

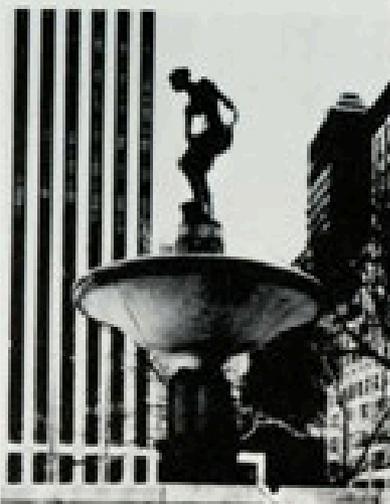
# exposure



# "His is a lovely city to behold..."

"Far subtler than most...Trager has taken the unmalleable stuff of New York and remolded it into the hopeful, delicate, light and enlightened metropolis that visionaries of the thirties were so sure would have come to pass by now.... Somehow, while delineating the grace notes of facade or finial, he manages to infuse his pictures with joy at the discovery of how delightfully man can vary the basic necessity of shelter.... His are not analytical documents, but shared moments of unmistakable personal joy." — Owen Edwards,

**American Photographer**



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## SPE Minutes 1980

**ACTIONS TAKEN AND RESOLUTIONS MADE BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE SOCIETY FOR PHOTOGRAPHIC EDUCATION AT THEIR MEETINGS, MARCH 14-17, 1980, DURING THE ANNUAL NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE SOCIETY, STEVENSVILLE COUNTRY CLUB, SWAN LAKE, NEW YORK, MARCH 18-19, 1980:**

Welcome was extended to new members of the board, Paul Berger, Chris Enos, Charles Hagen, and Ellen Manchester, who were invited to active participation in solving the Society's problems.

Accepted the minutes of the previous meetings as published in EXPOSURE 17:2. Resolved that in the future the complete minutes of procedure and decisions of the board and the membership at the annual meeting and those of the Executive Committee thereafter be published in the NEWSLETTER; that such complete minutes of board meetings be published in the NEWSLETTER following their circulation to board members for approval; that an abbreviated summary of proceedings and decisions of the board and the membership at the annual meeting and those of the Executive Committee thereafter be published in the society's Journal of Record, EXPOSURE.

Accepted the Treasurer's report of income and expenses and a revised estimate of budgeted expenses.

Acted to form a Policies and Procedures Committee under the chairpersonship of Vice-Chairperson William Parker, such committee to replace the Steering Committee for one year and to define the policies and governance of the Society and to prepare a document on S.P.E. Policies and Procedures for approval of the board at the 1981 annual national meeting. The committee was budgeted \$6000 for a meeting and expenses.

Accepted the report of the Publications Committee and a recommended Reprinting Rights Policy and Policy on Back Issues Sales and Fees relative to EXPOSURE. Resolved that an outline of the Education Issue of EXPOSURE will be sent to each board member for approval and recommendation. Resolved that the Society will accept contributions to the general fund for publications to be determined by the Society at its discretion.

Resolved that the Society for Photographic Education recognizes the importance of the collections of the International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House. The Society supports all efforts of the Board of IMP/GEH to sustain the integrity of the collections and to increase their accessibility to the Museum's numerous constituencies.

Approved the principle that exhibitors at the national conference who sell at tables should be charged and those who only give material away will not be charged. Approved the principle of waiving the conference fee for speakers. Accepted plans for the 1981 conference at Asilomar, California, March 15-18, 1981.

Accepted the report of the Membership Committee defining a total current membership of 1468.

Resolved that the Society continue its association with the National Association of Schools of Art Standards Committee with William Parker acting as liaison.

Resolved to delay hiring an Executive Secretary for one year in favor of the Policies and Procedures Committee identification of a clear definition of S.P.E. policies and procedures.

Referred to the Publications Committee for recommendation a proposal that the Society undertake to publish an annual collection of fine photographs and writing on photography subsidized by the Polaroid Corporation.

Directed the Membership Committee and Policies and Procedures Committee to explore options concerning student membership and present these options to the board.

Resolved that members new to the board be paid \$100 to help offset travel expenses when they attend the annual board meetings and that outgoing members also be paid \$100 provided they attend the board meetings.

Resolved that the board recommend the general membership rescind the previous action with respect to the Equal Rights Amendment and the selection of conference sites.

Resolved that the Regional Affairs Committee meet prior to the National

Conference on a day when its board representatives can be in attendance; that regional representatives be invited to attend all board meetings as observers; that the funding for the regional representatives be provided from regional resources. Resolved that such resolution be sent to the Regional Affairs Committee.

Approved Ellen Manchester as Conference Committee Chairperson for the year and Jean Looney as Conference Coordinator for 1982.

Resolved to budget discretionary funds of \$200 for chairpersons of committees to spend for expenses incurred in committee activities.

Resolved that the Board of the Society for Photographic Education accepts full responsibility for the failure to have defined clear professional procedures and policies with reference to the editorship of EXPOSURE; that it apologizes to Allan Coleman, a member of the Society and to Charles Desmarais, a member of the Board and Editor of EXPOSURE, for its lack of effective policies and procedures, which has led to professional and personal embarrassment of deep regard which may have been caused to either of them; and that it shall define specific policies for the editorship of EXPOSURE and all forthcoming publications.

Resolved a specific set of secretarial procedures for the minutes concerning Allan Coleman's presentation and the board discussion of same.

**ACTIONS TAKEN AND RESOLUTIONS MADE BY THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE SOCIETY FOR PHOTOGRAPHIC EDUCATION AT THE ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING, MARCH 19, 1980, DURING THE ANNUAL NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE SOCIETY, STEVENSVILLE COUNTRY CLUB, SWAN LAKE, NEW YORK, MARCH 18-19, 1980:**

Accepted the minutes of the previous meetings of the board and membership as published in EXPOSURE 17:2.

Accepted the Treasurer's financial report of 1979.

Resolved that the Regional Affairs Committee be thanked for a job well done.

Concerning the report on the original motion, passed three years ago, requiring S.P.E. to avoid holding meetings in states that have not ratified the ERA amendment, no motion or resolution was made, therefore the society shall be required to continue its prohibition against conference sites in states not having supported the EQUAL RIGHTS Amendment.

Resolved that a report on the Women's Caucus Meeting be made to the Policies and Procedures Committee for its study and recommendations and that Martha Madigan be the liaison with the committee.

Resolved that time, place, and agenda of all board meetings be published in advance of such meetings in the NEWSLETTER. Resolved that the Board of Directors meet with the membership during the annual conference, not before or after it.

Resolved to express thanks to all who made the 1980 conference possible.

**ACTIONS TAKEN AND RESOLUTIONS MADE BY THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE SOCIETY FOR PHOTOGRAPHIC EDUCATION AT ITS MEETINGS, NOVEMBER 8-9, 1980, ALLERTON HOTEL, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS:**

On review of applications of candidates for Editor of EXPOSURE and interviews with two candidates most highly recommended by the Publications Committee, appointed Gretchen Garner to the position.

On review of applications of candidates for Editor of the NEWSLETTER and consideration of the recommendations of the Publications Committee, appointed Peter Kloehn to the position.

Approved the recommended policies and procedures documents provided by the Policies and Procedures Committee and directed that they be presented to the Board of Directors for consideration and acceptance.

Accepted plans for the 1981 conference at Asilomar presented by Conference Coordinator Greg MacGregor.

minutes information provided by  
Richard Stevens, Secretary

# Society for Photographic Education

The Society for Photographic Education is a not-for-profit, educational corporation which through its programs and publications seeks to promote high standards of photography. For membership information, write: Society for Photographic Education, Post Office Box 1651, FDR Post Office, New York, NY 10150.

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*Exposure* is the quarterly journal of the Society for Photographic Education, and is a benefit of SPE membership. For membership information, write the Society at P.O. Box 1651, FDR Post Office, New York, NY 10150. Editorial contributions should, in the future, be directed to Gretchen Garner, Editor, 1028 Wesley, Evanston, IL 60202. ISSN 0090-8863.

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#### **Staff**

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#### **Submissions**

Future editorial contributions and inquiries should be addressed to Gretchen Garner, Editor, 1028 Wesley, Evanston, IL 60202. Manuscripts must be typewritten, double spaced, and should follow the form set forth in *A Manual of Style*, 12th Edition (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969). Please cite fewer than five source notes within the text. A modest honorarium for original feature articles is paid authors upon publication. Photographs must be labeled as to photographer, title, and date. Reasonable care will be taken with all submissions, but their return can not be guaranteed. Return postage must accompany all unsolicited contributions.

#### **Cover**

Robert Adams photograph, courtesy Castelli Photographs Inc., New York. See "Robert Adams: Post Modernism and Meaning, by Shelley Armitage, page 49.

## The Lexington Camera Club / Van Deren Coke

When Charles Desmarais called recently and asked me to write something about the Lexington Camera Club's role in fostering creative photography in Central Kentucky in the period 1937-1972, I had fond recollections but no data. One recalls bits and pieces of information about the past, but rarely the events that lead up to a moment or, for that matter, follow soon afterwards. My recollection of the Lexington Camera Club is that it was a small club of amateurs who met once a month to show their prints to each other and discuss their technical problems and achievements.

Around 1936, Benjamin Hart, a chemist who had worked for a fish canning company in California, returned to his native Central Kentucky to retire. He was most interested in 35mm photography, and made very good, large prints from the relatively grainy film of that period. He liked to use different kinds of paper to give his pictures a more "artistic" feeling, and toned some of his prints brown, and even blue. He was essentially a pictorialist, but being a chemist, was more respectful than most pictorialists of the fine prints made by Edward Weston and Ansel Adams, both of whom he had met in California and from whom he had acquired some prints.

In 1936, Hart began coming to the Lexington Camera Club meetings and offering more advanced criticism than had been available before his arrival. He soon decided to give a course for members of the club, to improve their techniques and provide them with a chance to study the prints he had acquired by Weston, Adams, and others.

I was 16 in 1937, and was a member of the first class Hart taught. The class was made up of advanced amateurs, most of whom were doctors, lawyers, and businessmen. We were given instruction in chemistry, shown how to make good 35mm negatives, and became acquainted with dozens of toners and different types of paper. Weston's and Adams' prints were studied as a standard for print quality. Little, though, was said about the aim of these photographers from an aesthetic standpoint.

Ansel Adams was the second person to be a catalyst for me and for a number of the others. Until recently I was

not sure when Adams first came to address the Lexington Camera Club, recalling only that it was a few months before Pearl Harbor. With the help of Mary Alinder, Ansel's assistant, the date has been established as September 1941. In a letter to Stieglitz, written August 15, 1941, on a train en route to the East, Adams referred to an upcoming visit to New York City, Detroit, Washington, and Lexington. During the visit to Lexington, he gave a talk on photographic techniques and did a critique of members' work. Consistent with his views on style, he rejected all prints that were the least bit fuzzy and the few made with paper negative processes. He spoke about the necessity for clarity and gave us ways to achieve division of tones to separate forms. This was before the Zone System was developed, but I recall his references to exposing for the shadows and developing for the highlights which he and Minor White eventually codified into their system of pre-visualization of where tones could be placed in a print.

During World War II the LCC was not very active. Upon return of the veterans, there was an increase in membership and a more sophisticated awareness of changes that were taking place in photography. Nicholas Haz, a painter trained in Europe, gave an important two or three week course to LCC members around 1955. He was a Fellow of the Royal Photographic Society, but also knew about the Bauhaus and conveyed an enthusiasm for Moholy-Nagy and photograms to those of us who took his class. I began to give short courses for some of the younger members of the LCC in 1952.

Among the most serious of the students was Gene Meatyard. He had come to Lexington after the end of World War II from Chicago, where he had been trained in eyeglass lens design. The firm of Tinder-Krauss-Tinder brought him to Lexington. All three partners of this company were photographers and members of the LCC; in addition to eye glasses, the firm sold photographic equipment and supplies. Meatyard, who already had professional knowledge of optics, became interested in photography while working for them. With an interest in art, furthered by his brother, who had been trained as an

artist, Meatyard moved from being casually interested in photography when he began taking classes with me, to becoming deeply involved with the medium by 1953.

He soon became a leader at the LCC, and when I left Lexington in 1956 to attend graduate school at Indiana University he began to teach classes in photography. Under Meatyard's direction a number of interesting photography exhibitions were organized by the LCC. Among them were *Photography 1968* and *Photography 1970*, both of which focused on current work being done in regions of the country such as the Midwest and South. Dr. Z. Gerlach, an LCC member and one of my students in Lexington, arranged for Doctors' Park to show work by the best of the LCC members and work by photographers who could be of interest to members. These shows were very important as catalysts for younger photographers.

After Meatyard's death in 1972 the LCC continued its involvement with new ideas, as exemplified in Bob May's multiple exposure work. The organization has been instrumental for over 40 years in providing a forum for serious discussion of photography and a showcase for work by Kentucky photographers.

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**Van Deren Coke** is curator of photography at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

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#### **To our readers:**

This is the last issue of *Exposure* in which I have been directly involved as editor. As you know by now, Gretchen Garner will serve as my very able successor. Our quarterly journal will, I feel, benefit greatly from her skill and experience.

As I proceed to a new phase of my own career, I would like to express my gratitude to the many people who helped *Exposure* to grow during my tenure. If I have not always easily surmounted the obstacles of time and budget which are the traditional plague of alternative publishing, it is clear that without these people the journal could never have achieved anything at all.

Those who have contributed many weeks of work at the virtually thankless task of actually producing the magazine deserve special notice. Patty Carroll re-designed the entire book in 1979, and shared her professional design expertise over a two-year period for no more than a token honorarium. Maria Gonzalez, Cis Rogers, Tae Terumoto, and Dan Meinwald gave selflessly during different periods of my custodianship. Candida Finkel, James Kaufmann, and Fred Quellmalz were always available with advice and physical assistance.

The members of my Publications Committee (Jim Alinder, Howard Becker, Ellen Land-Weber, Michael Simon, and Alex Sweetman) were invariably supportive and helpful, as were Charles Hagen and Peter Bunnell.

Finally, thanks to the hundreds of people I just can't list individually: the writers, photographers, national and regional board members, and, most important of all, the members of the SPE. In the end, it is all of us together who have made *Exposure* what it is.

Charles Desmarais

## West Coast 50's / Dody Thompson

There is a natural lag of about a generation between the occurrence of events and their being embalmed in written history. This article attempts to bridge that gap—a sort of written oral history minus the interlocutor. Unfortunately, what one remembers may be incorrect. What one forgets—or never noticed—may be important. Therefore these comments about serious West Coast photography in the nineteen fifties are offered only as my memory's jottings, with all its sins of omission and distortion, addressed to those who did not live through that decade as adults and would like some comparison with the present.

The times were certainly different. World War II retained a powerful hold on world consciousness, reinforced by the magazines already printing scenes from our military involvement in Korea. Nevertheless, the '50s saw the end of most wartime shortages, and the beginning of affluence. In 1950, television was just hitting stride; automobiles having an automatic transmission were a recent innovation; and 35mm cameras had no automatic focus, no automatic exposure, no built-in light meter, and no through-the-lens viewing, merely a rangefinder atop the camera which focused well but caused parallax problems.

The photographic industry was booming, approaching the one-billion-dollar sales mark, which it reached in 1956. Photography as a hobby was widespread. Camera clubs were numerous, but producing mostly mediocre work, full of S-curves and other outdated notions. Schools teaching photography were, by and large, trade schools, and there were no university art degrees with photography as a major subject. Only a handful of museums and universities exhibited photographs on a regular basis—most notably the San Francisco Museum of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The Metropolitan showed no photographs. The International Center of Photography did not exist. There were no photographic galleries as such, only an occasional forward-looking art gallery, although various short-lived attempts were made over the years to establish such a gallery. Willard Van Dyke and Ansel Adams had tried it in the San Francisco area in the early '30s. In the '50s, The Photographer's Gallery flourished (part-time) briefly in San

Francisco, and in New York Limelight opened successfully in Greenwich Village in 1954, a coffeehouse cum gallery with the coffee floating the photography.

In general, however, collectors of photography—and there were some—usually had to seek out the individual photographer to purchase his work directly. An Edward Weston 8x10 cost \$25.00. A signed, mass-produced 8x10 Ansel Adams print, purchased at Best's Studio in Yosemite cost, as I recall, \$15.00. A large, personally-printed Adams cost more, of course. Paul Strand charged several hundred dollars for his prints, but then it did not matter how many were sold: he did not need the income. (I remember visiting Strand in New York and longing for some of the prints he showed—but they were completely beyond my pocket-book. Actually, without private means it was impossible for the artist-photographer to survive except by a commercial supplement like teaching, portraiture, or fashion photography. Edward Weston, in his later years, came closest to attempting subsistence on creative work. He ate beans and nearly starved, for all his fame and the followers who purchased prints.)

In Hollywood the Hayes Office refused to allow the inside of a thigh to be shown in movies; in still photography, such was photography's identification with reality in the public mind that a museum might exhibit a nude statue, but not a photograph showing pubic hair. Thus censorship drew the line between art and obscenity. Edward Weston, you remember, had spent anxious moments debating whether one of his most famous nudes, seated in a doorway, could pass muster in this regard for his Museum of Modern Art retrospective in 1946.

That major exhibit of Weston's, which capped his lifetime struggle toward photography as art, exemplified how far the acceptance of photography seemed to have come since Stieglitz had given it such a shove in the right direction at the beginning of the century. But despite the medium's publicity and its growing constituency, and even while proclaiming that photography had arrived (as was often announced in the '50s) one sometimes noted the snail's pace of real progress, the signs of lip service rather than conviction, and could not but sometimes harbor a

sneaking sense of its still being considered a step-sister of the arts.

This had its compensations, especially for the newcomer like myself. It was a small world, comparatively, the world of creative photography; one had that cozy sense the Insider always has; and excitement; and a feeling of being on the cutting edge of the future, with converts to be made and an Insider's knowledge of things not yet spread to the man in the street.

When I look back, I think that we in the West could make in our heads in those days a sort of unconscious "creative photography" map of the United States not unlike, in spirit, Steinberg's famous map in which Manhattan looms huge and the rest of the country dwindles rapidly away into obscurity. Being photographers, we made our map of darkness punctuated by light. The West Coast was bathed in both the after-glow of Group f/64 (whose duration was so short and whose shadow so long) and the brilliant light—typical of our wide spaces—cast by the long fight for straight photography versus fuzz, kitsch, and Victorian morality. It was a battle that seemed to have been won, and whose best-known so-called "purist" practitioners in the West were at that time Edward Weston, Brett Weston, and Ansel Adams.

On the northern periphery of our map glowed the Aurora shooting from Chicago's Institute of Design, where Moholy Nagy had transplanted Bauhaus modernism, evolved photographically into the photogram. Arthur Siegel and Harry Callahan were then heading the staff. A lone spark showed in New Orleans in the surreal work of Clarence John Laughlin. And in the Southwest, two very different lights: Frederick Sommer quietly tending his own dada-surreal—but on the whole unclassifiable—bonfire, and Laura Gilpin, welcome in any Indian hogan. Except for a glitter of insight from Wright Morris, who was essentially a writer, the center and the south of the country had lain in darkness since the FSA days of the '30s.

The big klieg lights, of course, blazed from the East Coast and especially from the Big Apple (though the appellation had not yet been coined), where the famous names clustered in numbers and styles too diverse to list

except sketchily. Paul Strand, of course, and Charles Sheeler, heading the classicists. The prestigious picture magazines *Life* and *Look*, with their well-paid photo-journalists. Many of Roy Stryker's ex-FSA photographers, like Walker Evans. Fashion photographers like Irving Penn and Richard Avedon. And a host of other luminaries—Aaron Siskind, Ernst Haas, Arnold Newman, Eugene Smith, Berenice Abbott, Lisette Model, Lotte Jacobi, Barbara Morgan, Margaret Bourke-White. (From its inception, photography had nurtured and given recognition to a galaxy of talented women.)

Stieglitz was no longer living, but Edward Steichen, whose association with Stieglitz went back to the beginning of the century, took over the photography department at the Museum of Modern Art when the photographic historian Beaumont Newhall, who had founded the department before World War II, moved on to head the newly-created George Eastman House in Rochester. Beaumont and his wife Nancy Newhall provided an important link between East and West, whose photographic ideals often clashed. As historians, as authors, as curators (Nancy wrote many books and articles, and headed MOMA photography during Beaumont's World War II absence) they kept an objective judgment, and bridged the continental gap through friendships in both camps.

Overseas, we were particularly aware at that period of Bill Brandt in England, and on the continent, especially in France, of Atget, Cartier-Bresson, Boubat, Brassai, Doisneau, Izis, Lartigue, Kertesz (who was living in Paris at that time, I believe). The painter Man Ray's "Rayographs" and solarizations were familiar through reproduction, and in Mexico we knew of the work of Manuel Bravo. If these seem to be merely lists of currently famous photographers, remember that while some were famous, many were scarcely known in those days except to their photographic peers and admirers.

That was our world as I remember it, and my place in it is simply stated. I met Edward Weston in 1947, came to his studio-home in Carmel in the spring of 1948 to be his apprentice in photography, and knew him well until his death in 1958. In the early '50s, I was Ansel Adams' as-

## 50's / Thompson

sistant for the better part of a year, working in Ansel's studios in Yosemite or San Francisco, where he was dually based. A little later I married Edward's son Brett, who had spent the war years in the Signal Corps in New York but had now settled on the California coast near Edward. Brett was busy with his own photography, among other things producing two portfolios of original prints, one of delicate *White Sands* photographs, and one from Sundays spent on leave in an empty Manhattan, entitled *New York*. As the decade progressed, he gave a great deal of time and effort, and I assisted, toward several projects in aid to Edward, whose physical strength was gradually failing due to illness.

