoller, who was honored with the American Institute of Architects' first Award for Architectural Photography in 1961. His photographs can be found in the permanent collections of the Whitney; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; and the Montreal Canadian Centre for Architecture. "Today, Stoller is widely recognized for shaping the perceptions of Wright's achievements and Modernist architecture in general," says Milo. Yet another reason to catch this show.

"Ezra Stoller Photographs Frank Lloyd Wright Architecture" will open June 29 and run until August 25, 2017.
Capturing Modernism’s Chic and Sheen

Ezra Stoller, the American architectural photographer, left behind a trove of modernist classics of modernist classics. Picture Eero Saarinen’s TWA Terminal, or Philip Johnson’s Glass House, or the Manufacturers Trust building by Gordon Bunshaft, with its bank vault by Henry Dreyfus. Chances are you’ve got one of Stoller’s images in mind. Immaculate, self-effacing and with a mix of light and shadow revealing every angle and surface, his photographs stressed geometry, transparency, timelessness — like the buildings.

And almost as much as those buildings, Stoller’s pictures helped fix modern design in America’s consciousness. In fact, before the Internet and cheap air travel it was through Stoller and a handful of leading commercial photographers like Julius Shulman, Balthazar Korab and the firm of Hedrich Blessing that untold numbers of people saw the new architecture.

The subject of a show through March 3 at the Yossi Milo Gallery in Chelsea, Stoller died in 2004, at 85, leaving behind some 50,000 photographs. As a young editor at I.D., the design magazine, I felt my heart race planning his studio. To be “Stollerized” became a verb and requirement for designers. “The art is the architecture,” Stoller insisted, likening what he did to a musician “given a score to play who must bring it to life and make the piece as good as it can be.”

Music was a fair analogy. It implied attention and deference. Stoller was a virtuoso at harmonizing an architect’s mix of concrete, glass and steel. Advertising also fit the bill. To leaf through a book of Stoller photographs today (a new one has been published by Yale University Press) is to see a Mid-Min chic and sheen be brought to midcentury office parks, airport terminals, industrial sites and other assignments. Photographers like William Klein and Robert Frank, Lee Friedlander and Garry Winogrand trashed city streets, exploiting

Continued on Page 2
Capturing Modernism’s Chic and Sheen

From First Arts Page

the camera’s, and American life’s, unruliness.
Stoller, implacable, sold clients on the aura of inevitability.

So he devised perfectly composed views of the
Design Research Center, by Benjamin Thompson,
in Cambridge, Mass., and of the John Hancock
Center in Chicago, by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill,
with its crisscrossing girders made to look like
ready-made Franz Klines. He photographed the
sprawling deck of the Salk Institute by Louis Kahn
stretching toward infinity; the bulging curves of
Wright’s Marin County Civic Center, muscular and
elastic; the snaking balconies inside the United
Nations Building, with a statue of a naked man on
tip toe positioned in the foreground, as if stretching
his arm to caress them.

At Yossi Milo, unfamiliar pictures are culled
from the archives. Stoller famously documented
the Seagram Building from various angles, but the
show has a picture I’d never seen before, of the
building behind a construction site plastered with
a poster for Palisades Amusement Park in New
Jersey. (“Come on over!”) In Miami, Stoller ac-
tented the colors and curves of 1940s automobiles
parked on the open levels of a whitewashed-and-
red garage by Robert Law Weed & Associates.
And I was taken with a photograph of the Catan-
alo House, designed by Eduardo Catalano, in
Raleigh, N.C.: mostly showing dense trees, it cen-
ters on children atop a wall, obscuring the pitched
roof that you’d think would be Stoller’s focus.

He was never candid. But the show also un-
covers photographs of factory workers. A slender
woman, seen from the back through a translucent
sheet of silk, operates a weaving machine; three
more women, before stacks of vinyl records, slide
disks into cardboard sleeves; impossibly graceful,
like one of Hiroshige’s beauties of Edo, yet an-
other woman in a lab coat prepares processors at
an I.B.M. plant in Tokyo.

Nowadays Stoller might be hired to advertise
the campuses of Google and Apple. Back then cor-
porate hype swirled around I.B.M. and Heinz, the
ketchup maker, whose antiseptic factory in Pitts-
burgh he chose to photograph in color, accenting
by baskets of tomatoes. Color had its uses; at the Life
Savers factory in Port Chester, N.Y., he looked
down on a patchwork of conveyor belts, for a hole-
punching machine, distributing mounds of fluores-
cent green, yellow and orange candies.

Art photographers like Andreas Gursky fill
museums today with digitally altered panoramas
of postindustrial excess, while photographers like
Andrew Moore and Robert Polidori, as the veteran
critic Andy Grundberg lately pointed out, have
been documenting in extravagant detail the de-
cline of architecture in cities like Detroit and parts
of post-Katrina New Orleans

Architectural photographers like Iwan Bann
stress buildings as social artifacts, showing people
unposed, using them. Architects circulate video
fly-throughs and computer renderings of their own
prospective designs — advertisements for them-
selves — that muddle public perceptions of what’s
real and not.

Stoller belongs to another time. But all photo-
graphs are contrived, ultimately, and the passage
of years can turn the best commerce into art.
The bottom line is that Stoller’s pictures en-
shrine an era and an aesthetic that still speak to us.

