

DANZIGER GALLERY

Biography

O. Winston Link

Born 1914 in Brooklyn, New York.

Best known for his photography and sound recordings of the last days of the steam railroad, and for pioneering night photography. As a teenager, Link developed early interests in photography, locomotives and rail yards. Amid the depression era, Link graduated from the Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn with a degree in civil engineering. Soon after, he took a job as a photographer for a public relations firm, an act that launched his lifelong photographic career.

Link's reasons for shooting at night were simple. For one, it was more romantic and dramatic. For Link the trains were comparable to Garbo and Dietrich at their most glamorous. Secondly, steam from the trains against a night sky photographed white. Against a day sky it came out a dirty grey. Whatever the circumstances, Link's pictures were an intense labor of love. Indeed, he discovered, shortly after starting the Norfolk and Western project, that no one was much interested in photographs of a fast disappearing mode of transport. This was, after all, the beginning of the era of the great American car.

Beginning in 1983, Link's photographs began to be exhibited as works of art. Several museums in England and the United States organized exhibitions of the N&W photos, and a book "Steam, Steel, and Stars" followed in 1987.

At first Link's photographs were appreciated for their combination of nostalgia, technical virtuosity, and partly due to Link's famously cranky character and disposition - almost outsider artist's vision. But as photography has moved on, Link's work is increasingly seen and appreciated for the degree to which he controlled, planned, and constructed each image, prefiguring such well known contemporary artists as Gregory Crewdson and Jeff Wall, both of whom willingly acknowledge their interest in and appreciation of Link's work.

His work has been exhibited throughout the U.S, Europe and in Japan and is present in numerous major museum collections around the world. His rail photography is exhibited at the O. Winston Link Museum in Roanoke, Virginia, refurbished by the famous industrial designer, Raymond Loewy, which opened in 2004.