The first of these was Edward's *Fiftieth Anniversary* portfolio, handsomely cased in white in a limited edition of 100, printed by Brett in Edward's darkroom under Edward's direction. The other was a tremendous year-long project generously (and at the time anonymously) financed by Richard F. McGraw, a wealthy patron and friend of Edward's. Edward chose 800-plus of his "best" 8x10 negatives, from each of which a set of ten matching prints was made. One set was mounted and given to McGraw; one set was put unmounted into ringbound books, with appropriate numbering system, as a way of presenting the massive number of prints to prospective purchasers; and the remaining eight prints went unmounted into a special file from which they could be plucked for mounting and signing whenever sold. That was Dick McGraw's object: to allow Edward's income from sales of prints to continue when he could no longer reprint them. I can still see Edward day by day under the skylight at his table in the big room perched over the sea, holding up his thousands of negatives one-by-one to the brilliant light, and choosing without much hesitation which to include.

One cannot describe what those days were like without attempting to convey some sense of the effect of Edward's presence among us, an effect touching every photographer within range, and which Nancy Newhall called "the silent dominance of Weston's vision." This now-frail, aging man still radiated a glow we inexorably drew near to warm ourselves, reaching out our hands not only to his photography,

but to the example of his committed, single-pointed life, and the spirit that was inseparable from these. Brett loved him, he was Ansel's original inspiration and continuing friend, he deeply affected Minor White, and indeed changed the course of many lives, from Margrethe Mather through Willard Van Dyke to Wynn Bullock and myself.

At that time Minor was heading the photography department that Ansel had founded at the California School of Fine Arts in San Francisco, where Ansel's zone system and Minor's unfolding esthetic were taught (one of only two schools I can recall teaching photography as an art as well as craft, the other being the Art Institute in Chicago). Minor used to regularly bring his students down to Carmel to look at prints and soak up inspiration from the maestro, Edward, and to work out their cameras on near-by Point Lobos.

Minor lived just next door to Ansel's studio-home in San Francisco, in a big, comfortable Victorian house that had belonged to Ansel's parents, where I too stayed when Ansel was in town during the period I worked for him. Imogen Cunningham lived across town in the little white house on the steep hill, behind her garden, where she remained until her death. She was very busy with every kind of commercial work to earn her bread, with less time for the creation of her "own" works and a good deal less technical mastery in her printing than she later gained.

Across the Bay in Berkeley lived two photographers with diametrically opposed approaches to their medium: Dorothea Lange, well-known for her small-camera reportage, who was an old friend of Ansel's; and Donald Ross, a particular friend of Brett's and Edward's, at the time working in classic 8x10 view-camera style, between bouts of designing and building handsome homes of redwood and glass. Wynn Bullock came along to Carmel during that period, and was so deeply influenced by Edward's friendship and photographs that his own style (military ID photographs for a living, black and white photogram-like light experiments for himself) was revolutionized and his career, like others before him who had met Edward, took forever a different turn.

These were the major constellations on the West Coast,

clustered in the San Francisco-Carmel area, about whom orbited lesser-known photographers like myself, of varying degrees of fame and experience: Pirkle Jones, Ruth-Marion Baruch, Milton Halberstadt, Rose Mandel, William Heick, Charles Wong (like myself, one of the last two recipients of the generous Bender Award from the San Francisco Museum of Art, just before the endowment finally ran out of funds) Ruth Bernhard, Cedric Wright, Morley Baer, Max Yavno, to name a few as they come to mind. In southern California, William Garnett was flying and photographing out of Altadena. Edmund Teske was living and working in Los Angeles and Taliesen West, but he did not surface for many years, and we were unaware of him. A young Paul Caponigro was in San Francisco in those days, but did not come within my ken, since by accidental good luck I tended to be moving in the stratosphere among the bigger lights.

Ray Atekson was producing popular books of color landscapes of the West, but was taken by the above group to be a fine craftsman, not an artist. They tended not to take color photography itself seriously, and indeed it was only Edward Weston that I remember of the Western photographers who worked "for himself" in color, rather than for commercial purposes—and he was paid for it. Color was in wide use commercially, but there was a deeply-felt preference for the black and white print among these photographers. The palette in color was too uncontrollable, and the result too evanescent; and below this rationale lay the experienced excitement, and a sense of the uniqueness and removal from the literal world that was possible when using the grey scale.

Eastman Kodak Company, however, sent Edward, for promotional purposes, some 8x10 color positive film for testing with no strings attached—he was to photograph whatever pleased him. They included both their Kodachrome emulsion and an experimental one not yet on the market, which they had decided to name Ektachrome. Edward had fun with it, and must have made several dozen exposures over a period of about a year. The best were sent to Eastman, which used them in national advertising and has them still today. They will be on view soon, for

the first time in a generation, in an exhibition and book John Upton is presently preparing. I recall one transparency that depicted some brilliantly-painted buildings at the Monterey wharf, reflecting their colors in the waters of the bay, and my indignation when a local Sunday painter simply copied it in oils, straight from the Eastman ad, building for building, color for color, in the belief that he was committing a creative act.

Armed with the color film, Edward returned to some favorite subjects—landscapes, a shell taken to Point Lobos—and, as always, portraits of friends and family. He made a number of handy me, sending Eastman the pick of the crop and giving me the remainder—lesser versions but still very nice. One was an accidental double exposure (unheard of for Edward) showing a silvery weathered branch surrounded by blooming stonecrop, behind which my dreaming face showed up with a yellow velvet ribbon in its hair. Edward's reaction when it came back from the lab: a laugh, and then, "I couldn't have placed the elements better if I had been trying!" (It is interesting to note that these 8x10 transparencies he gave me were stored until recently, when I finally got them from their cool, dark resting place. Over the years the experimental Ektachromes had faded away to nothing; the Kodachromes might have been made yesterday.)

Technically the medium was changing as always—not to say advancing—in pursuit of sales. But in many areas the big companies had not yet achieved the expertise of today. For example, Edward Weston's insistence on contact prints rather than enlargements was based neither on whim nor habit. Roll film coatings were considerably denser than they are today, and consequently grain and sharpness were difficult to control. The problem of "grain" was frequently canvassed in technical articles in those days; today one scarcely sees the term. With the improvements of time, coupled to our changing attitudes, it has ceased to be an issue. At any rate, the tonal scale achieved by each method—enlargement or contact printing—could be handsome, but was quite distinctive. You could not then mistake an Ansel Adams print for a Weston.

Today we are so accustomed to beautiful original prints

and fine black and white reproductions that we forget how rare they used to be. Color reproduction was quite good in the '50s, but black and white reproduction was generally agreed to be in a sorry state, the best being gravures made in Europe, especially Switzerland. This suited the work of Paul Strand, whose original prints were softly voluptuous and velvety. And many of the photo-journalists scorned the original print as an end in itself. As that time letterpress was still the norm for black and white reproduction in this country, and in any case the gravure look did not suit the Western photographers, who needed black blacks, sharpness, and a long tonal scale on the sheen of a reflective surface, to match a type of original print that they themselves had inaugurated in the 1920s (Brett and Edward leading the way) with their switch to air-dried glossy bromide papers on a white rather than a toned base. By this time the need for top-notch reproduction of this type of print had built a real head of steam.

Ansel was busy doing something about this. As always he peripatetic and multi-faceted—creating books in collaboration with Nancy Newhall, such as *Fiat Lux*, an overview of the University of California; making large folding screens from his photographs on commission; donating time and photographs to the Sierra Club as a committed conservationist; writing and publishing his series of technical books on photography; testing Polaroid emulsions in the field as they were created by Dr. Land's laboratories in this new and landmark technology; teaching, as he still does, summer classes in Yosemite; and scooting about in his favorite "camera car," his trademark, a long black hearse. He had received two consecutive Guggenheim Awards for a project to photograph the other National Parks as he was already known for having photographed Yosemite.

Houghton/Mifflin Company, jointly with Ansel's wife Virginia Adams, published the results as *My Camera in Yosemite* and *My Camera in the National Parks*, both books printed under Ansel's direction in San Francisco. Working with the Walter J. Mann Company as engravers, he trained them in the following way. They were given two prints of each photograph: one perfect print, and one long-scale,

relatively flat-looking print that was not visually attractive, but clearly contained all the middle and low values. The latter was photographed in order to ensure that the plate registered every important shadow detail and middle tone.

Then, with the good print to hand as reference, one of the engravers (at considerable extra cost) worked on the plate under magnification, manually picking out those metal dots necessary to give the whites and high values an appearance when printed that approached the original. Once the engravers understood this unaccustomed visual requirement they took pride in the work, with a result that effectively stretched the grey scale, doing away with the usual increase in contrast (shortened scale) of ordinary half-tone reproduction. Then Ansel chose a coated paper stock of fine quality, and lastly had each print run a second time through the printing presses for varnishing before being ring-bound (to equalize the engraving costs) into the books. Thus Ansel, with his usual inventiveness, had devised the best-looking reproductions to that date. Now, with the laser-scanning process, it has been superseded; but it was a brilliant and important break-through in its day.

A third book was added to the series, Edward Weston's *My Camera On Point Lobos*, a beautiful though sometimes somber section of his work, without the same popular appeal as the Adams volumes. However, some geographic reference point was necessary in order to fit in with the "My Camera On . . ." concept. For that book, remaindered in its day but now reprinted from the original plates, Edward and Ansel generously entrusted to me—without any evidence I can recall that I could do it creditably—the job of writing the introduction and editing Edward's journals for inclusion, and I then saw it through the presses with Ansel as part of my work with him.

Two major events on the West Coast powerfully affected all of us interested in photography as an art form. The first was the creation, in 1952, of the magazine *Aperture*. It came about because no national medium of expression or cross-fertilization existed. Magazines like *U.S. Camera* and *Popular Photography* were chiefly concerned with the vast amateur market, and published "how-to" articles and what

we thought of as out-dated photographs. Tom Maloney's *U.S. Camera Annual* was a prestigious international compendium, hard-bound, of everything in straight photography from landscape to best news photos of the year. It was particularly helpful in publishing European photography which we would otherwise not have seen in this country, but its taste, as in "cute" animal photographs, was sometimes questionable. In 1951 the magazine *American Photography*, under the brave editorship of George B. Wright, tried to remedy this situation. Although it might publish articles with such titles as "Try Shooting Your Home Town Industries," and "Camera Club News," the same issue also featured long excerpts from a symposium held at the Museum of Modern Art on November 20, 1950, titled "What is Modern Photography?" Represented by quotation and reproductions were participants Margaret Bourke-White, Ben Shahn, Irving Penn, Wright Morris, Charles Sheeler, Homer Page, Aaron Siskind, Gjon Mili, Walker Evans, and Lisette Model.

Another issue was given over entirely to a "Mid-Century Review," which contained articles by—among others—Beaumont Newhall, Arthur Siegel, Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, and myself (containing the work of Edward Weston, Ansel Adams, and Paul Strand). Its reproductions represented the fifty-year gamut from Stieglitz, Kasebier, and Clarence White down through photographers like Morris Engel, John Szarkowski, and myself. It seemed that here at last was a serious, national photographic forum. It was the great white hope—until after two years it quietly folded.

In New York some activity still centered around the Photo League, which had formerly been both vital and highly politicized (like so many of our institutions in the '30s and '40s) but now, during these McCarthy years, was respectable and dying. Nevertheless it still provided some sort of forum for New York photographers—a place to meet, talk, learn, use a darkroom, stay out of the cold. In the West there was no equivalent.

I don't yet fully understand why everyone felt such an overwhelming need to discuss the aims and esthetics of photography at that moment. Of course to do so represented a long tradition in the other visual arts, and in

photography itself antedated even Stieglitz's *Camera Notes*, going back to the very inception of the medium in the nineteenth century. It is also true that a relatively small segment of the general public had any understanding of what the creative photographers of the day were all about. The photographers themselves, and their band of advocates, felt to some extent scattered and alone. But perhaps our particular need at that point sprang, at least in part, from the unexpressed but nagging uncertainty I mentioned, that continuing sense of the lack of full acceptance of the medium as an art form by the art world establishment. We needed to advertise ourselves a little, and to do a little reassuring whistling in the dark.

Gradually, out of all this (symptomatic) questioning of where photography stood and where it was going, a group coalesced around Ansel as the spark (and chief fundraiser), and *Aperture* was born. It was financed by regular subscription and by "sustaining" subscribers from all parts of the country, who in effect were underwriting the worthy new enterprise. All the writing, photography, and design work was for years entirely donated—no one was paid except the printers and engravers (who were, naturally, the J. Walter Mann Company) and even these sorts of fees were discounted by everyone except the post-office. The editorship devolved upon Minor because he was willing to do the considerable work involved. When he later moved to George Eastman House and then to MIT, *Aperture* by rights went with him, for it had really become his baby, and eventually with new financing it evolved into the form we know today, a book-like magazine into its eighty-some odd issues, and a major publisher of photographic art books in New York.

The first issue of the new quarterly, however, was a slim 6½x9½ in. volume on good semi-gloss paper stock, 16 pages long, dated merely "No. 1, 1952." The cover photograph was by Dorothea Lange, and those inside by Ansel, Minor, and Lisette Model, along with two lengthy articles by Minor and Nancy Newhall. The inside cover displayed a quotation from Ansel, "We Have Nothing to Lose But Our Photography."

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The facing page contained our manifesto, which read in part:

*Aperture* has been originated to communicate with serious photographers and creative people everywhere, whether professional, amateur, or student.

Most of the generating ideas in photography now spread through personal contact. Growth can be slow and hard when you are groping alone. . . .

*Aperture* is intended to be a mature journal in which photographers can talk straight to each other, discuss the problems that face photography as profession and art, share their experiences, comment on what goes on, describe the new potentials. We, who have founded this journal, invite others to use *Aperture* as a common ground for the advancement of photography.

Signed/

MINOR WHITE / DOROTHEA LANGE / NANCY NEWHALL /  
ANSEL ADAMS / BEAUMONT NEWHALL / BARBARA MORGAN /  
ERNEST LOUIE / MELTON FERRIS / DODY WARREN /

Later issues expanded to include more reproductions, reviews of exhibits and new books, and authors as diverse as James Thurber, Frank Lloyd Wright, Elizabeth Bowen, or a quotation from Okakura Kokuzo's *The Book of Tea*.

Volume 2, Number 4, which must have been published in 1954 (some of these early issues were not dated) contained a selection of photographs from *Perceptions*, a major regional photographic show that had, like *Aperture*, erupted from the creative ferment in the area. In a remarkable burst of trust, the San Francisco Museum of Art authorized the photographic community itself to choose and put on this exhibit. Nata Plaskowski and I were its official curators, with a lot of input and elbow grease from our peers, and Donald Ross's home in Berkeley was the chief staging area. We took for our motto a line from Blake: "Man is led to believe a lie when he sees not thro' the eye;" and we determined to permit the inclusion of any work of top quality from the area. Since the resulting participants ranged from the famous to the unknown, we sought some means to encourage the viewer to judge on merit, not preconception, and ended by decreeing that no print was to be signed. Beside it on the wall appeared a number, so that one could—it was hoped *after* viewing the print on its merits—refer to a list naming the photographer.

Of course there was no mistaking a large Adams landscape from across the room, and a close look would show you Wynn Bullock's pencilled signature showing through his erasure, but the idea was well received. The exhibit, which comprised over two hundred prints, was such a success that the Smithsonian Museum in Washington requested that we cut it in half, then circulated the smaller version for several years throughout the country.

*Perceptions* was important to the West. But it was small potatoes compared to the show already in preparation in the East, the show which one year later, in 1955, unblushingly billed itself as "the greatest photographic exhibition of all time—603 pictures from 68 countries—created by Edward Steichen for the Museum of Modern Art, New York." *The Family of Man* created a national and even international stir. Media hoopla filled the air; the multi-layered, multi-level presentation of the exhibit (which had required the services of an architect) bowled the viewer over; attendance by the general public as well as the photographic community was record-breaking; and the show's catalogue, with a prologue by Carl Sandburg and an introduction by Steichen, sold across the country like hot-cakes; in all, much like the Picasso exhibit of this 1980. It was true: never had such space or publicity attended a photographic show anywhere.

The fact was that the 603 pictures in *Family of Man* were not *from* 68 countries, they were *taken* in 68 countries; the actual photographers, preponderantly American, numbered 273, as compared to the 46 participating in *Perceptions*. But quite aside from their difference in prestige, size, and scope, the two exhibits were as widely separated by ideology as they were by the width of the continent. *Family of Man* was a theme show, depicting a kaleidoscope of people in various countries, their doings and relationships, grouped around topics such as Young Love, Family, Work, and above all Motherhood (although the presentation was too sophisticated to spell these out explicitly). It emphasized the general human condition, across all racial and national boundaries. This One World theme in that Cold War period was warming, and welcome to all, and was emphasized by the quotations used from

sources such as Thomas Jefferson ("I know no safe depository of the ultimate powers of society but the people themselves"); Sophocles, in the catalogue beside the body of a dead soldier ("Who is the slayer, who the victim? Speak."); or from the Charter of the United Nations, which was little more than ten years old and still the public repository of hopes and dreams, speaking of its faith in "the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small." In short, it was a handsome, gigantic, anti-war, anti-atom bomb, pro-Mom, humanitarian view of democracy and the family of man.

By contrast, the quotations on the walls at *Perceptions* had been, like the one from Blake, addressed not to social but to esthetic or general philosophical conceptions. Without being by any means an exhibit of rocks and landscapes—35mm photographs of personal interactions were well represented—it was nevertheless an exhibit of individual artists, whose participation was not predicated on a type of subject matter. Print placement on the walls was motivated by purely formal considerations, and displayed the photographer's personal virtuosity in size and print style on a series of modular panels of dark brown cork framed by black-stained redwood, designed by Donald Ross, against which the usually white-matted black and white photographs made a handsome, quiet statement.

Most of the photographs in *Family of Man* were printed by the museum itself, bleed-mounted to whatever size MOMA needed for the dazzling, often aerial, contemporary layout. The difference in spirit animating the two shows was plain. Inevitably some photographers felt that individual contributors to *Family of Man* had been demoted from artist to illustrator of a sermon, no matter how worthy a one. West Coast photographers were represented in *Family of Man*—Weston, Adams, Garnett, Bullock, among others—but not in large numbers. There was some feeling among them—expressed by those who were represented, and therefore not sour grapes—that Steichen's gargantuan conception had its roots in a certain Germanic sentimentality, and was perhaps not the most accurate or complete representation of photography as an art form for

display in our most prestigious museum of contemporary art.

I just happen to have—like a family portrait whipped from the pocket—a first-hand account of some of these opinions in an excerpt from my diary of May 2, 1956, describing a "hilarious evening" Brett and I spent with Donald and Estelle Ross in Berkeley, together with Ansel and a non-photographic couple, Blake and Mick Edwards. It illustrates our concerns at the time, and some of our pleasures, too.

Last night Ansel scattering kudos about Keith Munroe's iron crucifixion in chapel in Arizona, where he has recently been travelling. Much talk about art, photography, and themselves by Don and Ansel. Ansel wishing that Brett and Don would free themselves—he meant free their seeing—from the "rigid" technical approach they choose (view camera, no enlargement, sharp focus throughout). Don and Brett trying to explain that within that chosen framework there is infinity to be explored.

Blake's *mot* of the evening during talk of clever people who catch the art world eye and favor: "more act than art." Ansel much struck with this. Wants to know Blake's name again so he can give credit when repeating it. Much laughter. Steady consumption of Jim Beam. Back to art. Ansel pro John Marin. Don and Ansel pro Roualt, down on Picasso. Ansel down on Cartier-Bresson, pro Eugene Smith and Werner Bischof. Don down on Bischof. Everybody down on Steichen. Ansel's contention: "The Family of Man show could come from the United Nations, but shouldn't come from the Museum of Modern Art, thus indicating *this is photography, this is art.*" Says Steichen putting photography back ten years. Don says, "Ten years, hell. He's leaving photography exactly where he found it!"

By now everybody happy. All pile into Don's station wagon to drive Ansel home across the Bay. After a mere half block, car stops dead. Brett, who is driving, tries over and over to make it start. Motor keeps turning over, rrr-rrr-rrr. Don stands grinning in street, not telling Brett he knows it's out of gas. Ansel capering in street directing traffic past stalled vehicle, bowing each auto by. Blake spills gas over self and pavement, rushes back to house for dry undershirt, finds old green bathrobe instead, wears it on the drive to San Francisco, sitting on pile of earth intended for landscaping in rear of jammed station wagon. Music and cognac at Ansel's. Without any real practice for years, Ansel plays with marvelous feeling and remarkable control my favorite Bach upon request. Blake and Don end evening together back in Berkeley, after everyone else goes to bed, in metaphysical discussion.

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Looking back now, it seems to me those two exhibits powerfully exemplify the polarization of belief that was so prevalent among photographers then, and was expressed by the geographic as well as conceptual distances. On one side were ranged the photo-journalists and street photographers, mostly on the East Coast and in Europe, (though New York had its formalists, like Aaron Siskind or Lotte Jacobi, as Berkerley had its Dorothea Lange). They practiced a humanist reportage usually aimed at awakening the need for social change. Many of them felt that reproduction was the final end and aim of their work, rather than an original print, which they tended to look down upon as "too precious," leaving their own negatives to be processed and printed by the lab technicians at *Look and Life*. Consequently, they had little use for the meticulous fine prints of the Western classicists, which they found static and "too beautiful;" it was a gritty world out there. Cartier-Bresson, for example, did not care for Edward Weston's work (too cold—no people, he mistakenly believed), although Weston admired Bresson.