Follow Michael Kimmelman on Twitter
@kimmelman.
in a quietly enigmatic exhibition now at the Yossi Milo Gallery here, photographs by Ezra Stoller capture more than a record of mid-century-modern building and industry in the U.S.

Stoller was one of a handful of photographers with a mission whose black-and-white images, favoring a deep focus and monumental point of view, managed to incarnate the confidence of an American moment, free of doubt and ambiguity, and now all but extinct. The more than 60 photographs on display in 20-by-16-inch frames include many of the best-known views of the best-known buildings from an extended postwar period, such as the United Nations complex (1950-54), the TWA Terminal at Idlewild (now JFK) Airport (1962), Chicago's John Hancock Tower (1970), and the Salk Institute in La Jolla, Calif. (1967).

They fill two rooms, presenting their subjects with a stark solemnity that seems as remote from today's ironic, self-conscious posture as Stonehenge.

The show also includes some rarely seen and highly stylized commissioned photographs of manufacturing—making, vinyl records for Columbia Records and molding pills for Upjohn Pharmaceuticals—that underscore through their crisp abstraction of conveyor-belt machinery and dignified presentation of workers the photographer's complicity in shaping that myth of certitude.

Stoller was born in Chicago in 1915 and studied architecture and industrial design at New York University before launching into commercial photography in the late 1930s. His design background quickly made him a favorite among the most distinguished architects of the day—among them Frank Lloyd Wright, Eero Saarinen and Louis Kahn—who knew he would understand how to showcase their structures to best advantage. Stoller adapted to buildings the "straight style" already popular in portrait photography by Edward Weston, Walker Evans and Ansel Adams, making architecture the center-piece with precise angles within a carefully controlled context. There are no random distractions or moody moments in Stoller's photographs: If there's one thing, it's the absence of color—particularly a spotless white Heinz factory floor with orderly rows of baskets brimming with red tomatoes at the ready—convey unambiguous purpose.

It is also astonishing how consistent Stoller's approach is across more than four decades of assignments from architects and magazines including Fortune and Time Inc.'s Architectural Forum. Early images from the 1939 World's Fair and a nighttime view of a Hahn Shoe Store taken in Washington in 1947 are only marginally looser compositionally than a view of the main lobby at the United Nations from 1977 and a nighttime view of the Design Research store in Cambridge, Mass., from 1970.

And even the elevation view in color of a Miami parking lot from 1946 offers intimations of the straightforward renderings of Andreas Gursky.


What impresses now is just how effectively these images establish a cloud-free conviction of progress as a modern virtue. And it's not just the black-and-white views; even the handful of color images—and particularly a spotless white Heinz factory floor with orderly rows of baskets brimming with red tomatoes at the ready—convey unambiguous purpose.

It is also astonishing how consistent Stoller's approach is across more than four decades of assignments from architects and magazines including Fortune and Time Inc.'s Architectural Forum. Early images from the 1939 World's Fair and a nighttime view of a Hahn Shoe Store taken in Washington in 1947 are only marginally looser compositionally than a view of the main lobby at the United Nations from 1977 and a nighttime view of the Design Research store in Cambridge, Mass., from 1970. And even the elevation view in color of a Miami parking lot from 1946 offers intimations of the straightforward renderings of Andreas Gursky.

Stoller always gives his buildings monumental presence thanks to large-format view cameras (he used Deardorffs until the 1950s and then Hasselblads). Leicas and Nikons positioned to emphasize grand scope. If a person is present in a shot, as in an upweaving view of a concrete column at Dulles Airport or alongside a gargantuan telescope at Kitt Peak Solar Observatory, that human is usually miniscule by comparison. The impression is a celebration of accomplishment, not effort.

The photographer's ability to elevate architecture to such supreme heights endeared him, particularly, to Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, the architecture firm perhaps most identified with the glorification of corporate America from the '30s through the '70s. It's one thing to capture the elastic vitality of Saarinen's winged TWA Terminal or the swirling ramparts at Wright's Martin County Civic Center, but to uncover an equivalent dynamism at SOM's Connecticut General Life Insurance headquarters in a bland park in Bloomfield, Conn., called for more precision.

Stoller's images—along with those by Julius Shulman on the West Coast, Hedrich Blessing in Chicago, and a few others—have become inextricably entwined with how we understand that modern moment. In the later '70s as postmodernism gained momentum, Stoller slowed down, understanding perhaps that the new mood did not suit his temperament or what his daughter Erica Stoller describes as a dedication to "journalism, artistry and a kind of zestful." In the gallery exhibition (and in an expansive portfolio book from Yale University Press), one image seems to hint that Stoller could linger in multiple meetings with the best of them. It's a photo taken in 1972 of a Philip Morris office space, all white and empty but for a rank-and-file black telephones on the floor hooked up to outlet poles as if in TV support. It's a rare cry from the promise of productivity that typifies most of Stoller's work.

