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E.O. HOPPÉ'S AMERIKA: MODERNIST PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE 1920S. With an essay by Philip Prodger. June, 2007, W.W. Norton & Co., 500 Fifth Ave., New York (<http://www.wwnorton.com>); 175 pages, approximately 130 black-and-white plates; \$49.95 hardcover; ISBN No. 978-0-393-06544-2. Catalogue accompanies recent exhibition of the same name held at Silverstein Photography, 535 W. 24th St., New York, NY 10011; phone: + 212 627 3930; fax: + 212 691 5509; website: <http://www.silversteinphotography.com>.

Although German-born Emil Otto Hoppé (1878-1972) may have been the world's most famous photographer when he arrived in America in 1919, his fame grew out of a London studio in which he photographed the celebrities of the day. Once in New York to set up a satellite studio, his intoxication with images of street life, skyscrapers, the Brooklyn Bridge and Grand Central Station led to a commission to photograph the U.S. from coast to coast—a monumental survey that would anticipate the Farm Service Administration projects of Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, et al.

Silverstein Photography's recent exhibit, the first such Hoppé survey in 80 years, offered a look at rare and previously unknown vintage photos from Hoppé's American ramble of the 1920s. This catalogue, with its evocative essay by Philip Prodger, notes how Hoppé transitioned from Pictorialism to Modernism, often paralleling if not inspiring the better known work of not only the FSA photographers but also of Ansel Adams, Paul Strand, Steiglitz and Steichen. Indeed, Hoppé captured the towering symmetries of electrical pylons in Los Angeles years before Edward Weston would, while his image of New York's first great skyscraper, the Woolworth Building--sharply focused on the building's mid-section, with the squat cityscape of smaller structures in the foreground--is a superb play of modernist photographic grammar.

Other examples of Hoppé's instinctive modernism include his views of crisscrossing girders and bridgework in industrial locales, the smokestacks of Detroit's auto factories, shadowed elevated railway structures and the like. Much of this is documented in moody chiaroscuro that retains something of the link to Pictorialism and, often enough, romanticizes its subject matter. And yet, Hoppé's eye for the soaring forms and brute energies of the New World was unflinching. This catalogue affirms him, finally, as one of modernism's pioneers.