



60 x 10 x 12 in.

**STORRS, John**

Chicago, Illinois 1885 - Mer, Loir-et-Cher 1956

*Auto Tour, Formes industrielles (partie A)*

*Auto Tower, Industrial Forms (part A)*

c. 1922

cast and painted concrete

free-standing abstract

Acc. No.: 2008.33.2

Credit Line: Gift of Deborah and Ed Shein

Photo credit: Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington

© Artist :

**Washington, D.C., District of Columbia, The National Gallery of Art**

[www.nga.gov](http://www.nga.gov)

---

**Provenance**

- 2008, Gift of Deborah and Ed Shein

**Bibliography**

- Museum's website, 24 August 2011

**Exhibitions**

- 2010 Washington  
American Modernism: The Shein Collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.,



2010-2011

## Related works

- Auto Tower, Industrial Forms (part B), cast and painted concrete, c. 1922, in the same museum, 2011.1.1.

## Comment

Museum's website, 24 August 2011:

A pioneering figure in the development of American modernist sculpture, John Storrs incorporated the lessons of cubism and futurism and the streamlined design elements of industrialism to create some of the first abstract sculptures in the United States. Storrs was born in Chicago in 1885 and studied art in Hamburg, Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, and Paris, under such noted sculptors as Arthur Bock and Auguste Rodin. He traveled extensively through Europe, North Africa, Canada, and Mexico, and he was deeply affected by such disparate styles as the art of the Vienna Secession, ancient Greek and Egyptian art, and Southwest and Pacific Northwest Indian art. The son of an architect and real estate developer, Storrs also had a lifelong interest in the interrelationship of sculpture and architecture, and he maintained close friendships with such Chicago architects as Louis Sullivan, John Root, and Frank Lloyd Wright. In the early-to-mid-1920s, Storrs began to make architectonic "column-tower" sculptures, which were inspired by modern New York skyscrapers, as well as by classical art and by American Indian designs.

This gift, Auto Tower, Industrial Forms (part A), is one of a pair of large painted cast-concrete sculptures that Storrs may have been commissioned to produce for an estate in Gland, Switzerland, perhaps at the behest of the renowned art deco design firm, Maison Jansen. The piece is related to a number of much smaller works: the bronze Auto Tower (Industrial Forms), c. 1922 (whereabouts unknown); a plaster model for the bronze, c. 1922 (whereabouts unknown); a painted plaster version of the sculpture, c. 1922 (Smith Collection); and a pen and ink drawing, Study for Auto Tower (Industrial Forms), 1920 (Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Alvin S. Lane). The plaster model for the bronze Auto Tower was shown in Storrs' 1923 one-artist exhibition at the Société Anonyme in New York, which established him as a member of the international avant-garde. The plaster for the bronze was also reproduced in the winter 1922 edition of *The Little Review*, along with an essay by Storrs titled "Museums or Artists," in which Storrs expressed his belief that modern sculpture should be created directly for architecture. Despite the cool abstraction of much of his work, there is a playful side to Storrs' sculpture. Auto Tower, Industrial Forms reflects the Dada and surrealist humor of the "geste," or visual pun, that was current in avant-garde circles in the 1920s. When turned horizontally, the sculpture is transformed from a skyscraper tower form into a sleek automobile. The piece also has distinctly anthropomorphic qualities; the related ink drawing of the bronze shows that Storrs intended the work to be viewed as the profile of a totemic figure.

Auto Tower, Industrial Forms stands alone as an important example of Storrs'



architectonic sculpture from the early 1920s. This gift will greatly strengthen our collection of American modernist sculptures by artists such as John Flannagan and Alexander Calder. Furthermore, the piece will complement our holdings of European avant-garde sculpture by artists such as Constantin Brancusi, Jean Arp, and Jacques Lipchitz. It is the first work by Storrs to enter the Gallery's collections.

---