Toward the end of his active career (he died in 2004), Stoller wrote: "All we can hope to achieve is an impression—and it's rarely an accurate one." That may be technically true, but the pointedly unblemished images he has left us with are all the more resonant than factual reality, showing us America in full stride.
GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

EZRA STOLLER
As one of America’s most stylish and successful architectural photographers, Stoller helped define and popularize modernist design; again and again, he made visual sense of radical structures and found the beauty in austerity. This big, engaging show covers the full range of his work during the course of five decades, from Alvar Aalto’s Finnish Pavilion at the 1939 World’s Fair to Louis Kahn’s Salk Institute in 1977, with mini-essays focussing on the Seagram Building, the United Nations, and Chicago’s John Hancock Building. Less familiar projects—at assembly lines, printing plants, and vast office floors—ground the exhibition in the workplace and give some idea as to how these buildings accommodated or intimidated the people working inside them. Through March 2. (Milo, 245 Tenth Ave., at 24th St. 212-414-0370.)
MODERN ART

Photographer Ezra Stoller used his camera to capture postwar America — shooting modern architecture in the form of Eero Saarinen’s terminal at JFK, Mies van der Rohe’s Seagram Building, as well as factories.

Seventy-three of Stoller’s photos, some commissioned by Fortune or even House Beautiful, are on display at Chelsea’s Yossi Milo Gallery.

“The mid-20th century was an optimistic time,” says gallery owner Yossi Milo. “After the war, there was an expansive sense of enthusiasm and change. We were the winners, after all. It was a new era: Success was at hand; money was to be made (and it was made). Stoller created images that conveyed newness, clarity, a kind of perfection that was contained in Modern architecture. While each image is interesting, seen together the work conveys a look back in time. It has become social history.”

Catch the history through March 2 at 245 10th Ave.; 212-414-0370; yossimilo.com.

— Billy Heller
Ezra Stoller, “Beyond Architecture” Yossi Milo Gallery
The elegance of mid-20th-century America is recalled in these images of factories, offices and storefronts by Stoller, who is best known for his photos of the TWA terminal at JFK. Through Mar 2; see Chelsea

Galleries

Yossi Milo Gallery
245 Tenth Ave between 24th and 25th Sts (212-414-0370, yossimilo.com).
Tue–Sat 10am–6pm.
* Ezra Stoller, “Beyond Architecture” See Critics’ Picks.
THE STOLLER MYSTIQUE

A new book, *Ezra Stoller, Photographer*, from Yale University Press, gives the master the prominence he deserves.

BY MICHAEL LASSELL | WINTER 2013

AMONG THE ADVANTAGES OF GROWING UP ON LONG ISLAND in the middle of the twentieth century was proximity to the creative cauldron of New York City. Instruction in modern art and architecture, for example, did not come from books: it was all show and tell. There were field trips to the Guggenheim when it was new and to the inaugural week of Lincoln Center’s Philharmonic Hall. The cities of my adolescent imagination and limited drafting prowess were full of impossibly high Lever Houses, futuristic A-frame cathedrals, and homages to Morris Lapidus’s Americana Hotel (now the Sheraton New York), which boldly went where no building had ever gone before—off the strict right-angle orientation of Midtown Manhattan’s street grid.

While I was busy learning what modern architecture was, Ezra Stoller, a gentleman several decades my senior, was recording it on film. Stoller was born in Chicago in 1915, took a degree in industrial design from NYU in 1938, and soon thereafter set about becoming one of the world’s first architectural photographers. Sometimes known as the “East Coast Julius Shulman,” a comparison to the better known photographer who recorded the history of California modernism, Stoller stayed in New York. He worked notably for Architectural Forum magazine but for other magazines as well, and also collaborated with architects and their clients.

Stoller, however, was no point-and-click assignment shooter. He would study his subjects for days, sometimes longer, in order to discover not just the spirit of the buildings but the best way to render them. Consequently his work is known for its sophisticated lighting and unexpected points of view. Working with large format cameras and almost always in black-and-white, Stoller documented such now iconic buildings as the United Nations, Wright’s Fallingwater, Eero Saarinen’s game-changing TWA Terminal, Philip Johnson’s Glass House, even Le Corbusier’s Notre Dame du Haut.

Stoller was not just taking visual notes; he was composing two-dimensional symphonies. His images transcend photojournalism in the same way architecture floats on a higher aesthetic plane than more prosaic building. Taking his cues from abstract expressionism and other modernist works as inhabited the Museum of Modern Art, Stoller became a first-rank artist in his own right, whether he was documenting public icons, private houses, or the world of industrial production. For his efforts, he was awarded the first-ever gold medal for architectural photography, created by the American Institute of Architects in 1961.

Stoller’s photographs do not look complex, yet the strategies are sometimes breathtaking. A detail shot of the Seagram building’s facade occupies only the left half of his frame; the right is occupied by the urban context of Mies van der Rohe’s black monolith, including much of Lever House across Park Avenue. A shot looking out from the glazed lobby of Pietro Belluschi’s Equitable Building in Portland, Oregon (now called the Commonwealth Building and one of the first steel-and-glass high rises), shows the neoclassic wedding-cake masonry of the U.S. National Bank Building of 1921 across the street. Most of what you need to know about modern architecture is contained in the image—with a nod to the paintings of Mondrian.

