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PRESS RELEASE:

Magnitogorsk Metal Kombinat: Stalin's Pittsburgh of the East

Exhibition of Photographs by Andrew Garn

February 16th-March 28th 2006

Opening Reception: Thursday February 16th: 6pm - 9pm

Gallery Hours: by appointment

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The Magnitogorsk Metal Kombinat (MMK), built in the late 1920s during Stalin's Five Year Plan, is the largest steel plant in the world today. The sheer vastness and architectural complexity of this Siberian metal city, conceived with the ambition to become the "Pittsburgh of the East", is unparalleled throughout the world. An important record of political, social and manufacturing history, Magnitogorsk is also a feat of engineering and socialist ideals.

The Russian steel plant, constructed on an uninhabited barren and hostile plain near the Ural River and a mountain rich in iron ore, stretches for over thirteen miles. By comparison, the great US Steel plant in Pittsburgh, PA, was a third of this size.

Comprising hundreds of unique industrial structures, Magnitogorsk was to the Western eye, an exemplary template of functional architecture. With the contemporaneous emergence of modern ideas, European architects, followers of the Bauhaus school and supporters of the International Style would frequently visit to witness the application of the form –follows-function tenet.

In 2000, Andrew Garn, already drawn to the iconography of industrial architecture, traveled to Siberia to photograph and document the vestiges of the plant compound. For this work he received a Graham Foundation fellowship.

Andrew Garn is the author of *HOUSEBOATS* (Rizzoli), *SUBWAY STYLE*, (Stewart Tabori Chang-winner of New York Library Society Book Award) *BETHLEHEM STEEL* (Princeton Architectural Press).

Mr. Garn is currently at work on a project documenting the architecture of incarceration for which he received a New York State Council for the Arts Fellowship. His most recent book, *WORLD'S FAIRS* will be published by Rizzoli in Spring of 2007. Mr. Garn is a frequent contributor to numerous publications. He lives in New York City.