



International Center of Photography

Contact: Communications Department
212.857.0045 info@icp.org

media release



United States Strategic Bombing Survey, Physical Damage Division
[Ruins of Chugoku Coal Distribution Company or Hiroshima Gas Company],
November 8, 1945
International Center of Photography

Hiroshima: Ground Zero 1945

On view from
May 20
through
August 28, 2011

Media Preview
May 19, 2011
11:30 am–1:00 pm

RSVP:
info@icp.org
212.857.0045

Once-classified images of atomic destruction at Hiroshima will be displayed in a new exhibition *Hiroshima: Ground Zero 1945* at the International Center of Photography (1133 Avenue of the Americas at 43rd Street) from May 20 to August 28, 2011. Drawn from ICP's permanent collection, the Hiroshima archive includes more than 700 images of absence and annihilation, which formed the basis for civil defense architecture in the United States. These images had been mislaid for over forty years before being acquired by ICP in 2006.

This exhibition will include approximately 60 contact prints and photographs as well as the secret 1947 United States Strategic Bombing Survey (USSBS) report, *The Effects of the Strategic Bombing on Hiroshima, Japan*. It will be accompanied by a catalogue published by ICP/Steidl, with essays by John W. Dower, Adam Harrison Levy, David Monteyne, Philomena Mariani, and Erin Barnett.

After the nuclear attacks in August 1945, President Truman dispatched members of the USSBS to Japan to survey the military, economic, and civilian damage. The Survey's Physical Damage Division photographed, analyzed, and evaluated the atomic bomb's impact on the structures surrounding the Hiroshima blast site, designated "Ground Zero." The findings of the USSBS provided essential information to American architects and civil engineers as they debated the merits of bomb shelters, suburbanization, and revised construction techniques.

The photographs in this exhibition were in the possession of Robert L. Corsbie, an executive officer of the Physical Damage Division who later worked for the Atomic Energy Commission. An architectural engineer and expert on the effects of the atomic bomb, he used what he learned from the structural analyses and these images to promote civil defense architecture in the U.S. The photographs went through a series of unintended moves after Corsbie, his wife and son died in a house fire in 1967.

The U.S., at war with Japan, detonated the world's first weaponized atomic bomb over Hiroshima, a vast port city of over 350,000 inhabitants, on August 6, 1945. The blast obliterated about 70 percent of the city and caused the deaths of more than 140,000 people. Three days later, the U.S. dropped a second nuclear bomb on Nagasaki, resulting in another 80,000 fatalities. Within a week, Japan announced its surrender to the Allied Powers, effectively ending World War II.

"Once part of a classified cache of government photographs, this archive of haunting images documents the devastating power of the atomic bomb," said ICP Assistant Curator of Collections Erin Barnett, who organized the exhibition.

The archive containing the images included in *Hiroshima: Ground Zero 1945* was purchased in 2006 with funds provided by the ICP Acquisitions Committee. The exhibition and catalogue were made possible with funds provided by the ICP Acquisitions Committee and with public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.



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