In fact, looking at Stoller’s photographs in the new Yale University Press monograph, *Ezra Stoller, Photographer*, connections to a museum’s worth of artists rise off the pages. Stoller’s nighttime shot of Marcel Breuer’s 1966 Whitney Museum of American Art alone is redolent of de Chirico’s mystery, Hopper’s lighting, and the geometries of Rothko rendered in sharp-edged stone rather than soft-focus pigment. There’s something of the bold wide-brush slashes of Franz Klein in the girders of Stoller’s in-progress shots of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill’s Hancock Center in Chicago. And there’s something of Bernd and Hilla Becher’s black-and-white shots of nuclear reactors and oil tanks that seem inspired by images like Stoller’s exhaust fans on the roof of the Reynolds Plant in Arkansas or the water tower of the General Motors Technical Center in Michigan (both taken in 1955).

The book also contains photos of two of Yale’s landmarks: Paul Rudolph’s 1963 Art and Architecture Building and Eero Saarinen’s matched pair of residential colleges (1962). The authors are architecture critic Nina Rappaport and Erica Stoller, who runs Esto, the agency and archive founded by her father, with additional essays by Andy Grundberg, John Morris Dixon, and Akiko Busch. In addition to celebrating Stoller’s architectural imagery, the book includes his considerable industrial photography. Stylistically, Stoller’s take on the means and methods of production takes more than a casual cue from Russian constructivism. It’s clear that he was constantly trying to expand the implied limits of his medium.

http://www.modernmag.com/?p=2578
It was easy to fall in love with modern architecture in America in the years following World War II. You didn’t necessarily have to appreciate the merits of new building materials and methods, the clarity of structural logic, or the flexibility of modular systems. Talented photographers, along with their editors and stylists, overlaid all the talk of usefulness and economy with an aura of serene beauty and carefree simplicity. There were at least two modes of pictorial seduction, as two new books clarify with loving detail. *Maynard L. Parker: Modern Photography and the American Dream* recollects a kind of everyman's modernism centered around the suburban home. *Ezra Stoller, Photographer* envisions a modernism powered by master architects and encompassing not only the home but also institutions, corporations, and factories—spaces of civic life and work.

Both of these heavily illustrated books invite us to appreciate architectural photography as an art in itself, in the wake of a traveling exhibition of Stoller's work (2009–12) and a film documentary on his West Coast counterpart, Julius Shuman (Eric Bricker, 2009). Yet architectural photographers did not enjoy artistic autonomy in their own day. Photographers were hired to help sell architectural services and magazines. Fittingly, the two monographs at hand include critical essays and supporting documentation that reveal the social and economic context in which the images were produced. This was a curious era, quips Akiko Busch in the Stoller volume, "when the bedrooms were chaste but the laundry rooms voluptuous."

Parker's career was made by the influential *House Beautiful* editor Elizabeth Gordon. Just as the postwar domestic boom got underway, Gordon gave Parker a prominent role in her campaign for an easygoing, consumer-friendly "American Style" modernism—a retort to the more austere and allegedly undemocratic "International Style." Parker's images speak not only of good taste and informal living, but also, in a latent way, of the phenomena of suburbanization, Cold War tensions, and confining gender roles. Stoller, who took courses in architecture and industrial design at New York University, got his break as a photographer with *Architectural Forum* and *Fortune* magazine. Although one of his earliest big paychecks came from shooting colonial-style homes for *Ladies Home Journal*, he was from the start most sympathetic to modernist aesthetics and ethics.

Stoller developed a knack for capturing in a two-dimensional composition the thing that architects most want to communicate: design intent. That is why Stoller’s photographs help us "to understand the aspirations" of architects, writes former *Progressive Architecture* editor John Morris Dixon, FAIA. To illustrate spatial relationships in depth and scale, Stoller mastered the use of natural and artificial light.
The photographer Ezra Stoller was arguably the foremost chronicler of modernist architecture. Even today the images that we associate with the era—Fallingwater by Frank Lloyd Wright, the Seagram building by Mies van der Rohe, Eero Saarinen’s T.W.A. terminal—are unmistakably Stoller’s. In a career that spanned almost a half-century, Stoller, who died in 2004 at the age of 89, photographed about 3,500 projects, producing more than 60,000 images. Using his famous large-format camera, he shot the work of a veritable who’s-who of twentieth-century design: Alvar Aalto, Marcel Breuer, Gordon Bunshaft, Louis Kahn, Paul Rudolph, and many others. In architectural circles, when a project was photographed by Stoller, often in an abstract way, it had been “Stollerized.” For many architects, a Stoller photo shoot was almost a rite of passage. “Ezra was possessed with doing the most thorough job for every undertaking,” says Erica Stoller, his daughter and the director of Esto, the photographic agency founded by her father. She is co-author of a new book, Ezra Stoller, Photographer (Yale University Press, $65), a lavishly illustrated survey of her father’s work. The book also includes some of his lesser-known images, such as the industrial spaces he shot for Fortune magazine during the 1940s. Recently I talked to Erica about the book, her life growing up, and Ezra’s visual legacy.

**Didn’t your father start his career while he was an architecture student?**
Yes. While studying architecture at NYU in the 1930s, he began to realize that he was not going to be happy as a draftsman; he ended up taking a degree in industrial design. Incidentally, Ed Stone was one of his teachers at NYU. Ezra borrowed $15 from his uncle, Harry, for a Linhof camera and he used this to photograph models for architecture students and the work of young painters and sculptors, one of whom was Leonard Baskin. At school, as part of a project team, he would be the photographer. His first formal photography assignment was arranged through a school friend who worked for a firm that needed photographs of a new building that incorporated glass brick. The photographs were submitted to a Pittsburgh Glass competition. The project won the award; the images were then published and that connection allowed Ezra to meet editors and other architects.

