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Leopold Leysen, called Pol Mara (Antwerp
1920-1998)

Industrial Forms

Signed and dated (lower left): 'Pol Mara 55'

Oil on canvas

44 ½ x 34 ⅞ in. (113 x 88.5 cm.)

Painted in 1955



Provenance

With Barry Friedman Gallery, New York.

This 1955 painting by Belgian artist Pol Mara, *Industrial Forms*, challenges the usual approach to the aesthetics of modernity and industry and asks viewers to re-appraise their idea of the world around them.

By the 1950's, the excitement of the post-war period was growing, and the fragmentary counterculture of the Beat Generation (1944-1964) was followed by the full-blown revolution of the globalized counterculture of the 1960s. From this social climate emerged Pol Mara, a Belgian painter, illustrator, lithographer and cultural ambassador. Born Leopold Leysen he is better known by his moniker, an acronym which stood for "*Pour Oublier Laideur. Métamorphoses, Amour, Rêve, Amitié.*" ("To forget ugliness. Metamorphosis, love, dreams, friendship").

The experience of the Cold War, a distrust of post-war governments and a fear around America's nuclear arms race with the Soviet Union, its involvement in Vietnam and the threat of a nuclear holocaust, meant for the youth of the 1950s there was a general opposition to the military-industrial machine civilisation. However, Pol Mara sought to reveal how he experienced the world, often finding artistic inspiration in unlikely places. His positive reaction towards what could otherwise be seen as the ugliness and mundanity

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of everyday life is expressed through his art, as well as his name. His work from the 1940s and 50s, such as the present painting, reveals his ability to renew everyday industrial forms into something which touches the viewer on a deeper, almost primal, level.