An example of this schism between the "documentarians" and the "purists" was the cool reception given in some quarters to Ansel's book during World War II about Manzanar, the internment camp into which Japanese-American citizens were thrust, often forfeiting their farms, in the first panics after Pearl Harbor. Ansel chose to stress not so much criticism of the cruel injustice done these citizens as the cheerful, orderly dignity with which they pitched in to make the best of their painful and wrongful circumstances. This positive rather than negative approach was not what was *de rigueur* in some circles of the Eastern Establishment.

The classicists, for their part, were caught up in textural and spacial considerations, and the tonal and sometimes abstract beauties, unique in all the history of art, that black and white photography was capable of producing. They were concerned not with injustice, but with aesthetics; attempting to fuse form and content into a meaningful whole outside of time. And this seemed to them closer to the uses of art than the momentary realism and historicity of reportage, which they observed sometimes smacked of propaganda.

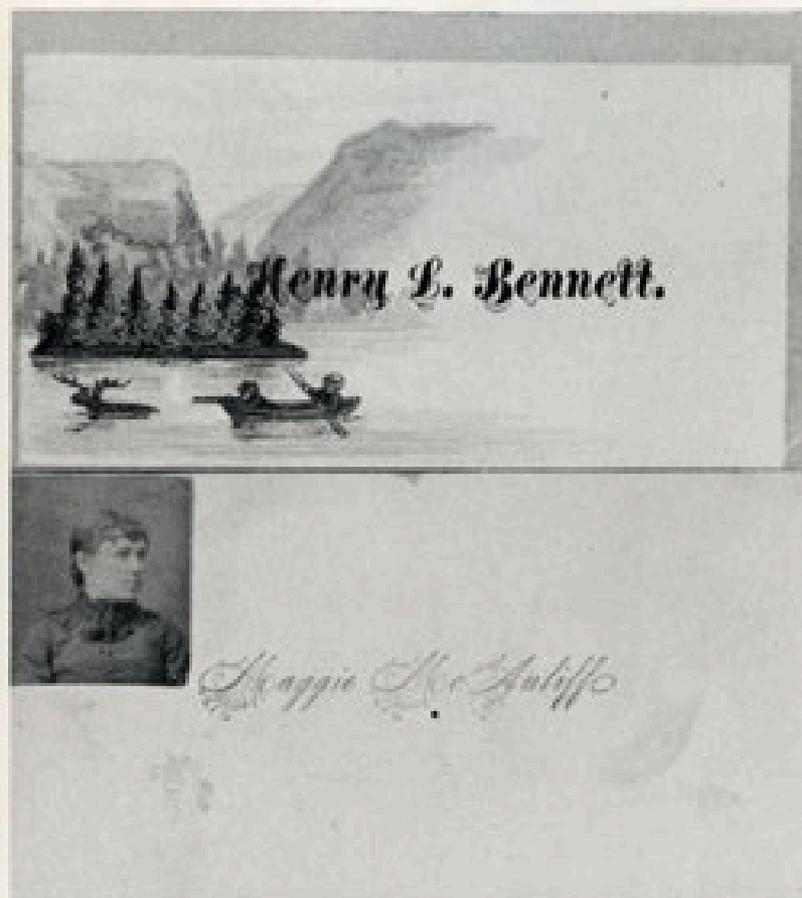
The third general group of serious photographers—what we might term the montage/surreal/photogram axis—whose approaches were, like the Westerners', rooted in art history, was by comparison small, as we perceived it in our imaginary map. This tripartite division, however, was nothing like the proliferating diversity of style we know today, our permissive and eclectic acceptance of all the old modes and a good many new ones, from bromoil, salt, or platinum prints to computer images and three-dimensional mixed-media montage. We live and let live, so to speak, as long as a photographer serves his style well. They, on the other hand, held their beliefs passionately and fought for them sometimes bitterly. Looking back on them today, we observe both halves of that schism as merely two aspects of a "straight" photography that, just as it seemed to reach its apogee, was, unbeknownst to its practitioners, about to be joined by entirely new sensibilities.

Time and art wait for no man. Robert Frank was already exhibiting in the 1950s; his photographs appeared in the *Family of Man*. Yet it is typical that I heard of him only later. But his work, though small-camera social realism, was of a different cast of mind from his "documentarist" American forbears. He was already widely travelled—Europe, South America—and he may have picked up some Gallic wit in France, since his photographs were more akin to those of Doisneau and Boubat than to the earnestness of most American reportage. His work was full of personal rather than social judgment, and was so free altogether of what we used to call social significance, and at times so anti-bourgeois, I would almost say anti-art; often so charged with irony toward the middle class rather than pity for a lower class; as to signal the next outlook, the next theme, the next era. Affluence, anomie, and existentialism were setting in. Largely unheeded by those still discussing "What is Photography?" a photographer had quietly started, once more, to redefine it for a new generation.

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## Photography and Greeting Cards in the 19th Century / Keith Davis



The carte-de-visite crew out of the traditional link between visiting cards and pictorial representations. The upper card, typical of the early and mid-19th century, shows a card imprinted with a stock illustration. The lower card reveals an attempt to personalize a plain visiting card with the addition of a small albumen portrait.

Photographs and greeting cards, both popular forms of 19th century communication, have an interesting number of similarities and parallels. Both catered to popular taste (falling, in many cases, into rigidly stylized conventions), and were used to fill the pages of Victorian albums in the craze for scrapbook ephemera and memorabilia. Both reflect complex social factors such as the rise of the middle class, with its ability to travel, and the Penny Postage, which greatly facilitated communication in the 19th century. And, broadly speaking, the success of both depended on the democratization and mechanization of art production, an idea central to idealistic, progressive Victorian society.

Greeting cards and photographs (the latter in the form of cartes-de-visite and cabinet cards) have a common ancestor in the long visual tradition of the visiting card. In the 15th century callers left playing cards with their names hand-written on the blank reverse. By the mid-18th century visiting cards were being printed with the name of the caller and decorative pictures of allegorical or topographic scenes.

The carte-de-visite, patented by Disderi in 1854, was originally intended to serve the same social function as the printed visiting card, with the added personal touch of the photographic portrait. A visiting card in the Hallmark Collections, with a small albumen print hand-pasted to its upper corner shows how natural this combination was. In addition, the greatly reduced price of carte-de-visite photographs made formal portraiture accessible to middle and lower classes for the first time. The logic and novelty of Disderi's concept caught public attention quickly, and astronomical numbers of cartes-de-visite were sold in the 1860s.<sup>1</sup> At that time a French writer commented that the craze for the "Disderian invention . . . has quite supplanted autograph mania, porcelain manias of varying degrees of absurdity which sweep Paris every winter."<sup>2</sup> Greeting cards and cartes-de-visite were perceived by 19th century observers as satisfying a similar popular demand; in the mid-1880s it was noted that "the growing distaste for Christmas cards has led to a generally increased demand for carte or Cabinet portraits to take their place."<sup>3</sup>

While the history of valentines is fairly long, the modern-day greeting card owes its origin to the first Christmas card, printed in 1843. On the initiative of Henry Cole, the artist John Calcutt Horsley (later a Royal Academician) created a design picturing family togetherness and goodwill toward the poor. The card's motto was "A Merry Christmas and A Happy New Year to You." Published under Cole's pseudonym at his "Felix Summerly's Home Treasury Office" by his friend and associate Joseph Cundall, the card was issued in an edition of about 1000, selling for one schilling.<sup>4</sup> (The second Christmas card, for years erroneously considered the first, was sent by Edward Bradley in 1845. Bradley's connection to the history of

## Greeting Cards / Davis

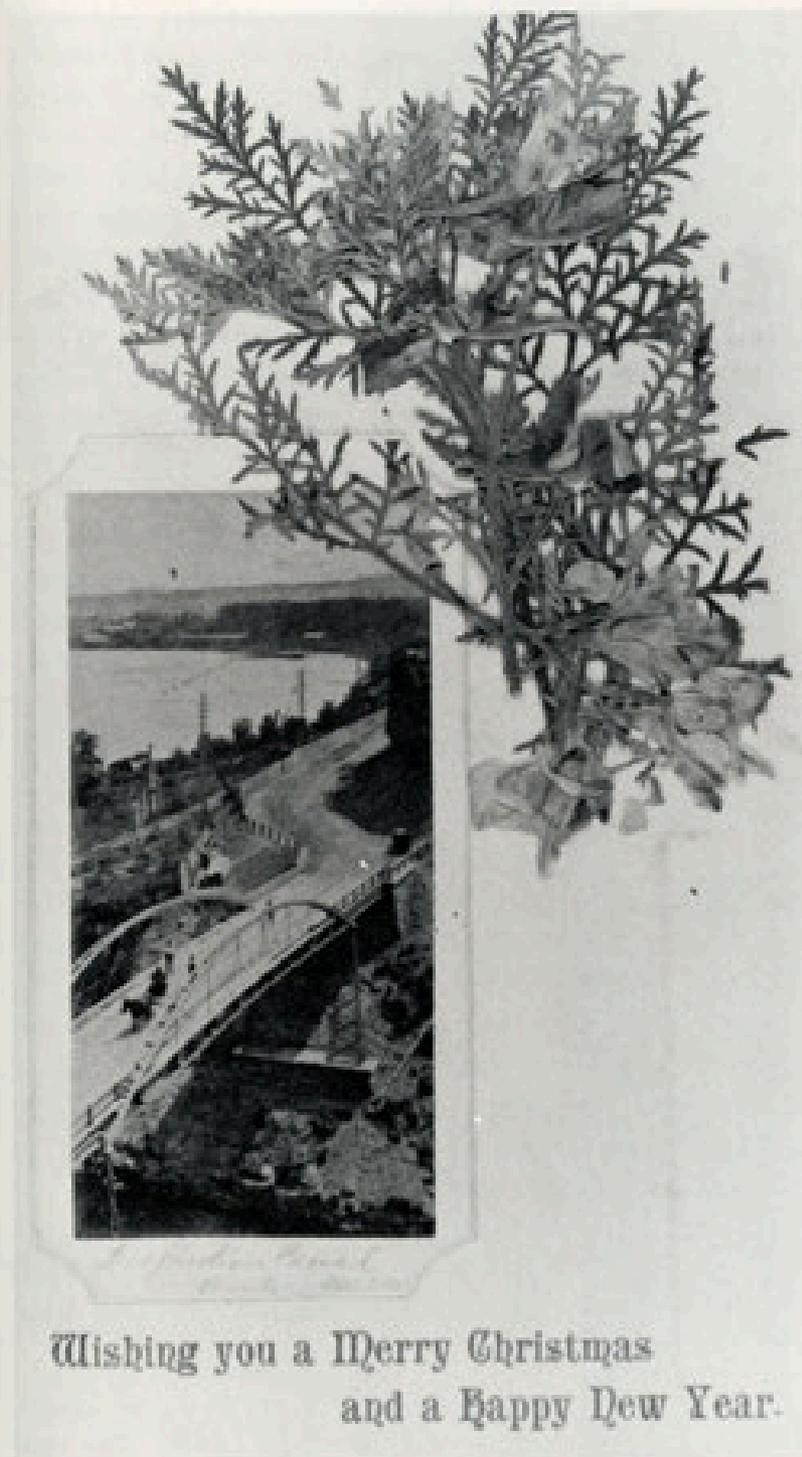
photography is clear; under the pen name Cuthbert Bede he wrote *Photographic Pleasures* (1855), a book satirizing the laborious manipulations of mid-century photography.)

While not personally involved in photography, Henry Cole is an important figure in the present discussion. His ideas were central to the conscious creation of Victorian society: a society which, in turn, embraced photography and greeting cards for many of the same reasons. Cole bristled with energy; he was full of ideas and had a genius for getting things done. Not surprisingly, the first Christmas card was merely one of many ideas generated by Cole in his busy life.

Henry Cole (1808-82) was the prototypical Victorian. He had broad tastes and talents: he was a painter, music critic, editor, author, and designer. His career was devoted to the liberal ideals of 19th century England: freedom of communication, the open exchange of ideas and, most importantly, the linkage of art and commerce to elevate the level of common taste. While working at the Post Office in 1838 Cole helped introduce Penny Postage, an idea that produced a revolution in communication (as well as providing the foundation for the greeting card industry to come.) He wrote and published, under his pseudonym Felix Summerly, a number of guides to national art collections, and a series of childrens books illustrated by the best contemporary artists. In 1845 the Society of Arts offered a prize for the design of a tea-service which was to combine everyday utility with fine aesthetic quality. Cole, who had "personally superintended the modelling and entire production of a tea-service to his own design, bearing in mind certain principles: plainness, cheapness, elegance, and beauty commensurate with cost,"<sup>6</sup> won the competition. The plain, white "Summerly tea service" was extremely popular, and was sold steadily for years by "Summerly's Art Manufactures." This competition for the design of a simple but elegant tea service resulted in several annual exhibitions of British industrial design, which in turn laid the groundwork for the great 1851 Crystal Palace international exposition. Cole was very important to the success of that spectacle, and credited by some (including himself) for the initial



Unusual card with photograph and dried plant. Publisher unknown, ca. 1880s.



Unusual card with photograph and dried plant. Publisher unknown, ca. 1880s.

idea itself. He was later general supervisor to the 1862 London Exhibition, and instigated the building of the Royal Albert Hall and the establishment of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

In theory the 1851 and 1862 Exhibitions stood for a concept Cole himself had embodied in a purer form several years earlier. In 1847 he began production of his "Art Manufactures,"

. . . a term of his own defining the union of fine arts with mechanical productions. For the word Art in its commoner, more general connotations seems to have come first into popular use about 1851, a convenient date for recording the beginnings of aesthetic mass-production. A year when art silk and art bindings, art notepaper and art lampshades, art leather, art cushions, art magazines and art writers began to come into their own . . . a year which saw the mass-realization of his earlier experiments.<sup>7</sup>

Cole and the jurors of the 1851 Exhibition generally deplored the pretentious, turgid ornamentation that proliferated at the Crystal Palace. His notion of "aesthetic mass-production," as shown in his simple tea-service, was closer to the truth-to-materials, form-follows-function ideas of the 20th century than the useless decoration seen at the Exhibition. However, the die had been cast, and the mass-production of "art objects" that were to become the ballast in most Victorian homes, began in earnest.

The mass-production of greeting cards and photographs occurred at the same time, both apparently dependent on similar technological advances and consumer demands. In 1862 Charles Goodall and Sons of London made the first truly mass-produced Christmas card. At precisely this time the first mass-produced photograph, the carte-de-visite, was rising toward its 1866 peak of popularity. In the following years the greeting card market grew tremendously, with the rise of large London firms such as Marcus Ward and Raphael Tuck. This period also saw the establishment of the photographic firms of George Washington Wilson, Francis Bedford, Francis Frith and James Valentine, which together mass-produced millions of topographic prints with assembly-line efficiency.

From the beginning the greeting card industry had been

## Greeting Cards / Davis

linked to photography by the activities of several important publishers. Joseph Cundall, the friend and associate of Henry Cole who printed the first Christmas card, was an art historian and publisher. He was also a photographer, and publisher of photographs, who had joined the Photographic Club of London in 1847 with such luminaries as Roger Fenton, Robert Hunt, and Frederick Scott Archer. Cundall, alongside P.H. Delamotte, photographed the dramatic re-opening of the enlarged Crystal Palace in 1854, and for a time collaborated with the young photographer Robert Howlett.

In addition the photographic firms of Braun (Geneva), James Valentine (Dundee) and Charles A. Wilson (London) all produced Christmas cards. Other publishers who specialized in photographic cards included J. Beagles and Co., William Luks, W. McKenzie and Co., W.A. Mansell, Portbury and Co., and S. Poulton (all of London), and Symonds and Co., of Portsmouth.

While photographic cards were never more than a small percentage of the total volume of published greeting cards, many photographers found a ready market for their wares. H. Baden Pritchard, in his book *About Photography and Photographers* (1883), included a chapter on the role of photography in the greeting card industry. He noted the success of the new field of photographic cards:

... photography ... is elbowing its way to the front among the little fine art productions that so often adorn festive cards ... In these there are not only beauty and grace, but there are life and truth besides, conferring an ineffable charm upon the pictures. All photographers of standing ... who have occupied themselves with this particular branch of the art, have simply "sold out" all they have produced, and in some cases are quite unable to respond to the call for more. . . .<sup>9</sup>

Pritchard noted that a "tasteful setting" was important to highlight the "fine, clear and pretty" photographs.<sup>10</sup> Most of these cards sold for one schilling apiece.

The subject matter of photographic cards varied from publisher to publisher. William Luks and Beagles and Co., both issued cards with still life photographs of wreaths, flowers, and stuffed birds. The firm of "P.O.F."

manufactured "curious photographic postcard Christmas cards of completely naked little girls sitting on flowering branches or talking to birds."<sup>11</sup> Marion and Co., issued, among others, cards with photographic reproductions of paintings. Symonds and Co., produced cards with photographs of seascapes and boating scenes. If advertising copy can be believed, some firms went to extraordinary lengths to achieve fine photographs. In 1884 the firm of Chas. Wilson of London stated that they had "gone to much expense in engaging the service of artist's models, actresses, and others in order to obtain photographs from the life." They also claimed to make "instantaneous photos" of birds.<sup>12</sup>

An 1883-84 catalog of Christmas and New Year cards by "W.A. Mansell and Co., Art Publishers, Photographer, etc." of London, contains considerable data on their photographic greeting cards.<sup>13</sup> The catalog's introduction states that, "in the Photographic Series . . . the interest is centered upon the charming landscape, the beautiful face, the lovely flowers, etc., the mottos duly appearing either at foot, or back, etc., but do not interfere with the value of the card, either as a valuable addition to a collection of Art Photographs or when framed as a decoration on the wall." A section entitled "Sweet Landscapes" lists "Woodland, Rustic, River, Lake and Sea Studies, beautifully photographed and printed, mounted upon superior gilt bevelled cards of various tints, with mottos printed in gold at foot. . . . Nearly all these photographs are vignettted." These series of "Landscape Gems" or "Quiet Nooks" cards ranged in size from 3 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 1 $\frac{7}{8}$ " to 6 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ " and were available either plain or handcolored. A dozen medium-sized prints wholesaled for 6 schillings plain and 12 schillings colored. Mansell's "Flower Subjects" were described as

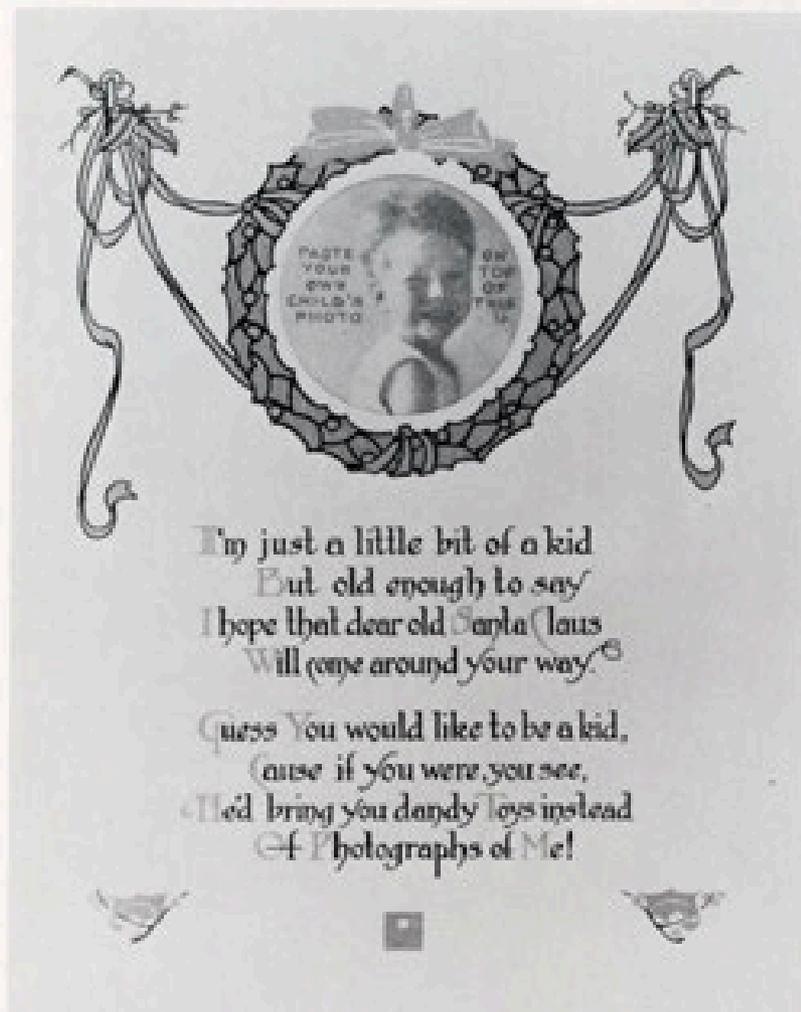
Tasteful groups of choice flowers, artificially arranged, cleverly photographed from nature, and splendidly printed. The plain copies make chaste cards, and those coloured by hand are prepared in a very superior manner.

The "Figure Subjects" were photographs of "clever drawings." In two cases the catalog credits photographers by name: A. Coke, for his "Moonlight Scenes," and Messrs



Ornate lace and fabric card with albumen photo-reproduction of art work; unknown publisher, ca. 1870s.

## Greeting Cards / Davis



Card by A.M. Davis Co., of Boston, 1911.



Very complex card with many attachments of cloth, lace, etc. Albumen print in center appears to be of Queen Victoria.

Symonds & Co., for their "Marine" and "Yachting" scenes.