**Where did you grow up?**
I grew up in Rye, New York, in a utopian community similar to Frank Lloyd Wright’s Usonia. This collective had been organized by politically active lefties and communists—though I didn’t know what that meant at the time—who bought 20 acres and divided it up. Henry Wright, an editor at Architectural Forum, designed most of the houses on the street. Myron Ehrenberg, a photographer; Jeanne Curtis, a researcher for Time-Life; and Dorothy Sterling, a writer, all lived in the neighborhood with their families. For me, they were just my friends’ parents. We were an interesting little gang of kids who hung around together and would go wandering into one another’s houses for supper. My father was part of the group, but not interested in politics.
What was your house like?
Our house was designed by Nemeny & Geller, but Ezra must have been a pushy client who made most of the decisions. At first he maintained a studio on 37th Street in Manhattan. Later he built a studio in a small building adjacent to our home. In addition to the assistant who traveled with him, there was a small staff including a darkroom person to process film and make contact proofs and prints, a secretary/bookkeeper, and another person to do everything else, like wrapping packages and handling deliveries. For many years, color film was processed elsewhere, so there was lots of back and forth. One way of getting film to the lab near Grand Central Station was to give the package and $5 to the train conductor, who’d walk over to 44th Street in his (feather-bedded) spare time. As a kid, most of my school friends had no idea what their parents did. My mother, Helen, was a painter, and I knew exactly what my father did: he went away with lots of equipment and came home with photographs. When the studio was next to the house, it was like living over the store. If there was a large print order, everyone might feed the prints into the dryer.

Did he ever take you on assignments?
Not often, but anyplace we went to had to do with his work and was some kind of assignment. We didn’t do things like take vacations. There was never time off.

What do you remember of his process with clients?
The first step would involve conversation with the client ahead of time, then a walk-through at the site to plan access and work out the schedule, always considering the weather and movement of the sun. He would make a timeline for the photography and then try to be everywhere at just the right time. For the early work, he’d be traveling with an 8-by-10 camera, sheet film (black and white, color daylight, and tungsten) with film holders and lights and cases of flashbulbs. He’d make several exposures of each view in black and white and in color, with many sheets of film to load, unload, and keep track of for processing. For interiors, when lighting was involved, there might be flashbulbs to change, lights to gel, and windows to black out between each exposure.

Returning from an assignment, Ezra would carefully review the black and white contact proofs and the color transparencies, organizing the sequence to create a narrative, cropping the color and the black and white (not always in the same way). For presentation of an early architecture assignment, there would be large black and white prints, mounted and bound into a book. Initially, color transparencies would be mounted with each matte cut or adjusted to the crop marks. The archiving system, too, was part of the process. Ezra created a cross-referenced library system. Because of this, we can now retrieve and view the whole collection. When I think back on all this, what a lot of work! But it was part of Ezra’s need to create an unassailable presentation and to control how one saw the images and therefore how one traveled into the building and through the space. In the early days my mother must have handled correspondence and kept an eye on billing when he was traveling. But who spoke to clients? Who arranged the schedule? Who supervised the equipment, lab, personnel, and most of all, who fretted about quality control? Ezra dreamed up the whole undertaking and the complicated procedures. And all this before Photoshop and without cell phones, FedEx, or even credit cards. It’s exhausting to talk about—imagine having to live it.

I gather your father developed a lot of friendships with architects?
Paul Rudolph was a real friend for a long time, even when they weren’t working together. He’d come over for supper. Gordon Bunshaft was a colleague and a friend, too. He’s known as a fairly gruff character, but his background and Ezra’s were similar and they had a warm and joking relationship. With most other architects, “friendship” came with their needing Ezra’s attention and his work. Ezra was also fond of Myron Goldsmith, the SOM Chicago designer. The friendship that was strongest and most enduring was with the graphic designer Will Burtin. They did a lot of work together and were close friends. As the art director of Fortune, Will hired Ezra to work on many projects that we included in the book: the story about a new offset lithographic printing process in step-by-step detail, and “Power in the West,” about hydroelectric power, in which Ezra followed workers into underground tunnels, where he photographed turbines and dams. He was always impressed with Will, who didn’t just deliver a layout and plug in the images. They worked closely together to illustrate a story. Neither told the other what to do. This approach to understand how things worked affected Ezra’s work in the future. He was interested in the structure and the function, and while he didn’t photograph only factories or bridges, he considered a house to be the same kind of machine.

Did Ezra have a favorite architect or building?
I keep thinking about that. He went off to these extraordinary places, came home, and you know there was always work to do—running a small office and a lab. When something was broken in the house, there was discord in the office, or the dog threw up, he’d have to deal with that reality. But I wonder why didn’t we ask more about where he’d been. Or why he didn’t tell us. The photographs told the story. To me it was important that the book include the full list of projects that my father worked on. In a short span of time, he photographed the Esso building at Rockefeller Center in New York City, then did Christmas decorations for House Beautiful, and
then shot Helena Rubinstein’s apartment. One can put together any number of these unlikely lists. The combination was really astonishing.

