

The coal mining photographs of C. William Horrell, taken across the southern Illinois Coal Belt over a twenty-year period from 1966 to 1986, are extraordinary examples of documentary photography—so stark and striking that captions seem superfluous. Horrell's photographs, reproduced in fine duotone lithography, capture the varied phenomena of twentieth-century coal mining technology: the awesome scale of surface mining machines and their impact on the land; massive machines forced into narrow passageways with inches to spare as they carry coal from the face to conveyor belts; and, more significantly, the advent of continuous miners, machines that dominated underground or deep mines during the mid-1960s. Horrell was also intrigued by the related activities of mining, including coal's processing, cleaning, and transportation, as well as the daily, behind-the-scenes operations that keep mines and miners working. His photographs reflect the beauty of the commonplace—the clothes of the miners, their dinner pails, and their tools—and reveal the picturesque remnants of closed mines: the weathered boards of company houses, the imposing iron beauty of an ancient tippel, the grassy sidewalks of an old coal town, and an abandoned building against the lowering sky of an approaching storm. Finally, his portraits of coal miners, such as the widely published *Black-Faced Miner*, show the strength, dignity, and enduring spirit of the men and women who work the southern Illinois coal mines.

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