The reason for the ubiquity of these quiet landscapes and floral arrangements was outlined in an article Louis Prang, the important American chromolithographer, wrote for an 1884 issue of *The Art Age*, a journal dedicated to "artistic printing."<sup>14</sup> The elements of successful Christmas cards were summarized as: "the human element," "the element that appeals to memory," "seasonableness" and "minor elements." The first category was characterized by "the embodiment of a universal fact—motherhood as characterized in the Madonna," and landscapes which "gain a double charm from the introduction of the human element either by figures or . . . by the curling smoke that indicates the hearth and home." The second category, essentially nostalgic, included floral pictures, since "every one has some association of joy or sorrow with the flowers." Under "Seasonableness" Prang noted that "a home scene is more popular than an angelic one and no card that represents medieval or foreign subjects is liked in the United States." The last category included "contrasts of color, dramatic suggestions, details which appeal to religious sentiment" which, however, must be subordinated to the primary human element.

Not surprisingly, these elements of composition and narrative correspond to the rules of "artistic" photography repeated by many authors in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The result was the rise of pictorial photography, which, when the weakest signs of vitality were replaced by compositional dogma, declined into camera club aesthetic. The mass-production of both greeting cards and photographs continued at a predictable level of popular taste. There are interesting exceptions to this mean of taste, however—Elihu Vedder and Thomas Moran both designed cards for Louis Prang. And stereographs, the clearest example of mass-marketed photographs at the turn of the century, are being rediscovered as a remarkable, albeit often rigidly stylized, mode of photographic vision. The legacy of Henry Cole's Christmas card and tea-service—aesthetic mass-production in the 20th century—is complex, problematic, and an integral facet of modern life.

## Notes

1. The figures given by Gernsheim in his *History of Photography* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969, p. 307) are staggering; at the height of the craze some 300-400 million cartes were produced annually in Britain alone.

2. Michael F. Braive, *The Photograph: A Social History* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), p. 67.

3. *The British Journal of Photography*, Jan. 14, 1886, p. 18. Quoted in Gernsheim, p. 303.

4. Of the original thousand, only a dozen of the "Cole-Horsley" cards are known to exist today; two of these are in the Hallmark Historical Collection, Kansas City.

5. Cuthbert Bede, *Photographic Pleasures* (London: T. McLean, 1855).

6. Yvonne French, *The Great Exhibition: 1851* (London: The Harvill Press, 1950), p. 15.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

8. Conversely, Louis Prang, the leading chromolithographer in America, published a series of "Artistic Reproductions of Photographs" which were intended for use in schools as educational aids. Subjects included major monuments such as the Roman Forum and Coliseum, the Egyptian Sphinx and Pyramids, and the Acropolis and Parthenon in Athens. "These fac-similes of photographs, unlike photographs, will not fade by exposure to light."

9. H. Baden Pritchard, *About Photography and Photographers* (New York: Scovill Manufacturing Company, 1883; reprinted by Arno Press, 1973), p. 74.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 75.

11. George Buday, *The History of the Christmas Card* (London: Rockliff, 1954), p. 268.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 282.

13. *Descriptive List of Christmas and New Year Cards, 1863-4* (London: W.A. Mansell and Co.). Collection of Hallmark Historical Collection, Kansas City.

14. *The Art Age*, Vol. 1, No. 9 (April 1884), p. 94.

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## Photography as Modern Art: The Influence of Nathan Lyons and John Szarkowski

Max Kozloff, in a 1964 review in *The Nation*, made the following statement about photography as art:

Before one can detect a responsiveness to aesthetic issues (as distinguished from a gifted eye) in the work of a photographer, it must be proved that he had not merely an awareness of the history of his craft but self-consciousness as an artist.<sup>1</sup>

The acceptance of photography as art is a rather new phenomenon. It has been largely due to the curatorial and critical work of Nathan Lyons and John Szarkowski that it is now considered as such by the museum-going public.

In a 1975 article published in the *New York Times Magazine*, the Museum of Modern Art's Director of Photography wrote:

Suddenly—within the past decade—a sizeable portion of the sophisticated public has come to regard photographs as repositories not only of dumb facts but of personal visions. Since Michelangelo, approximately, this is the touchstone that we have used to distinguish art from nonart.<sup>2</sup>

The exhibition of photography in art museums known for showing painting, drawing, and sculpture can be regarded as one index of the public's recent regard for photography as high art. During the 1960s and '70s, the decades of John Szarkowski's employment at the Museum of Modern Art, the number of photographic exhibitions at that museum increased dramatically. There were few photographic exhibitions during the 1930s and 1950s. During the 1940s, however, photographic shows averaged five a year. By the 1960s the museum mounted between five and eight photographic exhibits per year, reaching a peak of ten shows in 1970 and 1976.<sup>3</sup>

In 1958, during Edward Steichen's administration, the museum's records show a collection of 5800 prints. By 1964, two years after Szarkowski's hiring, the collection housed around 7000 photographs; by 1979 they held some 20,000 prints, along with rare books, letters and other documents pertaining to photography.<sup>4</sup>

A second measure of photography's acceptance as art is the teaching of photographic courses at colleges and universities. According to Szarkowski, between 1964 and 1967 the number of colleges teaching at least one course

in photography increased from 268 to 440. In a study done at the University of Illinois, it was found that the number of students studying cinematography and/or photography increased from 132 to 4,175 during the years 1966-70, an increase of more than three thousand percent.<sup>5</sup>

Before Nathan Lyons and John Szarkowski, the major figures in photography affiliated with museums were Beaumont Newhall, first at the Museum of Modern Art (1929-1946) and then at the George Eastman House (1948-1971), and Edward Steichen at MOMA (1947-1961). These were the major curators of contemporary photography, along with Hugh Edwards, Curator of Prints and Drawings at the Art Institute of Chicago from 1959 to 1970.

Both Newhall and Steichen conceived of photography as representing the world; they had an aesthetic which separated photography from modern art because photography, they felt, showed some higher truth, while modernism emphasized form as the only ideal. Photography for Newhall and Steichen was primarily subject-oriented; it was not until Lyons and Szarkowski that the rhetoric about photography placed it into the context of high art.

Newhall joined the staff of the Museum of Modern Art as a librarian. He was hired by the museum because as an art history graduate student at Harvard specializing in photographic history he had had part-time employment cataloging a professor's library. Alfred Barr, the museum's director, was interested in photography, and asked Newhall to mount exhibitions; Newhall's first project was a major historical survey in 1937<sup>6</sup> that included a catalogue titled *Photography: 1839 to 1937*. The catalogue was reissued in 1938 as *The History of Photography*, revised and reprinted in 1949, 1964, and again in 1971 (with the publication of the first paperback edition). The text, now a readable two-hundred page art historical textbook emphasizing the great masters of photography as well as the technical history of the medium, was published in Japanese in 1949 and French in 1964. In addition to this book, which is the major photographic history textbook in use in this country, a Newhall bibliography published in 1971 lists 632 entries from 1925 to 1971 (a goodly number are on cooking, as Newhall is a gourmet).<sup>7</sup> Newhall's writings

## on the Public's Acceptance of Photography as Fine Art / Candida Finkel

on photography have had a major impact on the photographic public.

According to Newhall, photographs have a special relationship to the world. Newhall said in 1956:

We do not expect the photograph to be in itself an object of beauty; rather it is a viewed experience, made concrete, to be enjoyed over and over. It brings us back to the world.<sup>8</sup>

While modern art distances the viewer from the world, from "the lived reality," photographs bring the viewer closer. In Newhall's terms, photography is better than any other medium at representing the world, what he calls "the direct use of the camera for what it can do best, and that is the revelation, interpretation, discovery of the world of man and nature."<sup>9</sup> Modernism, on the other hand, avoids man and nature, concerning itself with the dehumanized, the banal, the formal.

Newhall's understanding of formalism is not a modernist one. He calls formalistic photography

... a product of the restless search in the arts for the means of isolating and organizing form for its own sake . . . in which certain phenomena of the photographic process are exploited. . . . Subject is of no concern, and if indeed it exists, is often distorted beyond recognition. . . . The photograph is rarely considered for its own sake, but as a tool for vision.<sup>10</sup>

It is clear from Newhall's choice of terms that he does not approve of this kind of photography: "restless search," "isolating," "exploited," "distorted beyond recognition," and "a tool." Newhall's sense of form here is limited only to experimental pictures like photograms, photographs which use the negative as the final image, extremely high contrast pictures, etc. In such photographs, representation of the world is eliminated in favor of a kind of artiness which Newhall dislikes.

Edward Steichen was appointed Curator of Photography at MOMA in 1947. The essence of photography for Steichen was "the search for the truth." He thought that a series of photographs could "collectively communicate a significant human experience" as "mass communication." As one might expect, Steichen wrote that "the most promising and most vital area of photography is the field of

photojournalism."<sup>11</sup> He mounted such shows as "Road to Victory," "Power in the Pacific," "War Comes to the People," "Britain at War," "Image of Freedom," and "Two Years of War in England." The rhetorical impact of these titles suggests a highly political message; Steichen attempted to use photography to persuade people of important ideas. He realized by the 1950s that he had failed to do so through these war shows, so he decided to change the message:

I had presented war in all its grimness in three exhibitions. I had failed to accomplish my mission. I had not incited people into taking open and united action against war itself. . . . I came to the conclusion that I had been working from a negative approach, that what was needed was a positive statement on what a wonderful thing life was, how marvelous people were, and above all, how alike people were in all parts of the world.<sup>12</sup>

Steichen wished to create a mass audience for photography; the Museum of Modern Art, perhaps because it considered photography as a craft rather than an art, allowed him to try. He mounted a Christmas show one year in which prints were sold off the walls for ten to twenty-five dollars.<sup>13</sup> Christmas gifts are certainly not high art—the Museum had never had, and would never again have, another exhibition which sold prints. Other of Steichen's exhibits demonstrate his wish to appeal to all kinds of people, "the illiterate as well as the intelligentsia."<sup>14</sup> His first show at the museum for example, was a display of his hybrid delphiniums.<sup>15</sup>

The culmination of Steichen's attempt at convincing "the people" to attend photography shows as well as to love their fellows was "The Family of Man" exhibition in 1955, seen by more viewers than any other photographic exhibition anywhere in the world. It traveled for years to foreign countries, while the book, reprinted several times, has sold over four million copies. In Steichen's introduction to the book he says:

... the art of photography is a dynamic process of giving form to ideas and of explaining man to man. It was conceived as a mirror of the universal elements and emotions in the everydayness of life—as a mirror of the essential oneness of mankind throughout the world.<sup>16</sup>

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Steichen exhibited the kind of photographs that were, according to him, "concerned with man's dreams and aspirations and photographs of the flaming creative forces of love and truth and the corrosive evil inherent in the lie."<sup>17</sup>

A third important figure who preceded Lyons and Szarkowski was Minor White, who was an important influence in Rochester at the George Eastman House, where he began working in 1953, four years ahead of Lyons. White sought a transcendent meaning through photographs. His was a literary model of interpretation, based on his own peculiar blend of I.A. Richard's *Practical Criticism* and Evelyn Underhill's *Mysticism*.

White emphasized "three kinds of craftsmanship: a craftsmanship of technique, a craftsmanship of design, and a craftsmanship of feeling."<sup>18</sup> Newhall acknowledged only the first two; White emphasized the last. He looked for "the significance behind surfaces,"<sup>19</sup> and wished to widen the requirements of a good photograph to styles which may not have been found on the walls of museums:

Creative photographers include the portraitist, the creative photojournalist, the documentarian . . . and finally the man who quietly persists in using the camera as a way of communicating ecstasy. These last, dedicated to releasing dreams in us, invariably strain the definitions of creativeness. Yet they are the ones to whom the term specifically applies.<sup>20</sup>

The godterms (terms of the highest praise, to which all other terms are subordinate) for White are "creativeness," "dreams," and "ecstasy." Photographing for him was a communication of spirituality. There is no mention here of "detail." The artist does not necessarily need details about the world in order to release dreams in the audience. This kind of persuasion, a most powerful psychological one, is done through pathos (feelings) not logos (reason).

Nathan Lyons synthesized the two opposing viewpoints represented by Newhall and White. He used a dialectical approach to photography; in which the objective world and the expressive world merge into a photography which has a higher, but separate and independent, existence. In 1967 Lyons criticized the conception of photography as alternative reality. "Photography," he said "has repre-

sented for many a kind of substitute reality."<sup>21</sup> This word "substitute" is the very opposite of the authenticity which Newhall praised. A substitute is not as good as the thing it replaces.

For Lyons, use of the photograph as a detailed representation of the object is a simplistic concept.

The half-truth that the photographer is totally controlled by the subject overlooks the important and crucial aspect of the perceptual nature of the selective process involved. . . . Photography is primarily a means of retaining the impressions that an individual deems significant.<sup>22</sup>

"Impressions" suggests that the photographer is not addressing a mechanical or scientific recording situation but rather his feelings about or reactions to that world. An impression is not a document of details.

Lyons consistently attempted to change the way photographers and critics thought about photography in the 1950s. In a catalogue essay written in 1967 for *The Persistence of Vision*, he expressed his persuasive intent: "to challenge the postulate that the visual disposition of photographic images rests solely on its merits to picture experiences drawn directly from nature."<sup>23</sup> By the publication of his last catalogue in 1969, Lyons felt that he had succeeded, that photographers had changed their attitudes:

For many picture-makers, preconceptions about the photographic medium seem less significant at this time than they have in the past. These changes in visual attitudes do not necessarily suggest a greater degree of significance, but rather a shifting of terms needed to explore those enigmatic problems of assimilating the experience of an individual or a culture.<sup>24</sup>

If "substitute reality" is Lyons' devilterm, it is important to discover his godterms for photography. If he rejects Newhall's position, does he then accept White's? The title of his last Eastman House catalogue suggests an answer: *Vision and Expression*. The use of the conjunction gives equal weight to the two possibilities in photography: perception of the world (vision) plus symbol of the photographer's feeling state (expression). A key term for Lyons is "point of view," which implies a relationship between vision and expression. The picture does in fact record what the camera "sees," but its angle of vision is deter-

mined solely by what the photographer feels is important to select.

Lyons quotes a 1958 statement by photographer Aaron Siskind:

As the language or vocabulary of photography has been extended, the emphasis of meaning has shifted—shifted from what the world looks like to what we feel about the world and what we want the world to mean.<sup>25</sup>

The use of the terms "language," "vocabulary," and "meaning" suggest the rhetorical function of photographs. A photographer can use his art to persuade others to see new meanings or expressions in the world. Alternatively, he can persuade himself, making pictures as a symbolic act in which he changes the world in a private way.

In an essay published in the *Encyclopedia of Photography* in 1964, Lyons outlined two functions of photographs:

Thus photography is an articulate visual statement, which not only involves recognition of the original event, but also reveals the significance of an individual way of seeing. The photographer can communicate his experience in one of two ways—a literal visual statement on the basis of known and accepted symbols, or a non-literal visual statement developing along completely different lines and creating both new symbols and new types of correspondence.<sup>26</sup>

The "literal visual statement" refers to photographs which accurately record the details of the world. These are public images in that everyone can recognize a photograph of a tree when it is presented in a straightforward manner. The "non-literal visual statement" is a private symbol which communicates feeling or aesthetic concerns rather than information about the public world. These two kinds of photography, both of which have an important place for Lyons, work together in a dialectical process out of which can come some higher understanding or experiencing of the world.

He continues in the essay:

In a society whose symbols have lost meaning, the active use of photography as a language form could do much to re-establish meanings as well as help to develop new symbols.

The godterms here are "meaning," something critically important for post 1950s society, and "symbol," a positive value among artists and poets. Photography can thus serve a moral purpose. It can change the world for the better—rebirth through photography.

In 1960 Lyons published a suite of photographs in the company of two other artists (Syl Labrot and Walter Chappell). The book was called *Under the Sun*.<sup>27</sup> Each artist wrote a statement concerning the essential nature of photography. An analysis of Lyons' essay, his first major published statement (reprinted below), reveals his persuasive intent. It indicates the way in which he would like the art world to understand photography.

Lyons' essay in *Under the Sun* contains only four paragraphs, less than five hundred words. It begins with the following sentence: "The essential property of an image is that it is the fusion of intellect and emotion into a single reality." This concept of fusion is central to Lyons' argument. Fusion is the synthesis of two ideas into a dialectical truth. It also suggests the kind of energy released by nuclear fusion. It is the perfect blending of two substances or ideas so that they cannot be separated out. Each of the four paragraphs has its own term for "fusion," which is the central metaphor of the essay.

In the second paragraph, Lyons uses "juxtaposition," this time of "mind and the physical world" rather than of intellect and emotion, as in the first paragraph. He gives the reader two terms of a syllogism. Proposition one: image is the fusion of intellect and emotion. Proposition two: image is the juxtaposition of mind and the physical world. The conclusion is found in the third paragraph, where another term of mystical union is used:

Photography is, when used with regard for its inherent directness, a unique and exacting means of isolating inner realities found in correspondence with the physical world.

The last part of the syllogism is that the image (photograph) is the correspondence (fusion, juxtaposition) of inner realities (intellect and emotion) with the physical world. Correspondance suggests another unification of

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two separate concepts, Baudelaire's synesthesia in "Correspondences."

Three other terms are important to examine in the third paragraph: "inherent directness," "unique," and "exact-ing." All three words refer to photography's amazing ability to record detail and to resemble the external world of appearances. The idea that this characteristic is unique to photography recalls Newhall's attempt to distinguish photographs from paintings. Photographs are exact replicas in one sense: they are direct correspondences with objects in the world. Lyons, it is important to note, does not de-value the recording function of photography. Rather, he wishes to fuse the record of outer reality (public) with "inner realities" (private).

The key term in the fourth paragraph which is used to mean synthesis is "correlation."

The correlations between the camera and the functions of the eye have been repeatedly alluded to, but primarily in terms of mechanistic functions. There is, however, another area for consideration: the eye and the camera sees (sic) more than the mind knows."

Correlation is the mutual or reciprocal relation of two or more things, parts, functions, or concepts. Lyons outlines three pairs of reciprocal relations: the intellect and the emotions, the mind and the physical world, and, finally, inner realities and the physical world.

Lyons uses another significant metaphor for the fusion of thought, feeling, and the world. He recommends "sifting feeling through the strainer of intellect." This image implies that intellect has "holes" in it through which emotions might pass. The term "intellect" is repeated three times in the essay. It is clustered with other words like "idea," "mind" (occurring four times), "knowledge" (twice), and "thought." These words are used as mild devil terms. Lyons rhetoric holds that thought unfused with feeling and physical sensation is harmful.

Intellect, as an isolated consideration, with an unrelated concern for the interaction of our senses, represents a brittle human state.

At the end of the essay, Lyons states the above maxim:

"the eye and the camera see more than the mind knows." Knowing is limited; the mind perceives only part of what is required to make a good photograph.

A somewhat harmful fallout from this and other such maxims was a pervasive anti-intellectualism in the photographic community during the 1960s and early 1970s. The idea that art should be "felt" and "experienced" rather than talked about or interpreted was perhaps another extension of the sensitivity group and hippie mentality of the same time period. An inarticulate emotionalism was valued. Music was more important to the culture than books, handholding than discussions. Photographers felt that their pictures should not be discussed in words, as language was somehow a "brittle" and weak version of the esthetic experience. Lyons himself, with his suggestions that one photograph be used to "talk about" another, may have contributed to such anti-intellectualism, although he himself consistently recommended thoughtful readings in many disciplines. It was perhaps not until the publication of Susan Sontag's highly intellectual and critical book, *On Photography*, in 1977, that a serious dialogue was reinstated in the photographic community. She was from another discipline, that of literary criticism.

Instead of "knowledge," Lyons emphasized "understanding" in his essay. This term occurs more than any other—six times in four paragraphs. It represents the cluster of terms for a unified or fused mental experience.

There must be an active juxtaposition of mind and the physical world to affirm, challenge, or refute what is taken to be *understanding*. By sifting feeling through the strainer of intellect, we may grow to *understand* the thought of significant experience which remains. I believe in the knowledge that my senses supply my being and therefore, the virtual states inherent in the photographic situation enrich and challenge my *understanding* of life. (Author's italics).

Here again are the three key terms needed for the dialectical understanding: feeling, intellect, and senses. Three is the number for synthesis (thesis, antithesis, synthesis) as well as for syllogism. Lyons says we can understand thought itself, as well as experience.

Lyons clusters "understanding" with another godterm,

"imagination." This word, with its adjective "imaginative," occurs five times, twice in the following quotation:

The generative property inherent within interacting moments of *understanding* is the *imaginative* literature of the *mind*. The affirmation of *imaginative* association is the expression of Art. Art is an expression of *knowledge* (Author's italics).

Another syllogism occurs here. Understanding is the imagination of the mind. Imagination is the expression of Art. Art is the expression of knowledge. Or, put more simply: Understanding is imagination. Imagination is Art. Art is knowledge. The way to knowledge is only through imagination, which is a mystical position. The use of the capital A for Art (used twice) gives the reader a clear warning that a godterm is in use. Art is godly because it unites imagination and knowledge in the dialectical process. The kind of knowledge which can be arrived at through the understanding is both "generative" and "interacting" (alive) as opposed to the "brittle human state" (dead) which is the result of "intellect as an isolated consideration." This then is the primary opposition in the essay. Pure, dry intellect is opposed to the richer and more human understanding/imagination cluster.

It is through this synthesized kind of knowledge of the world and of the artist's soul that photography can become a means of rebirth. Lyons says that "photography may become an awakener of our sensibilities." If "the eye and the camera see more than the mind knows," the photographer and the viewer of photographs can learn to see more. "Understanding exists, it must be found," Lyons warns. We have become impure and insensitive through "the weight of too much thought" and "dissociated physical concerns." This is a common criticism of our time. Such responses to this brittle world as holistic medicine are attempts to re-unify the body, the mind, and the spirit. The advantage of photography over other holistic disciplines is that a permanent record of one's rebirth can be made. "Once recognized, . . . its primary characteristics can be recorded."

