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CHARLES SHEELER'S AMERICA

Artist's disdain for populism helped nurture a vision of modernity

By [Alan G Artner](#) and [Tribune Art Critic](#)
[October 15, 2006](#)

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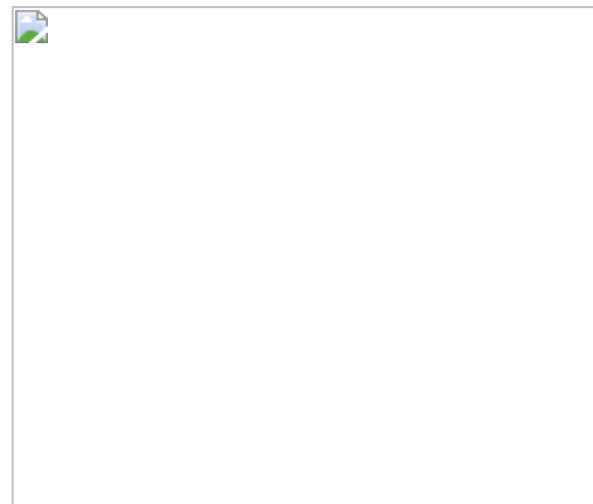
Charles Sheeler is one of the most important American artists in the first half of the 20th Century. Inspired equally by European abstraction and several aspects of the American landscape, he helped define what an indigenous art could be. Even when the Great Depression and World War II led to a populist high in uplift, Sheeler never condescended to an audience or lowered his aesthetic standards. How that stringency formed his photographs, paintings and drawings is the subject of "Charles Sheeler: Across Media," through Jan. 7 at the Art Institute of Chicago. Today we reproduce some pieces from the exhibition that show how the artist continually...

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