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Archives of American Art

Celebrating 175: Lewis Hine, Elizabeth McCausland Files, Correspondence, 1938

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To E. McC -

Copy of letter to Florence Kellogg
(Survey Graphic)

Dear Florence Kellogg:- 2/17/33

I am glad you raised the question of the value of human values in photography beyond mere illustration.

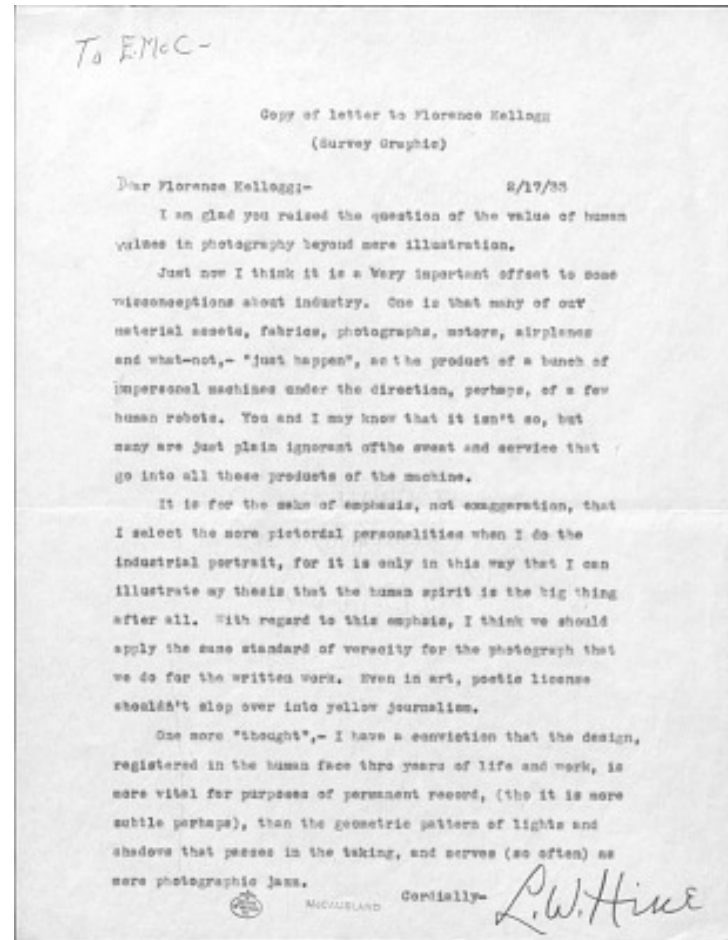
Just now I think it is a very important offset to some misconceptions about industry. One is that many of our material assets, fabrics, photographs, motors, airplanes and what-not, - "just happen", as the product of a bunch of impersonal machines under the direction, perhaps, of a few human robots. You and I may know that it isn't so, but many are just plain ignorant of the sweat and service that go into all these products of the machine.

It is for the sake of emphasis, not exaggeration, that I select the more pictorial personalities when I do the industrial portrait, for it is only in this way that I can illustrate my thesis that the human spirit is the big thing after all. With regard to this emphasis, I think we should apply the same standard of veracity for the photograph that we do for the written work. Even in art, poetic license shouldn't slop over into yellow journalism.

One more "thought", - I have a conviction that the design, registered in the human face thro years of life and work, is more vital for purposes of permanent record, (tho it is more subtle perhaps), than the geometric pattern of lights and shados that passes in the taking, and serves (so often) as meme photographic jazz.

Cordially- L. W. Hine

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