In the second half of his essay, Lyons discusses the Newhall approach to photography—the record of the real

world. The pictures which Lyons published in *Under the Sun* were called abstract photographs. What this term referred to was the fact that the viewer could not name the subject in the picture. In most cases, the photographer achieved a sense of abstraction by selecting only a certain portion of an object from such a close distance that the viewer is unable to recognize the whole from the part. Lyons' argument is that all photographs are abstractions. He contradicts the notion that photographs are more "real" than other kinds of pictures.

All photography which reveals existing states of matter is the result of abstraction. The essence or effect of a subject-matter situation is transferred to a two-dimensional surface. It is not the "thing in itself," recorded but a fixed representation of it.

Lyons takes his argument one step further. Not only does he label as abstractions those pictures commonly thought of as representational, but he calls his "abstract" photographs records of the real world.

Unidentifiable as the "subject matter" may seem, in terms of "real" associations, it does exist in the context of the physical world. It is here that it has been discovered, felt, and recorded.

He has said elsewhere that there is no such thing as an abstract photograph; something is always in front of the camera. By uniting abstract and realistic photographs—calling the "real" abstract and the "abstract" real—Lyons effects another kind of fusion. All photographs result from the photographer's selection or point of view. All result from the correlation of vision and expression. In that sense they are truth of the highest order—higher than records.

The visual experiences which I have included in this edition are in no way fictitious. . . . In a world composed of images, they point to the significance of vision as a primary sense of selective observation.

When Lyons says that his pictures are not fictitious, he means that they are symbolic truths. For Lyons, the act of synthesizing details of the world into Art is a symbolic action in the same way that poetry is a symbolic action. Lyons says in an essay he published about *Under the Sun*:

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The photographic medium is a means of bringing together into a single reality (the photograph or the photoprint) an objectified assimilation of a man's preoccupation. The bringing together is act (sic).<sup>28</sup>

Note that "reality" in this context is the Art itself, not the world that Art may refer to in greater or lesser detail. The words "bringing together" are the key terms for Lyons. His early writings on photography bring together the two important functions for photographs which were significant in the 1950s: photography as representation of the world's details and photography as symbolic expression of the photographer's feelings and sensations.

Lyons was able to effect changes in American photography by a number of agencies in addition to his photographs and essays. He published books and catalogues which were read across the country. He organized many traveling exhibitions of photographs according to his dialectical principles. These were seen at institutions as diverse as the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee; Eastern Kentucky University, the Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge; the York Historical Society in Philadelphia; and in Japan and other countries. Slide programs were purchased by many additional institutions in Canada, New Zealand, England, and all over the United States. As an example of the wide audience Lyons was able to communicate with, it is interesting to note the attendance figures from the George Eastman House for 1967. A total of 131,902 persons attended the museum that year. The slides, traveling shows, publications, and reached 1,999,200. Thus what Lyons called the "extension activities," those which took place outside the Eastman House, reached a larger audience than any other single institution in 1967. That year alone he tried to persuade 2,032,102 people to think of photographs not as individual masterpieces, not as documents of the world, but as records of a process. Each image was important as a symbolic action which resulted from the fusion of thought, feeling, and visual experience. As such, a photograph is both the most detailed description of the world ever known and a poem.

To pick a single essay written by John Szarkowski which

defines photography as fine art rather than documentation is more difficult than in Lyons' case, as Szarkowski has written many more essays and catalogue introductions than Lyons. Szarkowski's first major book, *The Photographer's Eye*, was published in 1966, and his most recent book, *Mirrors and Windows*, appeared in 1978, but the most effective statement of Szarkowski's aesthetic is found in the introduction to *William Eggleston's Guide*, published by the Museum of Modern Art in 1976.

The publication of this book, which was a \$12.95 hard-cover catalogue accompanying an exhibition of Eggleston's work at the Museum of Modern Art, was in itself a controversial act. It is the museum's only one-person catalogue on a little-known photographer. Four of the other five one-person photography books were on much more established photographers, while the fifth (*Animals*) was only a thin paperback priced at \$2.50. It is, furthermore, Szarkowski's only publication in color, although *Mirrors and Windows* does have a few color plates.

Many critics of photography would have been delighted that Szarkowski had decided to honor a new color photographer, except for the fact that Eggleston's work disturbed them. Hilton Kramer's review in the *New York Times* sums up critical response to the exhibition and book: he scornfully notes that Szarkowski calls Eggleston's work "perfect" in the final paragraph of his essay, and scoffs, "Perfect? Perfectly banal, perhaps. Perfectly boring, certainly." He continues:

The truth is, these pictures belong to the world of snapshot chic, to the post-Diane Arbus anti-formalist esthetic that has all but derailed Mr. Szarkowski's taste so far as contemporary photography is concerned.

What was shocking about Eggleston's work, as Kramer points out, was its apparent lack of artfulness. The pictures looked as if anyone could have made them; they looked like color slides of someone's not very interesting relatives. They seemed to have no meaning as a body of work nor any emphasis on style or form as it is traditionally understood in the arts. The photographs had neither photo-journalistic messages nor emotional/psychological

impact. They appeared unutterably ordinary. Why, critics mused, did Szarkowski break his tacit ban on color photography with this particular work?

What Szarkowski does so effectively in his introduction is to demonstrate exactly how such work fits into a modernist art context. Kramer's criticisms, of course, are those leveled at modern art in the 1950s and 60s—boring, banal. It is commonly said that anyone could have made those paint splotches, streaks, or diagonal lines, and that there is no social, moral, or emotional content in modern art. The very minimalism of modern art is an essential area of comparison to Eggleston. Like modern artists, he makes pictures out of less and less, pictures that are increasingly private.

In order for Szarkowski to reinforce his position that Eggleston's photography is modern art, he must persuade the reader of three points: (1) that photography is no mere device for recording subject matter; (2) that no two photographs are alike even though they are made by a machine; (3) that photographs are mysterious and magical despite their seeming ordinariness. Szarkowski's essay is a syllogism which demonstrates that photography's concerns are those of any modern art form. He makes the following argument: photography only *seems* to be about the world; photography is really about form. Since art is essentially concerned with form, photography is art. In the development of this argument, Szarkowski expands the first proposition in some detail when he speaks of the hermetic, private quality of Eggleston's work—his work isn't about the world (public issues) but about himself as artist in some magical way. Therefore, the pictures do not have meaning in a sense which can be expressed in language which is public. They are "irreducible."

Szarkowski's discussion of form allows him to discuss color at some length, making a major statement about its importance for contemporary photography. The new respect for color prints, greatly influenced by the Eggleston show, has been a major factor in the acceptance of photography by the art-buying public. Photographs may seem like "art" if they are in color, particularly if it is true that people buy art to decorate their walls—color prints are

more decorative than black and white ones. In order for color photographs to find acceptance in the art community, however, they must be dissociated from the snapshots done by legions of amateurs; high art must be an elitist activity. Szarkowski's essay accomplishes this dissociation.

Szarkowski begins his essay by persuading his reader that photography is not what that reader has always assumed it was, namely, a representation of people or places; rather, photography only *seems* to mirror real life. The argument is that Eggleston's pictures are "sharply incised, formally clear, fictive, and mysteriously purposeful," while the places are merely the "least pretentious of raw materials." Since the pictures are exciting ("ineffable dramatic possibilities"), and the places are ordinary, the reader can feel confident that the pictures do not simply mirror the place. If they did, Szarkowski suggests, sensitive art lovers would not need the pictures but should instead visit Memphis and the part of northern Mississippi where Eggleston shot his photographs.

Several major clusters of words in the first two paragraphs can be examined for their rhetorical impact. The words "art" and "artist" occur eight times, whereas in striking contrast, the word "photograph" occurs but once. When Szarkowski refers to passport pictures, he uses the word "photo" to suggest the offhand popular quality which would distinguish them from the more serious and longer word "photograph." The other word which Szarkowski uses to refer to the objects made by Eggleston is "pictures," a word which could refer to paintings, drawings, prints, or photographs.

The argument that pictures only *seem* to be like places is reinforced by four uses of the word "seem." In each case, "seem" is clustered with other words traditionally used for photography: "resemble," "document," "similar," and "passport photos." Szarkowski says: "photographs in this book might seem to resemble that part of the world and the life that is lived there"; "the picture is likely to seem a faithful document if we get to know it first and the unedited reality afterwards"; and "the people and places described here . . . would probably seem clearly

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similar to their pictures, and the stranger would assume that the pictures mirrored real life." In all three of these sentences the reader is being persuaded that the apparent resemblance between the pictures and unedited reality only seems to exist if we see the pictures first. Then the viewer finds that the place looks like what the pictures show the place to look like. The photograph is then rhetorical; it makes the viewer see something a certain way. The use of the word "stranger" here, which occurs twice in the first sentence of the second paragraph, suggests to the reader that only a stranger would think that Eggleston's photographs of Memphis and the real Memphis look alike. If, on the other hand, the viewer is not a stranger, the photograph "is likely to seem as unfamiliar and arbitrary as our own passport photos."

The passport photo is commonly thought of as describing the subject accurately, so accurately that governments all over the world accept it as proof of the bearer's identity. Yet Szarkowski knows that most subjects do not believe, or do not wish to believe, that the passport photo resembles them; they are often upset with the picture and put it away as quickly as possible. The picture is, in fact, unfamiliar to the viewer, although this unfamiliarity may be caused by the rigidity of the camera, setting, and subject during those few seconds allotted to make a government-related photograph. Whatever the true cause of the subject's disconcertment about the passport photo, Szarkowski uses that feeling to persuade the viewer that photographs cannot be trusted as mirrors of reality. If people do not feel their passport photos resemble them, they should not, to be fair, believe that Eggleston's pictures resemble Memphis.

What photographs are instead is art—something magical, mysterious, marvelous. In addition to the two uses of the word "stranger," the second paragraph uses "marvelous" (twice), "mysteriously purposeful," "ineffable," "dramatic," and "legerdemain." In contrast are the words for the place or for documents: "known well," "faithful," and "ordinary vernacular life." Szarkowski reuses these opposing clusters of words to contrast art with non-art near the close of the essay. He speaks of the subjects of

Eggleston's photographs as "fascinating," "startled and exhilarated," and "surrounded by spirits, not all of them benign." He contrasts these words with words more commonly used to describe America: "bland, synthetic smoothness," "vacant insentience," "extruded, stamped, and molded sameness," "irredeemable dullness." These two radically different types of adjectives are used to reinforce the point that the pictures and the place are different, only one is exciting and aesthetically charged.

Nevertheless, Szarkowski begins this essay with a mention of the place: "At this writing I have not yet visited Memphis or northern Mississippi"; in addition, "place" occurs three times in the first two paragraphs. What this mention of "place" enables him to do becomes quickly apparent: "the pictures reproduced here are about the photographer's home, about his *place*, in both important meanings of that word. One might say about his identity." The two meanings can be synthesized in this word "place" in a way which reflects the particular characteristic of photography; it records both a physical space and the mental space (identity) of the photographer. A photograph reveals place in the colloquial sense of the expression "hitting you where you live," when "where you live" means those ideas or things most important to you. It is in this sense that the title of *William Eggleston's Guide* must be understood. A guide reveals a place, tells the reader how to get along in that place. This book is a guide both to Memphis and northern Mississippi and to William Eggleston, who has an interior place for which his photographs act as maps—or at least as clues.

Like "place," another word traditionally associated with photography has been "subject." Before Szarkowski, it was most commonly thought that the photograph recorded the subject: in fact, it may be the subject which is interesting and the picture is merely a mechanical image of it. Szarkowski offers the same re-evaluation of such thinking as he does with the concept of "place": it isn't the place the photograph reveals, but the photograph itself, and in that photograph the subject is not found by the photographer but created by the photograph as art. "Whatever else a photograph may be about, it is inevitably about

photography, the container and the vehicle of all its meanings," says Szarkowski in the last paragraph of the introductory section of his essay.

Szarkowski makes the following statements about subject: "In this peculiar art, form and subject are defined simultaneously." The word "peculiar" is important because of the modernist imperative to find the essential particularities of each medium. "A photograph's subject is not its starting point but its destination." That is, a photographer does not, contrary to common opinion, find a subject and shoot it. Rather, the photograph itself is the subject; it is made, not found. Szarkowski continues: "The photographer cannot freely redispense the elements of his subject matter, as a painter can, to construct a picture that fits his prior conception of the subject. Instead he discovers his subject within the possibilities proposed by his medium. If the broad landscape refuses to compose itself economically within the viewfinder's rectangle, the photographer contrives a different but consonant subject, composed perhaps to two trees and a rock."

The words which cluster around "subject" are rhetorically effective choices such as "compose" (which appears twice), "redispense," "discovers" and "contrives." All these are terms which the viewer expects to see in connection with painting, drawing or sculpture; they are terms for making art. They serve to counteract earlier opinions about photography which expected the camera to mechanically slice out a piece of reality without alteration. Szarkowski persuades his reader that every time a picture is shot, there is a new subject never before seen. He even suggests that the reader perform an experiment to prove this point: "by clicking off a roll with the family Instamatic or Leica without moving from his chair: point the machine at random this way and that quickly and without thought. When the film is developed, every frame will define a subject different from any defined before." The subject, in other words, is what is found within the frame of the photograph. It is defined by the form of the photograph.

When Szarkowski says that every frame will be different in this experiment, he is counteracting another common

belief about photographs: that anyone could make or remake a given image. In fact, he continues, "the world now contains more photographs than bricks, and they are, astonishingly, all different. Even the most servile of photographers has not yet managed to duplicate an earlier work by a great and revered master." This is, of course, what is thought about painting and sculpture—that it cannot be successfully imitated because the touch of the master is completely idiosyncratic. Viewers of photography traditionally assumed that, as the artist's touch was removed by the use of machines, duplicates could be made. Here Szarkowski avers that even if the imitator had the great photograph before him/her, there is so much individuality in each photograph that no two would be alike. Such a statement, of course, increases the market value of photographs, single one-of-a-kind objects being worth more in terms of dollars and cents than multiples.

The emphasis upon "form" further places photography within the rhetoric of "art." Szarkowski states: "Form is perhaps the point of art." This is a rather traditional conception of art—that what separates art from the life which it imitates is the perfection of form, composition, or organization, which we do not find in the random motion of events and images in reality. Once Szarkowski assumes that the reader accepts form as the essential ingredient in art, he proceeds: "In photography, the pursuit of form has taken an unexpected course. In this peculiar art, form and subject are defined simultaneously. Even more than in the traditional arts the two are inextricably tangled. Indeed, they are probably the same thing." Here Szarkowski has it both ways: photography is like art because its goal is form, but it is different from the traditional arts by having an even more perfect unity of form and content. It is the same as the traditional arts only better. It is, of course, important that the differences between photography and the other arts be pointed out in keeping with the imperative towards purity of means of a given medium. But if photography is *too* different, the audience might not view it as high art. Szarkowski beautifully balances these two somewhat contradictory intentions.

The discussion of form prepares the way for the discus-

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sion of color. Having established that form and content are one in photography, Szarkowski goes on to say that in terms of color, form and content must also be one. He says that the failure of earlier color photographers was to ignore either form or content. "Most color photography, in short, has been either formless or pretty."

In the case of the formless picture, Szarkowski refers to what "might be described as black-and-white photographs made with color film, in which the problem of color is solved by inattention. The better photographs of the old *National Geographic* were often of this sort: no matter how cobalt the blue skies and how crimson the red shirts, the color in such pictures is extraneous—a failure of form." In this statement Szarkowski dissociates Eggleston's art photographs from commercial magazine pictures, an association which is damaging to the respect of the art community for color photography. What Szarkowski means is that the color is not essential to *National Geographic* pictures, and thus does not define the subject. The emphasis on these "formless" pictures is on content alone. If the viewer could mentally subtract the color, the photograph would have the same meaning (description), although, and this is a point Szarkowski ignores, a black-and-white photograph does not have the same emotional appeal as a color photograph. He ignores this point because he does not emphasize the emotion or expressive characteristics of art, as some theorists do. For example, he says that the difference between art and snapshots is "a matter of intelligence, imagination, intensity, precision, and coherence." This definition is tough, not romantic.

The second failure of earlier color photography was the "pretty" work which emphasized only form, ignoring content. These pictures are "photographs of beautiful colors in pleasing relationships. The nominal subject matter of these pictures is often the walls of old buildings, or the prows of sailboats reflected in rippled water. . . . It is their unhappy fate to remind us of something similar but better." Here Szarkowski dissociates Eggleston's pictures from the second type that the art community despises—"pretty" pictures that have no intellectual or artistic meanings.

The best kind of color photography, as the reader has been led by Szarkowski's argument to expect, is that in which form and subject matter are simultaneous, "as though the world itself existed in color, as though the blue and the sky were one thing." The "best" color pictures do not give us a sky which happens to be blue, or a beautiful blue which happens to be found in the sky, but a synthesis of the two, where to separate the color would be to destroy the meaning of the picture. "Reduced to monochrome," Szarkowski says, "Eggleston's designs would be in fact almost static, almost as blandly resolved as the patterns seen in kaleidoscopes, but they are perceived in color, where the wedge of purple necktie, or the red disk of the stoplight against the sky has a different compositional torque than its equivalent panchromatic gray, as well as a different meaning." The color changes the composition (form) and the meaning (subject).

Szarkowski, in his efforts to dissociate art color photography from sailboat pictures and the *National Geographic*, suggests a new source for the new pictures; he gives them a history which puts them into a modernist context. He uses mysterious language, which persuades the reader that the new kind of color pictures are inspired in the same magical and ultimately unknowable way that all art is inspired. He uses the words "clues" (twice) "leaps," "intuition," "labyrinthine," and "untraceable." But despite the mystery, Szarkowski is sure that the source for the best color work includes "modern painting, color movies and television, drugstore postcards, and the heterogeneous flood of imagery that has come from the modern magazine." The "modern magazine" is distinguished from "the old *National Geographic*" mentioned earlier, "modern" being a good term. What is important about these sources, in terms of placing photography in a modern art context, is the emphasis on vernacular imagery as source material for art. Modern painting is the first item on the list, but there are four more sources which imply that photography has incorporated modern art and gone one step further, perhaps four steps further. Again, Szarkowski shows photography to be the same as painting only better.

Szarkowski uses the emphasis on the vernacular arti-

fact and the apparent similarity of Eggleston's work to amateur Kodachrome slides and family albums for a double purpose. Not only does a relationship to the vernacular help to define modernism, but paradoxically, the more ordinary and commonplace the image, the more private and mysterious the art object becomes. Szarkowski calls Eggleston's work "local and private, even insular," hermetic as a family album, "a dairy," and "private and esoteric." "Hermetic" means both sealed up and alchemically transformed—a word suiting the magic/mystery imagery used elsewhere in the essay. There are Szarkowski's godterms in this essay; they are contrasted to words for pictures with large public or social meanings: "public and potentially exemplary," "public and general," and "carrier of symbolic freight." The choice of diction in the last example reveals Szarkowski's attitude towards such public pictures; he implies that the weight of symbolic meaning is too heavy for them. He describes "the adoption and adaptation of large public issues, social or philosophical, for private artistic ends" as "expressed in a style heavy with special effects: glints and shadows, dramatic simplicities, familiar symbols, and idiosyncratic technique." These adjectives are pejorative: again the emphasis on "heavy," "special effects" suggests insincerity, an application over the surface of work rather than part of it. These kinds of photographs are too familiar and simple, too ordinary. In contrast, Eggleston's work demonstrates an "uncompromisingly private experience." The use of the word "uncompromisingly" reaffirms Szarkowski's belief in the insincerity of art that speaks of social issues; by implication, social or public art compromises itself.

This view of art as essentially private is a modernist concept. Humankind finds it difficult, if not impossible, to speak to others and be understood. Therefore, the best the artist can do is make an authentic statement of his own private mind-state. What is paradoxical is that it is this same hermetic art which is based on commonplace models such as snapshots, magazines, postcards, and billboards. How can an art based on the vernacular also be local, private, and insular? The answer to this paradox is found in the changed context of the work. When post-

cards are found in drugstore racks, the customer understands their public meaning. When, however, a photograph with a resemblance to a postcard but with some more clearly structured form, or some special relationship to other photographs next to it, is seen in a museum, the viewer understands that the photograph is no longer about the place pictured in it. It is about that place and something more, the two meanings of place.

The second meaning of place is private to the individual artist; the viewer can never know exactly what the public and ubiquitous, even banal, image means as an expression of the artist's soul. "In truth," Szarkowski clarifies, "the people and places described here are not so sovereign as they seem, for they serve the role of subject matter. They serve Eggleston's interests." While they appear to be ordinary snapshots, they are linked to the artist in a way suggested by the pictures themselves but which cannot be put into words by the viewer.

In fact, artists cannot express the meaning of their pictures in words either, nor can curators. Szarkowski establishes this important point by giving two examples of readings, both of which he then undercuts. The first reading is by Eggleston himself, wherein and in answer to a question about the fact that the pictures "seemed to radiate from a central, circular core," he responds that the design was based on the Confederate flag. Szarkowski says about this answer, "The response was presumably improvised and unresponsive, of interest only as an illustration of the lengths artists sometimes go to frustrate rational analysis of their work, as though they fear it might prove an antidote to their magic." "Magic" recalls the previous mystical language and reinforces the concept that the meaning of art is unknowable in ordinary ways.

The second verbal description is done for a rhetorical purpose by Szarkowski himself. He sets up his description as a straw man, introducing it with the lines: "Attempting to translate these appearances into words is surely a fool's errand, in the pursuit of which no two fools would choose the same unsatisfactory words." Because the pictures are essentially personal, to interpret them is to distort. Szarkowski then gives a superb verbal analysis of

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one photograph in the *Guide*, using language which would surprise any other critic of Eggleston's work. Instead of using descriptive words for a photograph of a car parked on an empty street in late afternoon light, Szarkowski speaks of "civilization and wilderness," "freedom," "protest," "adventure," "opalescent dusk," and "atavistic." Szarkowski's description includes sound, color, and touch, all expansions of the primarily visual image. Szarkowski's words do in fact turn this picture into magic and enfold a rather banal picture with metaphor, a fine example of the way in which modern art rhetoric changes or even makes modern art.

