

An ambitious 1997 exhibition that set out to survey twentieth-century architecture marked the debut of Sugimoto's *Architecture* series. The catalogue of the exhibition¹ features classical architectural photography—by Julius Shulman, Ezra Stoller, Richard Bryant, Grant Mudford—alongside works by artists ranging from the historical (Edward J. Steichen, August Sander, Berenice Abbott, Louis Hine), to more recent works (by Andreas Gursky, Thomas Struth, and Gunther Förg), plus Sugimoto's first images of architecture: Tadao Ando's Church of the Light (1989, p. 129) and Azuma House (1975), William Van Alen's Chrysler Building (1928–1930, p. 69), Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim Museum in New York (1942–1960, p. 113), and Kenzo Tange's Shizuoka Press Building (1965–1970).

Almost without exception, all of these artists chose the modern metropolis as their subject, depicting it as sparkling in lights, shrouded in a magical, foggy haze (see Steichen's *Flatiron* (1904)), or frozen in unstable and anonymous forms (for example, the Asian metropolises dominated by their vast building sites). This approach is, by turns, one of heroic optimism (which we associate with Umberto Boccioni's *Rising City* (1910–11) and American photography from the first decade of the twentieth century) and disillusioned, coldly investigative (work by the contemporary German artists Gursky and Struth, for example). The metropolitan landscape, however, prevails as the subject of choice: more precisely, the metropolitan landscape observed in its unending metamorphosis, whether it be the formless expanse of the third-world megalopolis, the sprawling peripheries of ancient European cities where the line between historical center and countryside is all but obliterated, or other settings (such as Berlin or Hong Kong) where the incessant cycle of destruction and reconstruction results either from war or from massive political and economical change. These were the landscapes addressed by the great photographers of the early part of the last century, and the same landscapes serve as the subject of choice today for artists such as Lewis Baltz and Balthasar Burkhard, Armin Linke and Frank Thiel, Olivo Barbieri and Gabriele Basilico. Hiroshi Sugimoto, meanwhile, has set his sights elsewhere.