**Would you say he typecast himself as an architectural photographer?**
He let himself be typecast in the end because he considered those projects most important. Many of the earlier, non-architecture assignments were editorial stories that were published once and then they sort of disappeared, whereas the photographs of architecture would be published many times in magazines and books. These images sort of reinforced themselves and he became the photographer of modern architecture. Later, as he planned a retrospective exhibition, he chose not to include the interesting images from the Fortune projects dealing with printing, astrophysics, plastics, or hydroelectric power. Now as we look back at the images of architecture, we interpret them differently than the way they were seen when they were first published. Take the image of the Connecticut General building, designed by Gordon Bunshaft, an axial shot that has so much depth. There are two people on the left, with their backs to the camera, looking to the Noguchi-designed sculpture and courtyard. On close examination, one sees people in the background who are playing Ping-Pong; then there are women at the window on a higher floor. It’s complicated, well-considered, and full of information. And it’s about the light-filled spaces and about people using the building.

**Wasn’t your father a big fan of Louis Kahn’s work?**
Ezra mostly worked on assignment. Later in his life, when he slowed down a bit, he realized that there was a hole in his archive, and he had not photographed the Salk Institute in La Jolla, California. He rarely worked “on spec,” but he did go to the Salk in 1977. He also returned to Fallingwater at the end of his career because he felt there had been too much foliage when he was there the first time and one couldn’t really see the shape of the building.

**What are you going to include in the exhibition you’re organizing at the Yossi Milo Gallery in New York City [January 24 through March 2, 2013]?**
Many of the most well-known images of architecture were printed and signed in his lifetime. And since then, we’ve been rediscovering additional themes and many other impressive photographs. The forthcoming show will include rarely seen black-and-white images, as well as color photos, concentrating on the early assignments on science and production for Fortune magazine, and also a selection of new prints of the United Nations and the John Hancock building in Chicago, with views of construction and the finished buildings in each case.
Ezra Stoller is one of the 20th century’s most acclaimed photographers of Modern and Midcentury architecture. A new book and exhibition is set to throw fresh light on his oeuvre, showing his well-known architectural photographs alongside little seen works fuelled by his own personal interests.

Digging into Stoller’s archive of more than 50,000 images, the book 'Ezra Stoller: Photographer’ (published by Yale University Press) presents the Chicago-born photographer’s industrial and domestic work. This sits side by side with his better-known images of Modernist architecture, showing the breadth of his output. It is penned by curator Nina Rappaport and Erica Stoller (the photographer’s daughter and director of their agency, Esto).

The book is a timely precursor to the exhibition Beyond Architecture, which opens at the Yossi Milo Gallery in New York in January. Aiming to capture a ‘lost America’, it features visuals taken all around the country, from workers in Queens to conveyor belts at the Heinz factory.

Together they show a new perspective of post-war America, while also offering some of the images that helped define the cultural memory of mid-century design.
ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN

**Ezra Stoller, Photographer**, by Nina Rappaport and Erica Stoller, *Yale University Press, $45*

Stoller was the photographer of US mid-century modernism, his pictures proselytising the US lifestyle to a sad, grey Europe. This book blends some of those super-cool images with photos of factories and aeroplanes, malls and world fairs, the postwar US world of plenty presaging the epic images of Andreas Gursky.

**Edwin Heathcote**

*FT architecture critic*
Ezra Stoller was an architecture student at New York University when he bought his first camera, sometime in the late 1930s. But that purchase marked a significant shift in the trajectory of his career. Over the course of the next several decades, Stoller would become known for photographing buildings, not designing them. His shots of modern masterpieces like Ludwig Mies van der Rohe’s Seagram Building and Frank Lloyd Wright’s Fallingwater and Guggenheim Museum often helped those structures attain their iconic status. Now, his work is being collected in a new book, *Ezra Stoller: Photographer*, that includes many of those famous photographs as well as much of his lesser-known work.

Stoller was a meticulous photographer. According to Nina Rappaport, a professor of architecture and the editor of the new book, it was common to see Stoller “exploring every angle, spending a day on site to understand the passage of the sun on the building.” Of course, with a career that coincided with the golden age of modern architecture, Stoller had plenty of good subjects to shoot. But he had a way of composing and framing shots, Rappaport says, that brought out the formal and structural qualities of those buildings.

“He was an artist,” she contends, “but never considered himself as one.”

In the preface to the book, Erica Stoller, Ezra’s daughter, offers an anecdote that transpired when he was shooting Louis Kahn’s Salk Institute, illustrating the photographer’s exacting eye:

I recall hearing about a problem at the Salk and his fearing that the equipment had been damaged; even with
the tilts and shifts of the view camera, he couldn’t get the lines straight. Finally, he realized that the camera
was okay—it was the building that was the problem. In construction, some of the concrete pours had belliied,
creating vertical lines that were not exactly straight.

While Stoller’s architectural photography has proven to be his most enduring work, Rappaport points out that his oeuvre is a bit more diverse. In addition to photographing interiors for publications like Ladies’ Home Journal, he also had a great deal of personal interest in industrial subjects, shooting factories, machines, and equipment “in a time of a postwar optimism, focusing on the idea of production and progress,” Rappaport explains.

http://www.fastcodesign.com/1671395/modern-architectures-golden-age-captured-by-a-master-photographer
No architect is unfamiliar with Ezra Stoller, the pioneering photographer whose clinical eye defined modernism and shaped our vision of the built world for much of the twentieth century. For decades, no work of architecture, at least on the East Coast, was complete until it had been reconstituted in two-dimensions through his lens — "Stollerized." These translations had a tendency to be more heroic, more pristine, and more alluring than the buildings they represented in real life. That was his genius.