Szarkowski then subtly denies his own reading: "the meanings of words and those of pictures are at best parallel, describing two lines of thought that do not meet; and if our concern is for the meanings in pictures, verbal descriptions are finally gratuitous." Szarkowski frames his verbal analysis with a general critique of verbal analyses in art, using a device somewhat similar to the rhetorical question or the judge's advice to the jury to disregard the words of the witness which have been found objectionable. The reason Szarkowski gives for the failure of verbal descriptions to do anything but "prompt others to look at the picture longer" is that private relationship between the picture and the artist's self: "those pictures have a visceral relation to his own self and his privileged knowledge . . . [they] belong to him by genetic right. Form matches not only content but intent."

Szarkowski expands this praise of the unknowable in magical terms. If verbal description is the devil term for the modernist art critic, words with nonrational and non-linear connotations become the god terms; mystery is good, magic even better. Szarkowski continues: "This suggests that the pictures reproduced here are no more interesting than the person who made them . . . which leads us away from the measurable relationships of art-historical science toward intuition, superstition, blood-knowledge, terror, and delight." "Measurable" and "science" were once the usual ways of understanding the world, as well as art, but with modernism logic fell away and the unknowable took up residence. The more obvious

the pictures seem, according to modernist precepts, the more that fact reveals the viewer's insensitivity. The best viewers should be "startled and exhilarated," they should be "suggestable." "A picture is after all only a picture, a concrete kind of fiction, not to be admitted as hard evidence or as the quantifiable data of social scientists." "Evidence," "quantifiable," and "data" are more devil terms for science as opposed to art. Science, it must be recalled, was considered photography's chief function for many decades.

In addition to emphasizing the mysteries for the initiated, Szarkowski's contrast between data and art reinforces the distinction he made at the beginning of his essay, between *seeming* to resemble a place and actually resembling that place. In order for photography to be considered art, it must not be considered science. If it merely recorded the world, then, as earlier opinions concerning photography would have it, the viewer might just as well have the world. Szarkowski thus concludes his essay the way it began. "Eggleston's pictures are patterns of random facts in the service of one imagination—not the real world." The act of selecting the random facts is an art of artistic imagination which has nothing to do with a scientifically accurate description of the way the world looks. In the final paragraph Szarkowski calls the pictures "perfect: irreducible surrogates for the experience they pretend to record." The word "pretend" recalls the repeated use of the word "seem" in the first two paragraphs. Szarkowski concludes that these photographs constitute "a paradigm of a private view, a view one would have thought ineffable, described here with clarity, fullness and elegance." "Ineffable" is also used in the second paragraph ("ineffable dramatic possibilities") a conclusion that emphasizes the failure of speech to describe the photographs, which means, of course, that they are private.

What Szarkowski does speak about is photography as a modernist art. He is an art theorist, not a reviewer. Like this essay on William Eggleston, each of Szarkowski's writings is rhetorical rather than descriptive. He does not tell the reader what the pictures mean, except in the kind of paragraphs in this essay surrounded by disclaimers.

Rather he persuades the reader that the best photographs are not what (s)he thought they were; he places them in a new context.

While Lyons views photographs as a major addition to the modes of artistic human communication, Szarkowski views them as meaningless in the modernist sense: they are art objects which cannot be "reduced" to language, to feeling, to understanding, or even to documentation of the world. Lyons is the great photographic humanist who, with his emphasis on understanding, avoids the sentimental problems of Steichen and White. Szarkowski is the scientific modernist, emphasizing a cool, detached, and private photography which can be appreciated by a very few and which requires a sophisticated familiarity with the medium.

#### Notes

1. Max Kozloff, "Critical and Historical Problems of Photography," *Renderings: Critical Essays on a Century of Modern Art* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1967), p. 287.
2. John Szarkowski, "A Different Kind of Art," *New York Times Magazine*, April 13, 1975, p. 17.
3. Information on exhibition listings, curatorial staff, lectures, and numbers of prints is prepared and distributed in xerox form by the public relations department of the museum.
4. A. D. Coleman, "The Impact on Photography: No Other Institution Even Comes Close," *ARTnews*, 78:8 (October 1979), p. 103.
5. John Szarkowski, *Mirrors and Windows* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1978), p. 15.
6. The first show of photographs at MOMA was Walker Evans' "Photographs of Nineteenth Century Houses." Newhall was not involved in that exhibition; it was organized by Dabney Mabrey and Lincoln Kirstein and was much more of a modernist statement than Newhall's shows.
7. Van Deren Coke, ed., *One Hundred Years of Photographic History: Essays in Honor of Beaumont Newhall* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1975).
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10. *Ibid.*, p. 197.
11. Edward Steichen, *A Life in Photography* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1963).
12. *Ibid.*
13. Sally Stein, *Harry Callahan: Works in Color, the Years*

1946-1978 (Phoenix, Ariz.: Center for Creative Photography, 1980), p. 25.

14. *Op cit.*
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17. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
18. Minor White, "Ten Books for Creative Photographers," *Aperture*, vol. 4, no. 2, 1956, p. 58.
19. Minor White, "Aaron Siskind Photographs," *Aperture*, vol. 7, no. 3, 1969, p. 123.
20. Minor White, "Ten Books for the Creative Photographer," *op. cit.*
21. Nathan Lyons, *Photography in the Twentieth Century* (Rochester, N.Y.: George Eastman House, 1967).
22. *Ibid.*
23. Nathan Lyons, *The Persistence of Vision* (Rochester, N.Y.: George Eastman House, 1967).
24. Nathan Lyons, *Vision and Expression* (Rochester, N.Y.: George Eastman House, 1969).
25. Nathan Lyons, *Aaron Siskind, Photographer* (Rochester, N.Y.: George Eastman House, 1965).
26. Nathan Lyons, "Photographic Books," *The Encyclopedia of Photography*, vol. 14, 1964, p. 2681.
27. Nathan Lyons, Syl Labrot, and Walter Chappell, *Under the Sun: The Abstract Art of Camera Vision* (New York: George Braziller, 1969).
28. Nathan Lyons, "To the Spirit of a Time: In Consideration," *Aperture*, vol. 8, no. 8, p. 121.

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- The Idea of Louis Sullivan* (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1956).
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- "Photographing Architecture," *Art in America*, 47:2 (Summer 1959), pp. 84-89.
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#### **Essay by Nathan Lyons in *Under the Sun***

The essential property of an image is that it is the fusion of intellect and emotion into a single reality. Intellect, as an isolate consideration, with an unrelated concern for the interaction of our senses, represents a brittle human state. The weight of too much thought has a way of disturbing, not only the balance of the individual, but any concurrent objectification. A similar condition may arise as the result of disassociated physical concerns. I do not think that it is a question of man's frustration in terms of "absolutes," but rather, what is important, is the degree of significance in his "point of departure." Degree is the condition of time past, present, and future. It is also the condition of man. What it is that we "understand" is not a question of original idea, but discovery. Understanding exists, it must be found. Once recognized (always in terms of degree) its primary characteristics can be recorded. The generative property inherent within interacting moments of understanding is the imaginative literature of the mind. The affirmation of imaginative association is the expression of Art. Art is an expression of knowledge.

In the literature of the mind, imagination can become just a word. The presence and structure of imaginative relationship is only the occurrence of a point-of-entry for experience. There must be an active juxtaposition of mind and the physical world to affirm, challenge, or refute what is taken to be understanding. By sifting feeling through the strainer of intellect we may grow to understand the thought of significant experience which remains. I believe in the knowledge that my senses supply my being and therefore, the

virtual states inherent in the photographic situation enrich and challenge my understanding of life.

Photography is, when used with regard for its inherent directness, a unique and exacting means of isolating inner realities found in correspondence with the physical world. This is an important distinction; for the employment of camera vision to an area which is commonly labeled "unidentifiable" or "abstract" is a misnomer. All photography which reveals existing states of matter is the result of abstraction. The essence or effect of a subject-matter-situation is transferred to a two dimensional surface. It is not the "thing in itself" recorded but a fixed representation of it. Unidentifiable as the "subject matter" may seem, in terms of "real" associations, it does exist in the context of the physical world. It is here that it has been discovered, felt, and recorded. The photographic process not only records preoccupation in the exercise of plastic or creative sensibility, but the photograph may become an awakener of our sensibilities.

The visual experiences which I have included in this edition, are in no way fictitious. They are affirmations of imaginative preoccupation. In a world composed of images, they point to the significance of vision as a primary sense of selective observation. The correlations between the camera and the functions of the eye have been repeatedly alluded to, but primarily in terms of mechanistic functions. There is however, another area for consideration; the eye and the camera sees more than the mind knows.

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## Steichen's *Road to Victory* / Christopher Phillips

On May 20, 1942, some six months after the attack on Pearl Harbor, a disparate company gathered for a private dinner in the penthouse of the Museum of Modern Art. Those greeting David Hunter McAlpin, trustee chairman of the museum's committee on photography and the evening's host, included Mr. and Mrs. Roy Stryker, publisher Conde Nast, Mrs. Simon Guggenheim, and the 78-year-old Alfred Stieglitz. The dinner marked the opening of a spectacular photographic exhibition, *Road to Victory*, and was held to honor its two principal organizers: Lt. Commander Edward Steichen (newly-commissioned by the Navy), who had selected the photographs, and his brother-in-law, the poet Carl Sandburg, who had composed the accompanying text.<sup>1</sup>

The first visitors to reach the exhibition itself discovered that all of the interior walls of the museum's second-floor galleries had been removed by Herbert Bayer, the emigre artist/designer who had supervised the installation, to make way for Steichen's giant "procession of photographs of the nation at war." Through a sequence of heroically enlarged documentary images, gleaned for the most part from government files, a dramatic panorama of the American land and people was unfurled. As visitors moved around the exhibition on a predetermined path, many seemed surprised at the intensity of their own emotional reaction, as did the *New York Times'* art reviewer Edwin Alden Jewell. "It would not at all amaze me to see people, even people who have thought themselves very worldly, non-chalant, or hard-boiled, leave this exhibition with brimming eyes."<sup>2</sup>

In New York, the critical response was enthusiastic from all quarters. Ralph Steiner, writing in *PM*, observed with some interest: "The photographs are displayed by Bayer as photographs have never been displayed before. They don't sit quietly against the wall. They jut out from the walls and up from the floors to assault your vision. . . ." <sup>3</sup> On the left, the *Daily Worker* proclaimed: "It is the most sensational exhibit of photographs that ever was shown in these parts. . . . What a country to fight for!" <sup>4</sup> During the summer of 1942 more than 80,000 people made their way to MOMA to see *Road to Victory*, and it was quickly scheduled to

proceed to Chicago, St. Louis, Portland, and Rochester, N.Y., while smaller "replicas" were shipped to Britain, South America, and the Pacific. Asked by *Newsweek* to account for the overwhelming popular success of the exhibition, Steichen replied: "It shows the good common horse sense of the common people. It will give them something to base their faith upon."<sup>5</sup>

Even if it served only to fix more precisely the point at which American documentary photography was mobilized behind the national war effort, *Road to Victory* would reward closer attention. It may be more provocative, however, to consider the way in which *Road to Victory* predicated a certain form of museum exhibition, one which was to become Steichen's trademark during his 15 years as director of MOMA's Department of Photography, culminating in 1955 in *The Family of Man*. In photographic circles, the latter has been widely criticized for any number of reasons, but never seriously analyzed in terms of the tradition from which it arose. The notion of the exhibition-as-social-essay stands as a particularly interesting episode in photography's bumpy road to acceptance as a museum art, and what follows is an attempt to briefly sketch the combination of events and personalities which, in 1942, contributed more than a little to its distinctive form.

In September, 1941, before the United States had officially entered the war, David McAlpin recruited Steichen to organize a large photographic exhibition directed to the theme of national defense.<sup>6</sup> Although it can be seen in retrospect to have marked a decisive point in the history of MOMA's Department of Photography, this was unclear at the time. The department had been established the previous year; Beaumont Newhall (who earlier had prepared the groundbreaking exhibition, *Photography: 1839-1937*) was named curator, and McAlpin, a wealthy stockbroker and collector, became chairman of the committee set up to guide the department. Newhall's interest in photography reflected his training as an art historian, and centered on the individual photographer as creative artist.

Sixty Photographs: A Survey of Camera Esthetics, the first exhibition presented by Newhall and Ansel Adams (who had been brought in to act as the department's vice-chairman), examined original prints by Stieglitz, Strand, Atget, and Moholy-Nagy, among others, and confidently set photography alongside the traditional fine arts.<sup>7</sup>

The exhibition which McAlpin, in the fall of 1941, proposed that Steichen undertake seemed to have less to do with the program of the new department than with the series of defense-related exhibitions which the museum had sponsored since the outbreak of the European war in September 1939. In 1940, *War Comes to the People: A Story Written with the Lens* presented scenes from the opening of the conflict. *Britain at War*, the next year, showed paintings and photographs from that embattled nation. *Image of Freedom*, featuring photographs selected by Newhall and MOMA's director Alfred H. Barr, Jr., aimed more directly at shoring up the American spirit in disheartening times. The exhibit which Steichen was called upon to organize was seen as an extension in the same line.

Steichen, then 61, had closed his New York studio in 1938 after a long reign as the city's most celebrated portraitist and fashion photographer. The project which McAlpin proposed offered him the chance to act upon several interests which had occupied his attention since that time. Spurred, perhaps, by the success of his brother-in-law Sandburg's epic poem "The People Yes" in 1936, Steichen had begun to turn over in his mind the idea of an immense "portrait of America" executed in photomurals, a format he had employed with great success in the early 1930s. Wayne Miller, who served as Steichen's assistant on *The Family of Man*, has recalled:

He told me that before the war, in the late Thirties he had the idea of doing a massive, big show on America, and it was going to be the spirit of America, the face of America, and so forth. He hoped to use the Grand Central Station. . . . He wanted to use the walls of that and have pictures from floor to ceiling; I guess it must be five to six stories high inside. . . .<sup>8</sup>

There were to be panoramic murals of the American land, cities, and factories, leading into a series of smaller scenes

of everyday life in homes, offices, streets, and hospitals. Winding throughout would be a decorative motif of tassled, growing corn.<sup>9</sup>

Although it's unclear how many of the images Steichen intended to produce himself, by the spring of 1938 he had discovered that one group of photographers had for several years been chronicling an unsuspected face of contemporary America. In April 1938, New York's Grand Central Palace played host to the International Photographic Exposition, the largest display of photographs that the city had ever seen under one roof. Organized by Willard Morgan, the event featured more than 3,000 pictures gathered from the far-flung corners of the photographic world: pictorial work from camera clubs; news, theatrical, and industrial photography; historical images by Brady, Hill and Adamson, Daguerre, and Atget; new color processes from Europe and America; and a large number of photomurals.<sup>10</sup> But the most controversial display was the section of 70 photographs submitted by the historical section of the Farm Security Association. These images from the heart of the Depression—by Lange, Lee, Rothstein, and Evans, among others—created a minor sensation. Roy Stryker, chief of the FSA's historical section, wrote to a friend: "It is not exaggerating a bit to say that we scooped the show. Even Steichen went to the show in a perfunctory manner and got a surprise when he ran into our section."<sup>11</sup>

Steichen was, indeed, so struck by the FSA photographs that he had a substantial number of them reproduced later that year in *U.S. Camera Annual*, a popular round-up of the year's best photography for which he served as one-man jury. Introducing the pictures in a short essay, he drew an important distinction between two kinds of photographic documents, distinguishing those which are purely informational from those which he called "good storytelling pictures." The FSA photographs fell into the latter group; they were human documents, that "told stories, and told them with such simple and blunt directness that they made many a citizen wince."<sup>12</sup> He doubted that this combination of visual and emotional impact in itself constituted propaganda. "Pictures in themselves are very rarely propaganda. It is the use of pictures that makes them

## Victory / Phillips

propaganda. These prints are obviously charged with human dynamite and the dynamite must be set off to become propaganda; they are not propaganda—not yet.”<sup>13</sup>

When, in October 1941, Steichen began to search for the images out of which to organize the MOMA exhibition (called, alternately, “Arsenal of Democracy” and “Panorama of Defense,” before Pearl Harbor), he set off on an exhaustive examination of the photographic files of government agencies, the military services, *Time-Life*, U.S. Steel, the Associated Press, and many individual photographers.<sup>14</sup> But of the 134 photographs eventually selected, more than one-third came from the files of the Farm Security Administration. Edwin Roskam, who handled picture research and exhibit planning for the FSA at the time, remembers that when Steichen arrived to inspect the pictures, Roy Stryker was on hand to personally guide him around. Where important visitors like Steichen were concerned, Roskam recalls, “Stryker bestirred himself.”<sup>15</sup>

Times, and the national mood, had changed, and few of the FSA photographs which Steichen selected for *Road to Victory* came from the hard-hitting documentation of the nation’s “lower third” which had so impressed him in 1938. During the four years since that time, Stryker had specifically instructed his photographers to obtain a more judiciously balanced view of rural, small-town, and urban subjects. By now the FSA file included scenes of hard-working laborers in defense plants, Marion Post Wolcott’s idealized portrayal of New England small-town life, and pictures of America’s Midwestern “horn of plenty.” Not surprisingly, these were the images to which Steichen now turned most readily.

When Sandburg arrived at Steichen’s Connecticut home in April, 1942, to prepare the exhibition’s unifying text, he found Steichen beginning to arrange 8x10-inch copy prints into thematic sequences. By this time the United States was no longer an observer but a full-fledged participant in the war, lending an air of even greater urgency to the task. The times demanded not only an “epic portrait,” but a re-invigorated myth of the American land and people, and this is what Steichen set out to provide. He drew upon a number of themes first broached in “The People Yes.” In



Carl Sandburg and his brother-in-law, Edward Steichen, planning “Road to Victory,” 1942. Photograph courtesy The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

its final form *Road to Victory* carried a distinctly Sandburgian flavor in its mystical attachment to the American earth, and in its valorization of the proud, vigilant, determined faces of “the people.” Westerners, New Englanders, Southerners; farmers, factory workers, gas-station attendants; whites, blacks, Filipinos; all so very different, but all united by a common dream: America. As William Stott has pointed out, “unity-in-diversity” was to become one of the overriding themes of American wartime rhetoric, and *Road to Victory* evidenced its earliest and most compelling expression in photographic form.<sup>16</sup>

Road to Victory was not the first instance after Pearl Harbor in which documentary photographs were adapted to purposes of propaganda; that distinction may belong to the huge photomurals which were constructed from enlarged FSA photographs and raised in Grand Central Station in December 1941.<sup>17</sup> But it did mark the American appearance of a radically new kind of exhibition technique, in which individual photographs were carefully deployed as propositions which joined to form a larger argument. The narrative, story-telling use of photographs was certainly not unfamiliar to Americans by this time—*Life* magazine had seen to that—but *Road to Victory* broke new ground by combining a complicated sequence of enormous photomurals with a careful consideration of the way in which mobile spectators would encounter the material. Harbert Bayer had given much thought to new forms of exhibition design, and his contribution to the final shape of *Road to Victory* was crucial.

A native of Austria, Bayer had been Master of the Graphic Arts Department at the Bauhaus in the mid-'20s, before deciding to put his ideas into practice at the Dorland advertising agency in Berlin. It was Bayer's conviction that the rapidly accelerating tempo of modern life called for a condensed, intensified form of public communication, employing visual as well as written means. "Visual communications" in the broadest sense became his concern, and he established a reputation as one of Europe's most innovative graphic designers, combining typography, photography, and handwork to great effect.<sup>18</sup>

Bayer also set out to modernize the traditional forms of museum and gallery display. He felt that the dynamic qualities of modern life and modern art were thoroughly at odds with the reigning principles of exhibition design, which continued to emphasize a timeless, static space founded on balance and symmetry. In the late 1920s, Bayer began to experiment with the concerted use of color, scale, elevation, typography, and texture in order to bring a calculated dynamic quality to exhibition design.

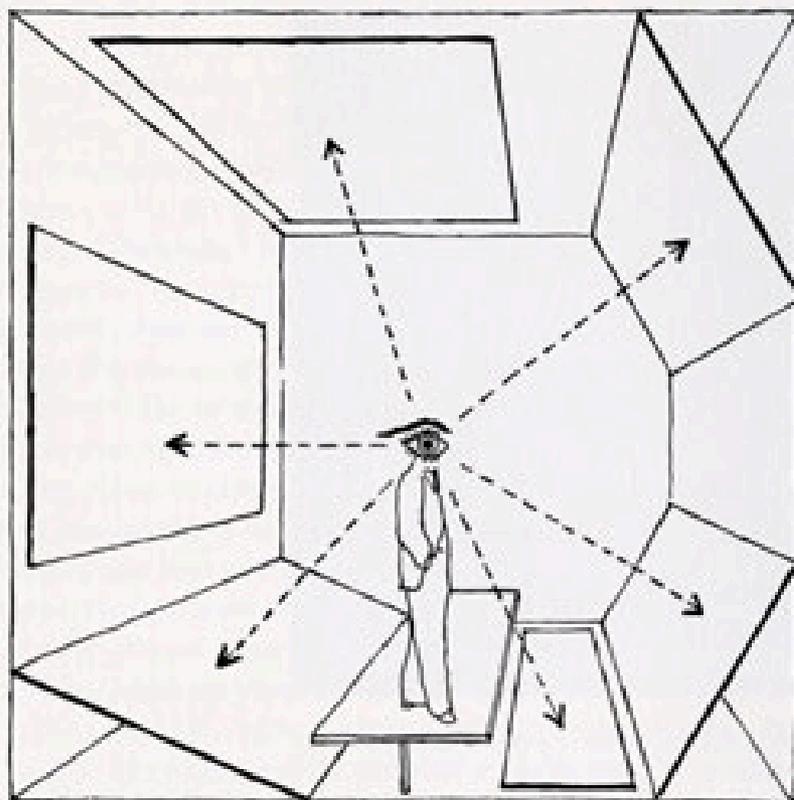
The special hallmark of the exhibitions which Bayer designed in Germany and France was the imaginative use of photographic elements. He has spoken of his fascina-



El Lissitzky, Soviet Pavilion, Dresden, 1929.

tion with the Russian Constructivist El Lissitzky's use of photographic cut-outs pasted together with typeface, a practice which Lissitzky extended to large exhibition structures in the late 1920s, applying repeating photographic imagery to walls and ceilings, as well as constructivist architectural forms.<sup>19</sup> Bayer adapted and rationalized a number of Lissitzky's devices, and put them to effective use, for instance, at the *Deutscher Werkbund* exhibition in Berlin in 1931. There, a great photomural of a crowd of workers served as a backdrop from which larger, free-standing figures emerged.<sup>20</sup>

When, in 1938, he was commissioned to design MOMA's Bauhaus exhibition—at which time he also decided to emigrate from Hitler's Germany—Bayer was able to bring into play a whole range of photographic display techniques. Nearly invisible wire supports were used to suspend photographic enlargements out from the wall toward the viewer. Prints were angled off the walls in various directions, or curled out from either end to meet the viewer. It



Herbert Bayer drawing, "Diagram of extended vision in exhibition presentation, 1930." Courtesy Herbert Bayer.

