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A visit to the ruins of Bethlehem Steel is a very moving experience. The broken buildings and majestically rusting blast furnaces are telling a story, visually and without words, and as filmmakers we felt that a documentary on this subject needed to confront the viewer with silent visceral images without resorting to narration. We decided to present a series of pictures that speak for themselves but often raise as many questions as they answer.

One of the challenges we faced putting together a film based on Marc Reed's photographs of the Steel was how to organize the material so the viewer can always stay spatially oriented. Marc first separated the photos into categories that each highlighted a separate building or group of structures. Each one was chosen for its importance and historical impact. Number 2 Machine Shop had been world famous for its massive capacity and the vast amount of steel products that had been produced within its walls. The Welfare Rooms were a haunting and gothic view into private space of workers before the development of modern locker rooms. The Blast Furnaces are quite iconic for not only Beth Steel and the town itself, but indeed the entire industry. The Gas Blowing Engine Room sits as silent witness to the colossal amounts of power that was required to drive the steel works. The buildings and machines placed in the miscellaneous section called Remains (the Open Hearth, the Administration Buildings, the High Tower) were by no means less important. But our self imposed time limit of 20 minutes for the film (a length we decided was appropriate for the presentation of silent photographs) forced us to choose the images very carefully.

A single image had to speak volumes in the absence of narration. The woman tattooed with the skyline of Beth Steel on her back represents the enduring passion that the citizens of the Lehigh Valley have towards the Steel while her obvious youth testifies to an on-going legacy that crosses generations. The multi-layered shot of the town from a cemetery hill, with the blast furnaces in the background, a long row of old row houses where present day citizens are living their lives in the middle ground, and an expansive lawn of tombstones in the foreground compresses the story of Bethlehem's life, labor and death into one single image. Marc's focus on capturing concentrated information and to tell a story with a static picture is part of his photographic art and helped the film take on a narrative shape.

Some of the images are quite mysterious. When I first saw Marc's portrait of the hooked baskets of the Welfare Rooms I thought I was looking at a medieval torture chamber. The fire extinguishers look more like robotic R2D2s than anything we would see in a modern facility. And the shape and sizes of one particular room was incomprehensibly strange until Marc explained that this was where battleship turrets rolled off the assembly line.

Some of the images speak volumes. My personal favorite is the image of the Whitworth Press, a large machine that looks so dangerous you wonder if any workers had perished or lost limbs as a result of a simple slip, and yet in giant letters on its surface is printed the words: SAFETY INVOLVES TEAMWORK. This one piece of management-approved propaganda, with the letters S, I and T ironically highlighted, speaks volumes about just how exposed the workers were to severe industrial accidents and molten steel. By including this one image in the film, we were suggesting the large number of labor disputes, issues and battles that occurred at the Steel over the years.

Viewers that have had no previous experience with or interest in the steel industry or Bethlehem in particular, have reported that the film kept their interest, and that the progression of images gave them a strange sense of nostalgia and loss. We feel that we have succeeded in our attempt to use the wonderful music of composers like Justin Durban and Tim Garland to help draw the emotional content out of the photographs. There is a passionate feelings to each and every one of Marc's photos, and I consider it a personal achievement that we were able to use the moving medium of film to enable the images to dance to the music and speak their haunting message.

There is no substitute for the experience of being at the Steel, of standing next to the cyclopean blast furnaces, of walking in the crumbling machine shops, of crawling into the dark flooded basement of the engine room, but we do hope that the film *Almost Gone* gives the viewer some glimpse into what it is like. And perhaps, although this may require more imagination and more sensitivity to the images, to gain a glimpse of what it was like many years ago when the furnaces were firing their fiery load, the tons of steel were rolling out the machine shop doors onto their train journey across America, and the men and women who worked the Steel were clocking out for their long bus ride home.

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