That's the Ezra Stoller we all know. The Ezra Stoller of the TWA Terminal and the Seagram Building, of Paul Rudoph and Richard Meier. (I was lucky to know Ezra personally, as the editor of a series of small books of his photographs on modern landmarks.) A new monograph on Stoller from Yale showcases that familiar work, but also an aspect of Stoller's output that is not: his photographs of industry. Not only did Stoller take photographs of American factories as architecture, he shot those spaces in action, with workers busy assembling the products that defined American life at midcentury: aluminum, computers, paper, penicillin, televisions, records, silk, typewriters — everything up to and including Heinz ketchup.

As noted by Nina Rappaport, who deserves much credit for resuscitating this work, many of these photographs were undertaken either for Fortune magazine or in collaboration with the designer Will Burtin. In them, the products and workers of corporate America are treated with the same heroic grandeur and sharp eye for detail Stoller typically graced on buildings. Though more innocent as to the nature of consumer capitalism, they have the epic scale and density of the photography of Andreas Gursky. Some of his detail images have a distinctly Bauhaus feel. Together, they represent an extraordinary documentation of the romantic corporate America of the imagination — white, prosperous, productive, clean, and efficient — an America that no longer, or at least rarely, exists, if it ever really did in the first place.

A few examples follow, but the book is highly recommended.
Recording Modernism: The Work of Ezra Stoller
If modernism sought to give us Le Corbusier’s “machine for living in,” photographer Ezra Stoller, who died in 2014, used the camera as a machine for living through. His work was not only so comprehensive that it documented modernism’s rise, but was a part of the modernist movement itself. Now, a new book “Ezra Stoller, Photographer” aims to showcase both the images that made him famous, and those that tend to get less exposure. Co-authored by his daughter Erica Stoller, who manages Esto, the photographic agency he founded in 1966, and architectural writer Nina Rappaport, the tome presents Stoller’s iconic images alongside lesser known industrial photography that has a strikingly different focus from his shots of buildings alone.

Like the spaces he captured, his work is clean, simple and elegant. In one frame Stoller could distill the essence of a structure, as if he knew how to perfect the architect’s dream. His shots of Eero Saarinen’s TWA terminal at John F. Kennedy Airport, for example, seem both fluid and solid at ones—a feeling often hard to experience in the building itself. Stoller was known for being meticulous, pedantic even. With large format cameras, a Deardorff in the 1930s and 1940s and a Sinar in the 1950s and 1960s, as we learn from the book, he would reportedly stay in spaces for days before he photographed, and would often turn up to shoot just after a building was finished. Among architects, his name was used as a verb; to have a design “Stollerized” was seen as a great honor. Indeed, his client list reads like a who’s who of mid 20th Century architecture: Frank Lloyd Wright, Philip Johnson and Louis Kahn, to name but a few.

It may come as a surprise, then, to learn that Stoller didn’t consider himself an artist. Trained as an industrial designer at New York University, Stoller came into the workforce during the Great Depression, a factor that saw him eschew a design career for one behind the camera, a discipline he had no education in. A move perhaps stemming from his token perfectionism: he didn’t have too many industry-related connections and hated the idea of working for another architect. He saw photography as a practical way to excel.

he could contribute more. He got to be involved with architects making decisions,” she adds.

Sometimes projects for magazines such as Fortune, other times commissions for companies such as IBM, Stoller’s lesser-known images are part social realism, part modernist idealism. In these posed shots we see the working man as hero, the working woman as heroine, and both at the center of the industrialist dream. They are optimistic, sharp, beautiful, and they show us the true breadth of his work: he was not just an architectural photographer but an industrial and portrait photographer too. “They are images of industry in America, and he is really focused on the worker in motion,” Rappaport says. “This was all post-war. It was a time of prosperity, and he really captures this.”

=Ezra Stoller, Photographer will be published by Yale University Press on Nov. 19.
Decades ago, Erica Stoller accompanied her father, the architectural photographer Ezra Stoller, on a shoot of the Chase Manhattan Bank Plaza in New York. It was cavernous and dark, but Ezra insisted that a shaft of light would burst through in 15 minutes. “The plaza was full of sun,” she remembers. “It did just what he told it to do.”

Stoller, trained as an architect, photographed the most well-known Modernist buildings in New York— the Seagram Building, the T.W.A. terminal, the Guggenheim— often after meticulous planning. That fascination with the postwar environment, which extended to homes too, was “about innovation and newness,” Nina Rappaport, an architectural critic, says. His work will be featured in a book by Rappaport and Erica Stoller that comes out in December, “Ezra Stoller, Photographer,” and an exhibit opening in January at Yossi Milo Gallery in New York.
Ezra Stoller
YOSSI MILO GALLERY

Beginning in roughly 1939, modernist architects Frank Lloyd Wright, Paul Rudolph, Eero Saarinen, Marcel Breuer, and Richard Meier, among others, had photographer Ezra Stoller document their now-classic buildings—"classic" in themselves, but also because of Stoller's exquisite "classifying" of them. With deft assurance, Stoller imbued the structures with an aura of inevitability. Seen through his lens, their geometry seems eternal—timeless as the pyramids—and drawn to some perceptual seventh heaven. Thus, Fifth Avenue fades into wet darkness, leaving the 1954 Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company building, by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, gloriously illuminated from within, transcending its environment as though it were a kind of abstract thing—which it is, of course, if one forgets its function.

