

With its monumental structures, vast space, and—all too often—sense of abandonment, the gritty landscape of industrial America has long been evocative subject matter for architectural photographers. The images composed and constructed by Shuli Sade, however, go a step further. Sade's photos transcribe the scaffolding of American industry—the silos, bridges, towers, factories, smokestacks, water towers, and more—in an effort "to record the last of these vanishing buildings." She then paints the images, rubbing them, smudging them, and otherwise manipulating them with an overlay of tar.

The result is an impressionistic quality not usually found in this genre of documentary photography. Sade describes the layer of tar as being "a filter that enhances the light." But it does something

else as well. It gives an overlay of immediacy to the permanent quality of these monumental structures. The wash of tar puts a primal imprint on the cold, impersonal machine world, and it seems oddly appropriate to have this tactility, this sense of energy, above all—this human intervention on landscapes that are, after all, about construction, fabrication, about people making things.

The formats of the images vary, but the material presentation of the photographs consistently reinforces their content. Some are small four-inch by six-inch prints, little mementos of steel that are all the more compelling for their ability to record vast landscapes. Larger, 11-inch by 14-inch prints have been matted in

steel that has its own worn patina; the mat, too, has been treated with tar—what Sade calls with resignation "my perfume." In these larger pieces the subject matter appears to have overstepped its boundaries to become both the picture and the frame.

A second series of photographs is at once sinister and elegant. The light in these color images, produced from filters, seems to fine-tune the precision of the structures. The result is a rust palette that is obviously suitable for its industrial landscape. The sepia tones convey a postnuclear afterglow as well, and we can't help reading these as portraits of elegant decay. This is ambiguous terrain, its structures evoking power and frailty at once.

In both series there is an emotional component; so it comes as no surprise when Sade says that she is drawn to these giant relics of industry for the spiritual qualities they convey to her. "These are like temples," she explains. "They are huge spaces that make us feel small. And like factories, ancient temples were often built along rivers. Both are monumental spaces meant to accommodate a god, or a machine god." That both are often tombs as well is another conclusion the viewer inevitably reaches on seeing these memorable landscapes. The photographs can be seen by private appointment with Shuli Sade, 53 Lispenard Street, New York City. (212) 226-5314. AKIKO BUSCH



## temples and tar

Shuli Sade's 1994 image of a Los Angeles warehouse Temples of Industry, with its wash of tar.