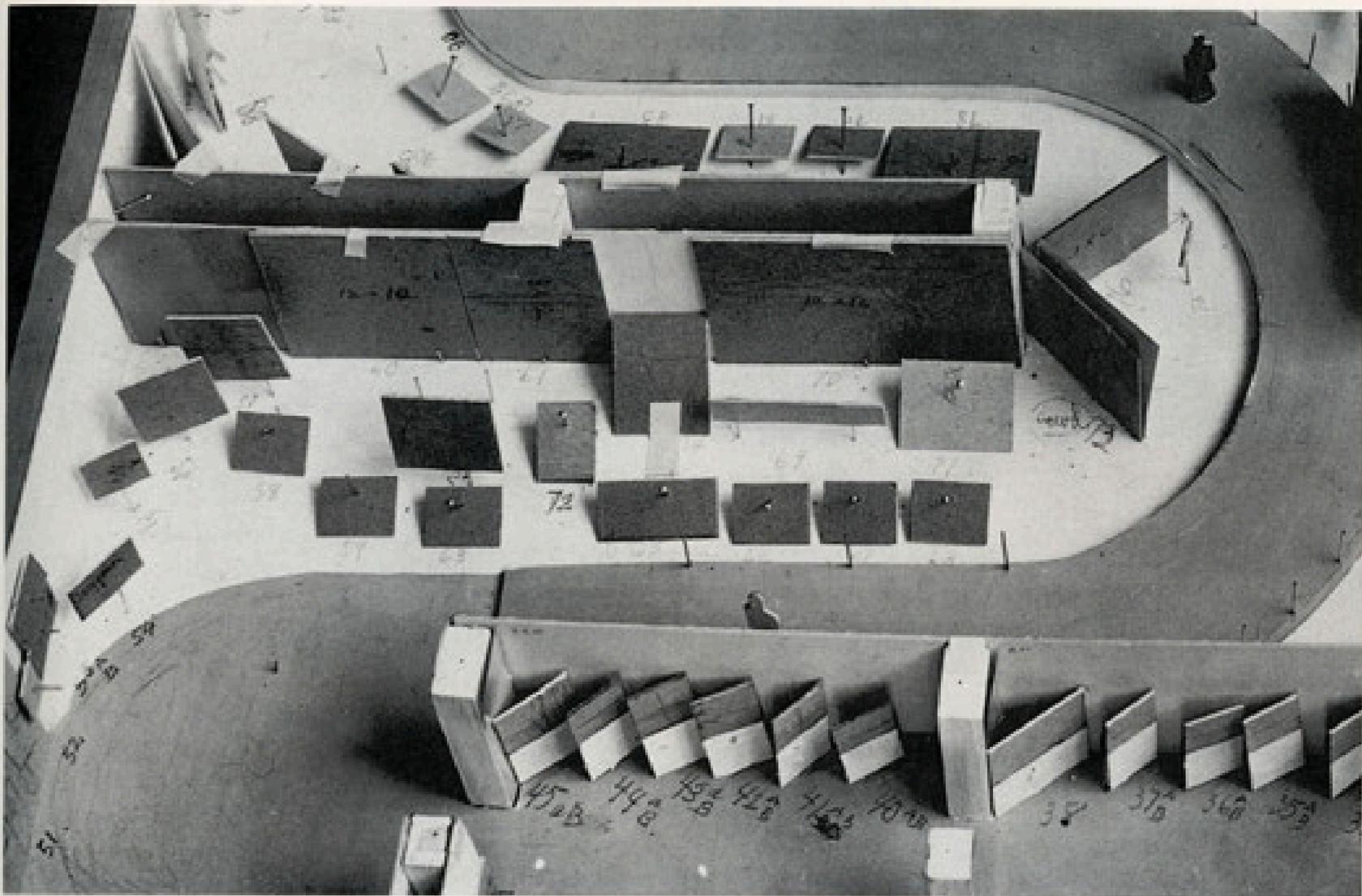
was, no doubt, Bayer's success with the Bauhaus exhibition which led Monroe Wheeler, MOMA's director of exhibitions, to call upon him to join Steichen in preparing an appropriate installation for *Road to Victory* several years later.<sup>21</sup>

By this time Bayer had summarized his ideas concerning dynamic exhibition design in a short essay published in an American design journal in 1939. The modern exhibition, he suggested, ". . . should not retain its distance from the spectator, it should be brought close to him, penetrate, and leave an impression on him, should explain, demonstrate, and even persuade and lead him to a planned reaction. Therefore we may say that exhibition design runs parallel with the psychology of advertising."<sup>22</sup> It can readily be seen that *Road to Victory*, whose motive was exhortatory and extra-aesthetic from the outset, provided a fine vehicle for implementing such concerns.

According to Bayer, Steichen initially presented him with the "story" and consecutive development of the images, from which he proceeded to build a three-dimensional model indicating the placement and relative size of the enlargements.<sup>23</sup> The two men apparently hit it off well. Bayer has recalled: "He constantly asked me for my opinions. We always spread photographs on the floor and he always became sentimental about American things."<sup>24</sup> The final installation followed Bayer's model closely, and incorporated its most original features.

After he had cleared MOMA's second-floor galleries of their movable walls, Bayer had the remaining walls, floor, and ceiling painted a uniform white. Having already determined upon a floor-plan which would guide visitors in a predetermined route through the exhibition, he used the largest murals—some up to forty feet in length—to articulate the main elements of division. The floorplan thus supported the narrative of the images: "Each room is a chapter, each photograph is a sentence," suggested the museum's bulletin.<sup>25</sup>

To furnish an air of dynamism to the enlargements, many were made free-standing or free-floating, thin wires supporting them at a variety of angles from floor to ceiling. At the exhibition's critical juncture, a dramatic juxtaposition of the Pearl Harbor explosion and a hard-bitten "Texas farmer," Bayer underlined the effect by calling into play his "principle of extended vision." The spectator was led up a raised ramp which afforded a dramatic vista, and the ramp itself, as it wound through the series of military images which followed, became the literal embodiment of the "road" to which the exhibition's title referred. The concluding enlargements grew progressively bigger, culminating in a gently curving 40-foot mural presenting row upon row of marching American troops. Over the larger mural were superimposed a number of smaller images depicting proud fathers and beaming American mothers. As remarked by Alexander Dornier in his very interesting study of Bayer's work: "The visitor was led from one such reaction to another, and finally to the climactic reaction of intense sympathy with the life of the USA and an ardent wish to help it and share its aims."<sup>26</sup>



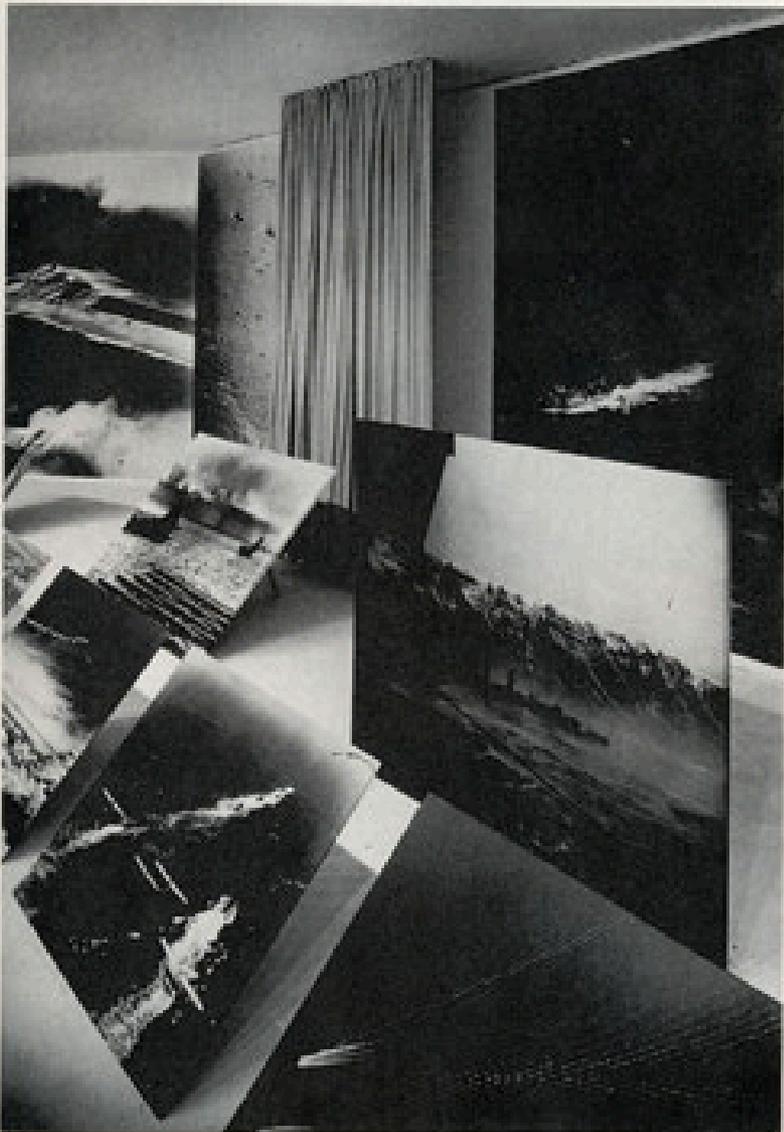
Bayer's scale model for "Road to Victory."

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Installation views of the exhibition, "Road to Victory," May 21, 1942–October 4, 1942. Collection, The Museum of Modern Art, New York.





Power in the Pacific, 1945



Road to Victory, 1942



Power in the Pacific, 1945



Power in the Pacific, 1945

Photography critic Elizabeth McCausland, in one of the more thoughtful responses to *Road to Victory*, was quick to realize that "Here art has been made a weapon of unmistakable intent and power." She insisted, however, that the exhibition aimed not to mold its audience's mind—that smacked too much of totalitarian practice—but to "evoke the deepest aspiration and historic remembrance of human beings." She noted with some satisfaction that after years of acrid debate over the value of socially engaged art, here art had "taken sides on the side of the American people." She pinned a medal on art.<sup>27</sup>

Such attitudes toward photography's supposed social mission persisted well into the post-war world. In 1947, it might easily have been thought that Steichen's appointment as director of MOMA's Department of Photography

signalled, on his part, a renewed interest in photography's fine-art side. This was not entirely the case, however. The wide popular success and critical acclaim which had greeted *Road to Victory* (and its 1945 successor, *Power in the Pacific*, which Steichen organized on behalf of the U.S. Navy) opened the way to an alternative future for photography at MOMA. Photography's claims as a fine art were to take a back seat to its role as a vehicle of high-minded social communication. Such was the implication of the remarks made by MOMA's president, Nelson Rockefeller, when he welcomed Steichen to MOMA.

... Steichen ... joins the Museum of Modern Art to bring to as wide an audience as possible the best work being done in photography throughout the world, and to employ it creatively as



"Family of Man" installation. © 1955, Ezra Stoller. Courtesy Esto Photographics Inc.

a means of interpretation in major Museum exhibitions where photography is not the theme but the medium through which great achievements and great moments are graphically presented.<sup>28</sup>

In an interview which took place not long after his appointment, the *New York Times* noted that during the war Steichen had been "impressed by what could be achieved by taking pictures on a grandiose scale and using them selectively to tell a complete story." How did he think this lesson could be applied at MOMA? The *Times* continued:

... sooner or later he wants to gather under his wing the 200,000 of America's amateurs who are already skilled photographers and teach them something about making pictures. Later on he wants them to send the pictures to him for sorting and cataloguing; then, some time, he wants exhibitions on a grand

scale, in the manner of his war picture exhibits. Ultimately, perhaps, there will be a great building in the nation's capital with murals covering the walls and ceiling, a place where tourists may see the great story of America in pictures.<sup>29</sup>

Although this extravagant bit of speculation, harking back to Steichen's earlier dream of a "portrait of America," was never carried out, it suggests the underlying attitude toward photography, and the even more ambitious scale of activity, which produced *The Family of Man* eight years later. The conciliatory, humanistic message of *The Family of Man* reflected the special concerns of the early 1950s; but the practice which shaped it and the form in which it finally appeared owed more than a little to the precedents set in *Road to Victory*.

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## Notes

1. "Sandburg, Steichen Honored at Dinner"; *New York Times*, May 21, 1942, I:22.
2. Edwin Aiden Jewell, "Portrait of the Spirit of a Nation"; *New York Times*, May 24, 1942, VIII:5.
3. *PM*, May 31, 1942. The Edward Steichen Archive, MOMA.
4. Edith Anderson, "Sandburg and Steichen Produce Fine War Photo Exhibit"; *Daily Worker*, May 24, 1942, p. 7.
5. "Road to Victory," *Newsweek*, June 1, 1942, pp. 64-65.
6. Carl Sandburg, "Road to Victory," in *Home Front Memo* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1943), p. 307. McAlpin, in correspondence with the author dated March 25, 1980, confirmed that he had suggested that Steichen be brought in to direct the exhibition.
7. See "The New Department of Photography," *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art*, Vol. 8, #2, December/January, 1940/41, pp. 1-14; especially Newhall's "Program of the Department," pp. 4-5.
8. Transcript of WXXI-TV (Rochester) interview with Wayne Miller, fall, 1979. Reel #1-038; p. 1.
9. "Camera, Career, Corn," *Time*, January 10, 1938, p. 36. See also Lt. J.H. Cutler, "Meet Captain Steichen," undated Navy press release in the Information File of the International Museum of Photography/George Eastman House, for Steichen's recollection of his plans for this exhibition. Steichen had used the photomural format with great success in the early Thirties; see Nicholas Haz, "Steichen's Photomurals at New York's Radio City," in *American Photography*, July 1933, pp. 404-408.
10. "Photography Show Will Open April 18"; *New York Times*, April 3, 1938, II-1. See in addition Frank Crowninshield's account in the 1939 *U.S. Camera Annual*.
11. Roy Stryker to Ed Locke, April 26, 1938; quoted in F. Jack Hurley, *Portrait of a Decade* (New York: Da Capo, 1977), p. 132.
12. Edward Steichen, "The F.S.A. Photographers," *U.S. Camera Annual*, 1939, p. 44.
13. Steichen, "The F.S.A. Photographers," p. 45.
14. Sandburg, *Home Front Memo*, pp. 306, 308.
15. Conversation with Edwin Roskam, April 17, 1980.
16. William Stott, *Documentary Expression and Thirties America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 236.
17. "The World's Largest Photo-Mural," *U.S. Camera*, February 1942, pp. 38-42.
18. Bayer's multi-faceted career as a painter, designer, photographer, typographer, and architect is too rich to be adequately treated here. See *Herbert Bayer: Painter, Designer, Architect* (New York/London: Reinhold/Studio Vista, 1967) for a good introduction. Alexander Dorner's *The Way Beyond "Art": The Work of Herbert Bayer* (New York: Wittenborn, Schultz, Inc.,

1947) situates Bayer's work within the theoretical concerns of the Bauhaus.

19. Paul Hill and Thomas Cooper, interview with Bayer in *Dialogue With Photography* (New York: Farrar/Strauss/Giroux, 1979), p. 118. See Sophie Lissitzky-Kuppers, *El Lissitzky: Life, Letters, Texts* (Greenwich, Connecticut: New York Graphic Society, 1968), pp. 361-363, for Lissitzky's statements on designing exhibition rooms; see also illustrations 184-229.

20. See Dorner, *The Way Beyond "Art": The Work of Herbert Bayer*, pp. 202-205. The exhibition was designed in collaboration with Walter Gropius and Moholy-Nagy.

21. MOMA's Department of Rights and Reproductions holds a full selection of installation views of both the Bauhaus and Road to Victory exhibitions. For anyone curious about the development of exhibition design in America, the MOMA holdings are of extreme interest.

22. Herbert Bayer, "Fundamentals of Exhibition Design," *P.M.*, December/January, 1939/40, p. 17. *P.M.* (Production Manager) was the publication of New York's Laboratory School of Industrial Design.

23. Herbert Bayer, correspondence with the author, April 14, 1980.

24. Hill and Cooper, *Dialogue with Photography*, p. 125.

25. *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art*, Vol. IX, #5-6, June 1942.

26. Dorner, *The Way Beyond "Art": The Work of Herbert Bayer*, p. 207.

27. Elizabeth McCausland, "Photographs Illustrate Our 'Road to Victory'"; *Photo Notes*, June 1942, p. 3. Reprinted from the *Springfield Sunday Union and Republican*, May 31, 1942.

28. "Edward Steichen Appointed Head of Photography at Museum of Modern Art," undated MOMA press release. The Edward Steichen Archive, MOMA. The first exhibition announced by the expanded department was to be Photography in the Service of Science in War and Peace; it was, however, never presented.

29. George Bailey, "Photographer's America"; *New York Times Sunday Magazine*, August 31, 1947, p. 39. For additional details concerning the events surrounding Steichen's appointment, and Newhall's departure, see Russell Lynes, *Good Old Modern*, pp. 259-260.

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**Christopher Phillips** is currently preparing a book on Edward Steichen's World War II Navy unit. The book will be published next fall by Abrams.

## Robert Adams Post Modernism and Meaning / Shelley Armitage

My sensations were those of a traveller, long sojourning in remote regions, and at length sitting down again amid customs once familiar. There was a newness and an oldness oddly combining themselves into one impression. It made me acutely sensible how strange a piece of mosaic-work had lately been wrought into my life. True, if you look at it one way, it had been only a summer in the country. But, considered in a profounder relation, it was part of another age, a different state of society, a segment of existence peculiar in its aims and methods, a leaf of some mysterious volume interpolated into the current history which time was writing off. At one moment, the very circumstances now surrounding me—my coal-fire, and the dingy room in the bustling hotel—appeared far off and intangible; the next instant, Blithedale looked vague, as if it were at a distance both in time and space and so shadowy that a question might be raised whether the whole affair had been anything more than thoughts of a speculative man. I had never before experienced such a mood that so robbed the actual world of its solidity. It nevertheless involved a charm, on which—devoted epicure of my own emotions—I resolved to pause, and enjoy the moral sillibub until quite dissolved away.

Hawthorne's heady contemplation of "reality" in this passage from *The Blithedale Romance* is remarkable for what Arthur Koestler calls "biosociation": "the perceiving of a situation or idea in two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference."<sup>1</sup> According to Koestler's theory, such thinking is creative (or double-minded thought) rather than routine (or single-minded thought) and produces a "transitory state of unstable equilibrium where the balance of both emotion and thought is disturbed."<sup>2</sup> Even a casual reading of the character Coverdale's musings suggests that these characteristics of creativity are those of ambiguity as well, for Hawthorne fixes this "state of unstable equilibrium" by placing opposites in juxtaposition. The civilization and wilderness, the actual and utopic worlds, the past and present, the dream and reality—all puzzle the narrator (and hence, the reader) not only in their dichotomous form, but because their existence is both cause and result of the creative act. Thus, Hawthorne's question "what is real?" he answers by suspending the transitory state of the imagination—by giving a permanent form to ambiguity for the reader to contemplate, in this case a paragraph which sustains what Baudelaire calls "a suggestive magic including at the same time ob-

ject and subject, the world outside the artist and the artist himself."<sup>3</sup>

Robert Adams accomplishes the same feat in his photographs. From his book *Denver*, a typical plate (for example, "Sunflowers"<sup>4</sup>) pictures the essential ambiguity of the Hawthorne paragraph. Within the framed, frozen instant photographic techniques (focus, depth of field, lighting, camera angle, composition, etc.) "biosociate" by joining the pristine land and urban development, thus raising questions about the meaning of the subject by directing attention to how it means: how it is envisioned, rendered, and interpreted. Hawthorne's narrator and Adams' camera eye focus on images that imply contradictory relationships and are both concrete and evocative. Yet such fixing of ambiguity—long acknowledged as crucial to multi-level meaning in fiction—although inherent in the nature of the photograph also is the source of its fiercest criticism. Literary critics such as Northrop Frye see the ironic mode (the realm of ambiguity) as "modern," and sophisticated in its ability to unite periods, to "begin in realism and dispassionate observation and move steadily toward myth."<sup>5</sup> Photo critics view such irony negatively: "Is photography truth or does the camera lie after it assures us it won't?" asks Peter Plagens in a recent review of criticism.<sup>6</sup> Despite Clement Greenberg's identification of literary qualities in the photograph,<sup>7</sup> critics avow such characteristics violate the supposed fidelity and intentionality of the medium. Moreover, critics A.D. Coleman and Susan Sontag argue that the nature of the photograph—the frozen instant—is ambiguously related to the real world and that such fragments of time are unreal, "deflected truths."<sup>8</sup> So prevailing is the notion that the photograph's integrity depends on its faithfulness to reality that other critics attempting to discover meaning via perceptual studies or semiotics quarrel with the medium's obliqueness. Writing "On the Invention of Photographic Meaning," Allan Sekula notes that the interpretation of photographic communication resides in a kind of binary folklore:

The misleading but popular form of this supposition is 'art photography' vs. 'documentary photography.' Every photograph tends, at any given moment of reading in any given context

## Robert Adams / Armitage

toward one of these two poles of meaning. The opposites between these two poles are as follows: photographer as seer vs. photographer as witness, photography as expression vs. photography as reportage, theories of imagination (and inner truth) vs. theories of empirical truth, affective value vs. informative value, and finally, metaphoric signification vs. metonymic signification.<sup>9</sup>

Add to this argument Wright Morris' contention that the photographer may distort the essential documentary quality of the image,<sup>10</sup> and interpretation becomes a matter of separating the subject from the creator's personal vision.

