



DAVID PLOWDEN

American, b. 1932

Statue of Liberty, Caven Point Road, Jersey City, New Jersey, 1967

Inkjet print

Gift of David and Sandra Plowden, 2014.9.113

Statue of Liberty, Caven Point Road



David Plowden (b. 1932) David Plowden has spent more than 50 years recording and capturing the true American scene through the camera lens. Plowden studied at The Putney School in Putney, Vermont, and graduated from Yale University with a BA in economics in 1955. His career began with the Great Northern Railway before he pursued his interest in photography through private study with Minor White and Nathan Lyons, and as an assistant to O. Winston Link and George Meluso. Plowden moved to the Midwest where he began teaching at the Illinois Institute of Technology-Institute of Design, followed by the University of Iowa, University of Baltimore and Grand Valley State University. Vast in subject matter, Plowden's works can be seen among numerous collections like the Smithsonian Institute, Library of Congress, Art Institute of Chicago, Humanities Iowa, and the Figge Art Museum.

A product of its time

Plowden has a passion for preserving the American timeline before it becomes obsolete and overlooked. When this photograph was taken in 1967, America was approaching a turning point in Vietnam and popular culture was becoming increasingly liberal. With this in mind, Plowden's *Statue of Liberty* is seen from an industrialized vantage point in Jersey City, New Jersey. Separated from the sensationalism of New York City, the viewer is forced to see a new reality of the definition of freedom. The graceful icon is abruptly juxtaposed by the entanglement of telephone wires supported by a row of uncompromising stanchions, creating a visible diagonal barrier in a forgotten wasteland. Plowden's contrast between the romanticism of liberty and the crudeness of the surrounding landscape reveals his perspective of historical truth.

Take a closer look

Plowden incorporates simple elements that some might consider mundane in order to create a sense of irony within this image. At first glance, the viewer is presented with heaps of discarded rubble, drawing a likeness to an abandoned junkyard. Yet the minuscule hand-painted "No Dumping" sign hovering over the refuse highlights a disregard for order. The hardened steel structures silhouetted on the horizon are softened by the delicate foliage of surrounding overgrown weeds. The disparities among these elements give Plowden the ability to capture the discord of the era and offer the viewer to draw his or her own conclusions.

Did you know?

Plowden's love of the Midwestern landscape was sparked in 1952 when he was invited to ride on the rear of a mail train traveling from Chicago to San Francisco. For the first time, he experienced the sights, smells and feel of America's heartland. This has greatly shaped his artistic career.

On your own

www.davidplowden.com

http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2012-11-02/features/ct-prj-1104-david-plowden-20121102_1_queensboro-bridge-steam-trains-kids-love

<http://iowapublicradio.org/post/photographing-heartland#stream/0>