Stoller renders the buildings ideal, pure—even ethereal. They have little solidity. Even when made of substantial material, like the white concrete used by Saarinen and Wright, the structures dissolve into insubstantial light. Human beings and automobiles, by contrast, appear impure and thus dispensable. The sweeping curve of the ceiling in Saarinen's General Motors Technical Center (1950)—echoed by a set of concentric steps—is boldly geometric and transcendentally luminous compared to the Buick station wagon on display below it. Although the automobile's design, too, has curves, it looks transient and irrelevant, overshadowed by the surrounding forms. The man gazing at the vault in a second photograph of the Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company building is also upstaged by his surroundings, as are the visitors to Frank Lloyd Wright's 1939 Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.

They function as measures of space, as human figures often do in traditional landscape paintings.

By highlighting the buildings' geometric qualities, Stoller's photographs suggest, correctly, that the structures are best admired and contemplated as autonomous works of art, not lived in by human beings. This is clearer nowhere than in a 1949 image of a Marcel Breuer house erected in the sculpture garden at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The neo-Renaissance apartment buildings visible in the background can't compete with the Breuer house's pure geometry—but one can live privately in them, whereas the large, glass windows of Breuer's building expose its inhabitants to scrutiny. Even when the buildings are naturalized (via the use of materials such as wood and stone), and appear to be outcroppings in a landscape, as does Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer's Chamberlain Cottage (1942) in Wayland, Massachusetts, their geometry resists nature. The modernist "machine for living" is uninhabitable, which is why postmodern architectural theorist Charles Jencks famously called it a failure.

The architects entrusted Stoller with their visionary architecture, and, to a large extent, remained true to it in his visionary photographs. (The prints' diminutive size—twenty by sixteen inches—however, makes the buildings seem more intimate than they are.) And that vision is in many ways seductive. But today, Stoller's photographs are like memento mori conjuring a dead idea of architecture.

—Donald Kuspit
EZRA STOLLER
In the years since they were made (mostly in the nineteen-fifties and sixties), Stoller's photographs of modern architecture have become almost as famous as the buildings they document. This show of black-and-white prints includes essays on Mies van der Rohe and Philip Johnson's Seagram Building, Eero Saarinen's T.W.A. Terminal, and Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim Museum that investigate the structures from inside and out, capturing not just the look but the spirit of the places. Because Stoller understood the ambition and idealism these projects represented, his pictures seem to be extensions of the architects' vision. Through Feb. 12. (Milo, 525 W. 25th St. 212-414-0370.)
An exhibition of the work of the photographer Ezra Stoller opens today at Yossi Milo Gallery. Stoller, who died in 2004 at age 89, was the foremost chronicler of Modernist architecture, using his large-format camera to record seminal 20th-century works like Mies van der Rohe’s Seagram Building, Frank Lloyd Wright’s Fallingwater and Guggenheim Museum, and Eero Saarinen’s TWA Terminal at Idlewild Airport (now Kennedy). The exhibition of gelatin silver prints includes not just images of these buildings but also of lesser-known midcentury works like the Starkey house in Duluth, Minn., by Marcel Breuer, and the International Style, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill-designed First National City Bank (now Citibank) branch, also at Kennedy — which still stands, albeit in a less pristine landscape than when Stoller trained his deep-focus lens on it. So influential was Stoller’s approach, which captured a building’s lines in sometimes abstract, often monumental compositions, that a project wasn’t considered complete until it had been “Stollerized.” The exhibition continues through Feb. 12.
A Stroll Through Modernism with Ezra Stoller

An exhibition of architectural photographer Ezra Stoller’s work will open at the Yossi Milo Gallery tonight and runs through February 12. A few of the photos are instantly recognizable, such as a photo of the Guggenheim lobby featuring women in pillbox hats standing in the foreground. But the gems of the show are those taken off the beaten path, like the roof of the Seagram’s Building or a parking garage in Miami.

"We see it as a mini-retrospective," said Milo. "We wanted to show more than the slam-dunk photos, to give it more depth."

The images show not only Stoller’s precise technical ability, but also reveal the self-effacing nature of architectural photography: that of an artist recording work of another artist. But the depth of Stoller’s appreciation for art and design makes it easy to forget that one is looking at a stand alone work of art. Not only is the genius of Mies, Wright and Saarinen observed, but the works of Picasso, Kandinsky, and Miro peer out from building interiors as well. The artworks act as a magnet, pulling the viewer further in. In a single shot of a Seagram interior one of Rothko’s “Red” paintings hangs next to the next to an Eames sofa which sits across from a Franz Kline.

“These were such new ideas. Now people sit with an iPhone and think that’s modern," Milo said gesturing to the photograph.

The images show buildings shot at all times of day and in all kinds of weather, taken at night, in the rain, after the rain, or, as in one photo of Saarinen’s TWA terminal, as a lightning storm approaches. That particular silver print holds varying tones of white within the building interior, while simultaneously retaining all the grays and blacks of the approaching storm.