

Review by Casey A. Gollan, from *Hey Hot Shot*, Jen Bekman Gallery, New York, NY, 2010

**RYAN BOATRIGHT**



Untitled #1, from *Exurbia*, by Ryan Boatright

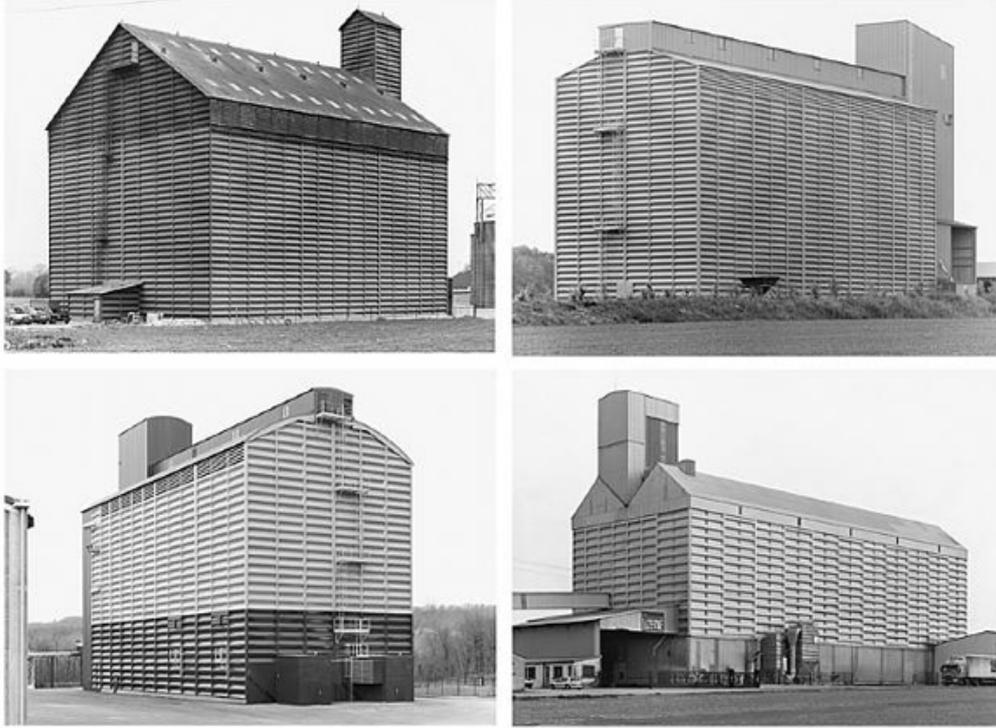
“[Ryan Boatright](#) divides his work into several categories, two of which are: Photographs and Photo Graphs. The difference between these two bodies of work is more than just semantics, it represents two different approaches to "evaluating photography's ability to measure experience."

First, the Photographs. After living in the same familiar neighborhood for 21 years, Boatright's parents moved to a bland, sprawling development. Referencing [Bernd and Hilla Becher](#)'s cataloguing of industrial and architectural structures, Boatright photographed the suburban roofs of his new neighborhood peeking out from the bottom of each frame.

Boatright writes:

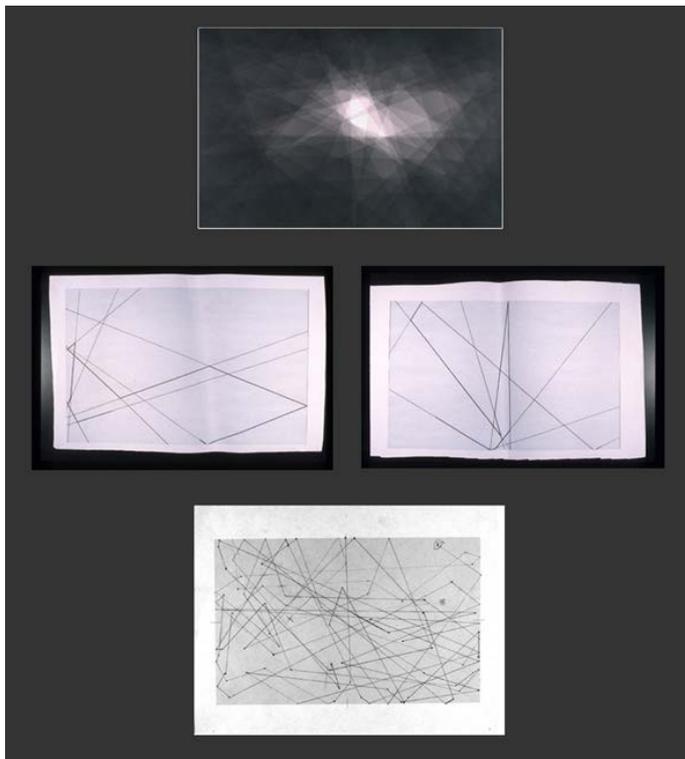
A vast, gray sky surrounds the emptiness of these structures. Builders construct homes of similar design for occupants who in turn conform to neighborhood codes and restrictions. The photographs describe the formal commonality of design that homogenizes mainstream American culture.

These straightforward, sparse images of places and things exemplify his straight photographic style. However, as I explored his work further, the *Exurbia* project began to take its place in a broader investigation of family, memory and the medium of photography.



Grain Elevators by Bernd and Hilla Becher

At the other end of the spectrum are Boatright's Photo Graphs, which are process-rich images derived more from graphs and charts than representational imagery. To create the piece below, Boatright recorded every angle and path that a cue ball traveled during a game of pool with his father. He used these notes to create templates for darkroom burning. Over six to eight hours, he burned and developed the game on a sheet of photo paper, resulting in a layered image whose angles ostensibly tell about the motion of gameplay between father and son.



Pool by Ryan Boatright

In this sense, Boatright's work also recalls [Nikki Graziano's](#) series [Found Functions](#), which superimposes tidy graphs and formulas onto photographs of clouds, shadows and plants.



Untitled from Found Functions by Nikki Graziano

But are Boatright's measured and charted images truly poignant? It's a question that he seems to explore not only on a conceptual level, but in terms of tools and materials. For four years Boatright was as a research scientist at the [Image Permanence Institute](#) at RIT. His research dealt primarily with characterizing the physical aspects of photographic prints. A major project of his was developing [Graphic Atlas](#), a public facing database "that brings sophisticated print identification and characteristic exploration tools to the general public." Different methods of printing and reproduction can be viewed from all angles under varying sources of light in a way that makes a sprawling and complicated topic remarkably clear.

It's in the space between his scientific exploration of materials and his introspective analysis of family dynamics that Boatright's work gets interesting. Boatright has since left Rochester for Paris, France where he is currently pursuing his art practice and will be exhibiting a new series of work in May.

You can see more of and read more about Boatright's work on [his website](#). For those interested in the process and research behind the images, Boatright maintains a running blog of [pages from his notebook](#) and also has [links to more of his research](#).