Not surprisingly, the critical consensus of Adams' work—that it is ambiguous<sup>11</sup>—results from a questioning of the photographs' amoebic evasion of Sekula's categories. A picture such as "A farm pond about to be destroyed by earth-moving machinery" (p. 118) confounds due to its documentary yet dreamlike quality. *How* it means thus becomes the key question. Phil Patton argues that Adams fails at both "expression and documentation." His style Patton likens to an imitation fallacy in which "the randomness of urban growth is matched with a randomness of artistic exertion."<sup>12</sup> Likewise, Leo Rubinfien challenges the appropriateness of Adams' limpid language:

Adams' work fails to understand that a picture is responsible for its own meaning, that it must create that meaning with rhetorical devices, and should ultimately be much larger than the flux of detail that the world offers it for material. His pictures, then, may reply on the hope that the inherent "political" significance of the things he photographs will give his pictures strength—will obviate the need for strong photographic language. Or, his tendency toward extremist understatement may be saying that here, amid this devastation, no rhetoric is possible; yet abstracted in black and white, the 'devastation' hardly looks egregious, merely common.<sup>13</sup>

Both Patton and Rubinfien raise questions essential to interpreting Adams' work, for certainly the photographs—tagged part of the "New Topographics" documenting the West's urban sprawl<sup>14</sup>—appear to be so objective they are random: rhetorically evasive, vapid, or even "silent." Rubinfien is close to the key when he quibbles about rhetoric creating context and thus meaning in the photograph. But whether it need be "strong" to make a state-

ment or not is another question. He fails to recognize that language may be literary rather than rhetorical, that Adams' point may be as poetic as "political," and thus made with subtle irony rather than overt exposition, that his creation of meaning through context relies not only on the language of the immediate photograph but on the larger context of modes in the history of photography. In short, Adams, as I intend this paper to show, operates out of a post-modern sensibility wherein literary devices are used ironically to invest old forms with new meanings. As John Barth defines it,

post-modernism is the synthesis or transcension of the antitheses of premodernist and modernist modes of writing. My ideal postmodernist writer neither merely repudiates nor merely imitates his twentieth century modernist parents or his nineteenth century grandparents. . . . He has the first half of the century under his belt, but not on his back. He aspires to a fiction more democratic in its appeal than late-modernist novels. The ideal post-modernist novel will somehow rise above the quarrel between realism and irrealism, formation and 'contentism,' pure and committed literature, coterie fiction and junk fiction.<sup>15</sup>

### I

Implicit in Allan Sekula's photographic categories is the immaturity of the medium's criticism. In the case of Robert Adams, the effort to read his mode as that of the "New Topographics," and hence, documentary, only acknowledges the wish to classify his portrayal of the movement of factories, suburbs, and people onto the prairies near Denver as a report of facts, informative and metonymic in meaning. Yet the essence of documentary style lies in the tension between the "artistic" and the "factual" as a survey of documentarians from the expeditionary photographers to the New Topographics indicates. Perhaps more to the point, documentary may constitute varying definitions of reality.

A brief look at the history of Adams' mode—that of landscape photography—illustrates this point. In the early days of the daguerreotype, practitioners fascinated with the capacity of the medium to record a variety of objects with equal clarity turned their cameras to nature in order to explore its beauty. Later, these attitudes polarized into two categories: the topographic, or an attention to the depiction

of object, place, or event (so called "mechanical" photographs which recorded scientific events, for instance); and the pictorial, which addressed the interpretative values of personal expression. Clarifying these two types, C. Jabez Hughes wrote:

Mechanical-Photography includes all photographs which aim at simple representation of the objects to which the camera is pointed. . . . Let it be understood that I do not mean the term *mechanical* to be understood deprecatingly. On the contrary, I mean that everything is to be depicted exactly as it is, and where the parts are to be equally sharp and perfect. . . . This branch, for obvious reasons, will always be the most practised; and where the literal, unchallengeable truth is required, is the only one allowable. Art-Photography embraces all photographs where the artist, not content with taking things as they may naturally occur, determines to infuse his mind into them by arranging, modifying or otherwise disposing them, so that they appear in a more appropriate or beautiful manner than they would have been without such interference.<sup>16</sup>

But the "unchallengeable truth" of topographic photography and imaginative "art" photography soon were infused due to the argument over optics as a vehicle for reality. In reaction to the allegorical photographs of Henry Peach Robinson and O.G. Rejlander, Peter Henry Emerson advocated "naturalistic" photography which, based on Hermann von Helmholtz' theory of optics, proposed to be true to human vision and thus capture what the eye saw. Implicit in Emerson's definition of naturalistic photography is the contradiction of point of view and fact: "It should be an impersonal method of expression, a more or less correct reflection of nature," wrote Emerson. Yet "there is not absolute truth to Nature from a visual standpoint, for as each man's sight is different, the only absolute truth to Nature for each man is his view of her."<sup>17</sup> By 1912, this personal way of seeing suggested that truth to Nature was truth to self; the role of the photographer demanded authenticity, experimentalism—a New Vision, according to Alvin Langdon Coburn:

The photographs taken looking down from tall buildings were almost as fantastic in perspective as a Cubist fantasy; but why should not the camera artist break away from the worn-out conventions, that even in its comparatively short existence have

begun to cramp and restrict his medium, and claim the freedom of expression which any art must have to be alive?<sup>18</sup>

Thus, by 1929, as exhibited in the "Film and Foto" show in Stuttgart, photography was "modern," and its exploration of reality a matter of personal vision, ultimately a concern with the *form* of the literal experience. One of the exhibition participants, Edward Weston, wrote of this definition of reality:

Life is a coherent whole: rocks, clouds, trees, shells, torsos, smokestacks, peppers are interrelated, interdependent parts of the whole. Rhythms from one become symbols of all. The creative force in man feels and records these rhythms, these forms, with the medium most suited to him—the individual—sensing the cause, the life within, the quintessence revealed directly without the subterfuge of impressionism, beyond the range of human consciousness apart from the psychologically tangible.

Not the mystery of fog nor the vagueness from smoked glasses, but the greater wonder of revelation—seeing more clearly than the eyes see, so that a tree becomes more than an obvious tree.

Not fanciful interpretation—the noting of superficial phase or transitory mood; but direct presentation of THINGS IN THEMSELVES.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, in a matter of one hundred years photography assimilated the concepts of realism and expressionism, so that by 1956 Gyorgy Kepes said of this new reality of the landscape:

It is not with tools only that we domesticate our world. Sensed forms, images and symbols are as essential to us as palpable reality in the exploring of nature for human ends. Distilled from our experience and made our permanent possessions, they provide a nexus between man and man and nature. We make a map of our experience patterns, an inner model of the outer world, and we use this to organize our lives. Our natural 'environment'—whatever impinges upon us from the outside—becomes our human landscape, a segment of nature fathomed by us and made our homes.<sup>20</sup>

As Kepes' comment indicates, depiction of nature necessarily emanates from visual language whereby form is a referent and thus, the meaning of photography ultimately exists in ideographic terms: the landscape represents ideas not objects.

Therefore, when the critic examines the documentation

of landscape, he confronts not the actual world but fiction. Indeed, if critics could admit to such a term as "photo fiction," interpretation could be simplified, for, like literature, photography is a creation of another world; as Northrop Frye says of poetry, "a mirror to the world, but not the world itself."<sup>21</sup> Photography, as Frye notes of literature in general, "is a world you build up and enter into at the same time."<sup>22</sup> Photography is, in other words, rooted in identifiable experience. It does replicate. But in the photographer's attempt to render reality is an inherent paradox. As in the example of the expeditionary photographers, such attempts at documentation necessarily involved a modification of "mechanical" or "topographic" photography. When these photographers went West with the geological surveys ostensibly to record the Western terrain, this record relied not only on the subject but on what already was thought of the subject—in the case of such photographers as Carleton Watkins and William H. Jackson a combination of religious and romantic notions that made for a *sublime* depiction of landscape. Because, too, of the influence of the Hudson River School on this early photography, attempts to *render* the landscape were involved with artistic conventions: that is, when one attempted to *render*, one in fact *made*.

Post-modern critic William Gass comments on the role of the *maker* in communicating the reciprocity between the actual and fictional worlds:

... aren't we right to seek in language the imprint of reality? Doesn't it shape the syntax of our sentences? Surely the way we speak about the world is a response to it just as thoroughly as the world is a reflection of the way we speak? ... But if we were making a world rather than trying to render one, wouldn't all our questions be answered? *Kennst du das Land* where all such tricks are fair? where the very sense of transcendence which is made possible by ontological projection and equivocation and type-token confusion and reification and hidden contradiction and rhetorical sleight-of-hand, is appropriate and functional. ... where the ancient dream of the rationalist—that somewhere in language there is a blueprint or a map of reality (where Eeyore's meadow's marked, and Piglet's tree, as well as where the Woozle wasn't)—that dream remains a dream because now language is the land—in fiction—where every fact has to have the structure of the sentence which states it, value too, and quality, and ap-

prehension, since there is no out-of-doors in the world where language is the land. . . .<sup>23</sup>

If we accept the concept of photo fiction, then, in like fashion, the photographer draws on the data of the world, but, as Gass reminds us, "nature doesn't make metaphors, metaphors must be made by a figure in fiction or by the author from without."<sup>24</sup> The maker, therefore, is essential—or the "mediator" as Joel Snyder calls the photographer.<sup>25</sup> A narrator, he mediates between *image* and *Imaged* by manipulating photographic elements—the language—which will deliver his idea of the subject. An example is the documentary photograph, "Migrant Mother" (1936), one of at least five pictures Dorothea Lange took before she got the shot she wanted. The idea that minimal mediation is a hallmark of documentary is questionable, therefore; Lange's photographs are worked on to get the worked on look out of them.

Such manipulation of photographic language may be said to qualify the documentary photograph as art so that literary language is necessary to the communication of meaning. Susan Langer in *Philosophy in a New Key*<sup>26</sup> argues that photography "means" through a system of non-discursive symbols, so that Gass's contention that "making a world" necessitates the creation by the maker of contexts which give us clues to their own interpretation. In documentary, part of this context is the replication of the actual world; but the rest resides in what the maker suggests about this world. Therefore, built into documentary are the essentials of the operation of symbol: it is a device at once concrete and abstract. For Langer and her "new" philosophy, ideas are transmitted via such symbols so that if we transfer this principle to photographic symbology, the documentary photograph may operate on the ideographic level. Moreover, though according to Langer each photograph creates its own context (hence, *nondiscursive symbology*), meaning may derive from the reference to former contexts—that is, other specific photographs, their conventions or generic affiliations. In this way, ideas may come from playing on what is considered to be true, whether it be that the camera duplicates reality or that a former symbol represents valid ideas. Thus, meaning may come from paradox

as much as from predictable and understandable contexts. As Minor White explains:

To get from the tangible to the intangible (which mature artists in any medium claim as part of their task) a paradox of some kind has frequently been helpful. For the photographer to free himself of the tyranny of the visual facts upon which he is utterly dependent, a paradox is the only possible tool. And the talisman paradox for unique photography is to work 'the mirror with a memory' as if it were a mirage, and the camera a metamorphosing machine, and the photograph as if it were a metaphor. . . . Once freed of the tyranny of surfaces and textures, substance and form the photographer can use the same to pursue poetic truth.<sup>27</sup>

Paradox can be what George Kubler calls "a disjunction between form and meaning;" it occurs when the artist tries to make meaning by remaking forms:

Renascent forms are repetitions of a past tradition made to assure its perpetuation. The disjunctive forms, on the contrary, infuse old forms with new meanings, and clothe old meanings with new forms. Artist and artisans at all times face this choice about the forms of the past; either the past is viable, deserving to be continued, or it is irrelevant, and discarded for a time. Most commonly the choice imposes a separation or disjunction between form and meaning.<sup>28</sup>

## II

On first reading, the symbolic context of *Denver* involves individual photographs, the order of the book, and the introduction (written by Adams) and captions which conclude the book. Taken on this level, the work appears to be strict social commentary, a documentation of the "New West," portrayed, for example, by such a photograph as the one on page 14 in which spanish bayonet and discarded paper cling on an empty prairie which recedes as the focus quickly falls off into the immeasurable distance. This photograph operates metaphorically, suggesting a forced equivalency; in the larger context of the book such symbols direct the view to the ravages of domestication. The sections, "Land Surrounded; To Be Developed," "Factories; Industrial Land," "Trees," "Shopping Centers; Commercial Land," "Our Homes," and "Agricultural Land in the Path of Development" march to the logical conclusion that Adams is subject-oriented: reality is as palpable as a next-

door neighbor's uncut grass or the back-alley view of a shopping center.

Yet as if anticipating the reader's confusion over his method, which ranges from seemingly amateurish, over-exposed prints to rather sophisticated and evocative shots that beautify the hostilities of man and land, Adams details the philosophy of the book in the introduction. Indeed, an explication of the introduction indicates that the photos are neither wholly "art" or "fact" (all the more fascinating since the introduction was written *after* the photos were taken<sup>29</sup>). At least initially, their ambiguity comes from the paradoxical nature of the subject itself: "The subject of these pictures is a troubling mixture," writes Adams, "buildings and roads that are often, but not always, unworthy of us; people who are, though they participate in urban chaos, admirable and deserving of our thought and care; light that sometimes still works an alchemy; a western scale that, despite our crowding, persists in long views" (p. 7). But such ambiguity quickly becomes the domain of the photographer who chooses to "adopt the perspective of the first settler, those who saw Colorado from the small rises of the prairie" (p. 7). Seeing from the outside and as if for the first time, Adams introduces his first hint that interpretation must go beyond immediate context; while he comes to the scene in the fashion of the nineteenth century expeditionary photographers, he determines to stay clear of the mountains: "I distrusted the late Victorians' passion for mountaintop vistas" (p. 7). He explains the need for such a point of view:

Denver was, in the early part of the last decade, different in appearance from Los Angeles. In 1962, when I came home after several years in Southern California, I tried to photograph the city and the high altitude brilliance that distinguished it. New building had, it is true, begun to change some of the geography, but the light was clean enough to disinfect car agencies and cheap bungalows; smog was so rare, in fact, that I refused to photograph when it was present. Bad light was just not typical.

By the end of the decade it was. A new city had emerged (though one that looked prematurely worn), a city much like other large urban centers across the Southwest. To show it accurately required that I stop sorting things out by the degree to which they were picturesque; if beauty were to be discovered

## Robert Adams / Armitage

in Denver, it had to be on the basis of a radical faith in inclusion. Shopping centers, junky arroyos, and commercial streets not only had to be more fully acknowledged, but acknowledged amidst the dull, hard gray of pollution. (p. 7)

How Adams acknowledges this discovery is not only through the rather naive viewpoint of a settler, but also the calculated language of "straight" photographer,<sup>30</sup> who is concerned with Form, effective composition, "an unarguably right relationship of shapes":

If I hope the pictures show more than this the subject of 'troubling mixture' it is because I share the goal of most photographers. You may have sensed what that goal is if you have watched someone with a camera struggle for adequate results . . . he explains, if asked, that he is trying for effective composition, but hesitates to define it. Edward Weston, a photographer who demonstrated he knew what it was, said simply that good composition was 'the strongest way of seeing.' What he appears to have meant was that a photographer wants Form, an unarguably right relationship of shapes, a visual stability in which all components are equally important. The photographer hopes, in brief, to discover a tension so exact that it is peace. (p. 8)

Thus, from the beginning of the book, these photographs promise to be referential—not simply as "metaphors" of the real world (as Minor White called them), but referents to other contexts, hence other symbologies. Quickly the paradox of subject is intensified by the ambiguity of documentation whose essence is a tension between art and fact. The "maker" as narrator heightens this ambiguity by his manipulation of this form and elements of previous forms (the expeditionary and the straight). As Adams notes: "Pictures that embody this calm are not synonymous, of course, with what we might casually see out a car window (they may, however, be more effective if we can be tricked into thinking so) (p. 8). Finally, Adams reveals that the goal of this trickery is more universal than the topical Denver landscape:

In Denver's vacant lots one can still find, no matter how numerous the food wrappers and pieces of styrofoam, an old, tough green—Spanish bayonet, cactus, and sage. Perhaps most reassuring of all there remain cottonwoods, those commercially useless trees that are habitat for birds and children.

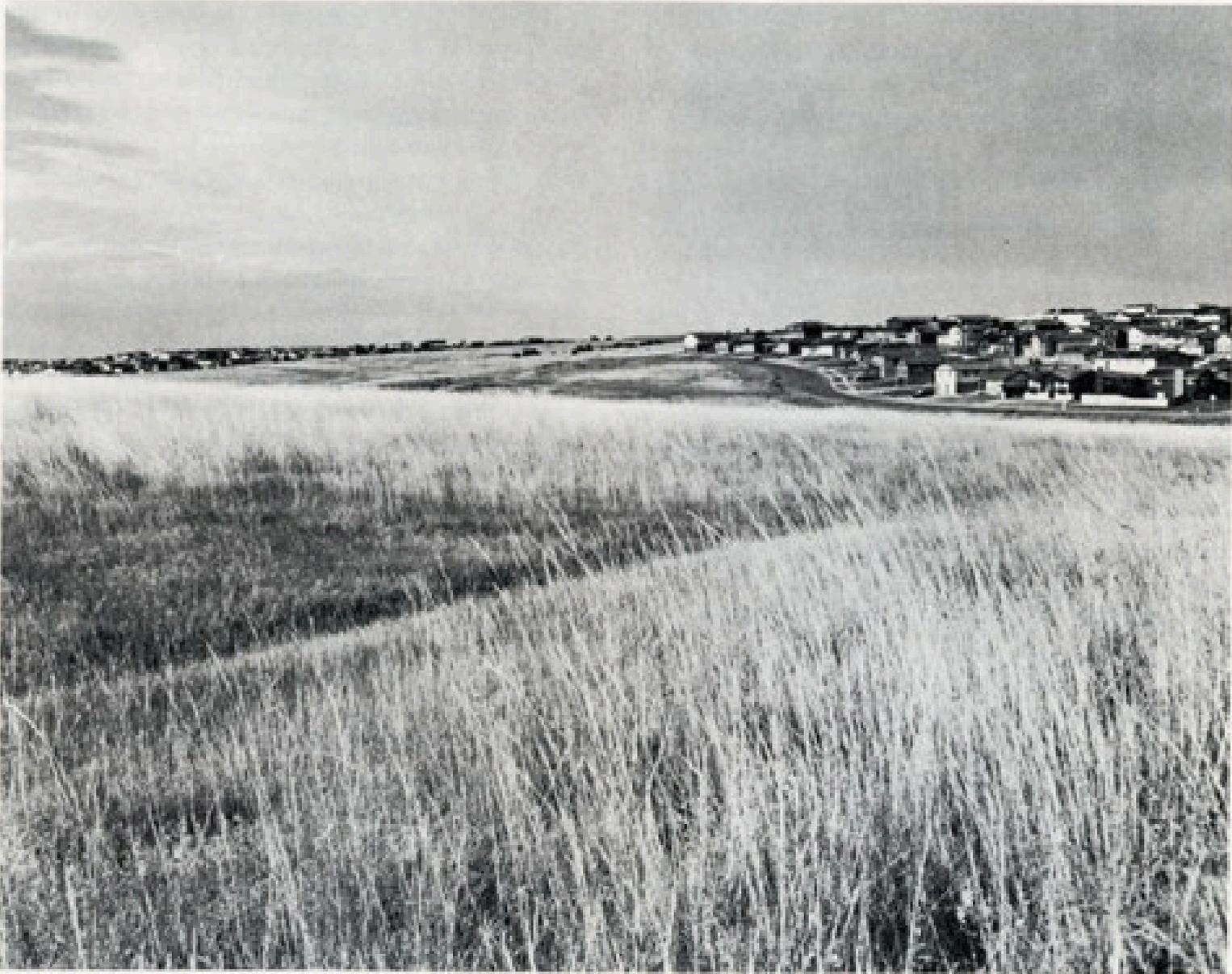
Whether I was photographing these accidental sanctuaries,

however, or bare, new tracts, I tried to keep in mind a phrase from a novel by Kawabata: 'My life, a fragment of a landscape.' The same applied, I thought, to each of us, and to the objects with which we live. My goal was not only to record the intimate and inintimate fragments, but to show the totality, the landscape. . . . The form a photographer records, though discovered in a split second of literal fact, is different because it implies an order beyond itself, a landscape into which all fragments, no matter how imperfect, fit perfectly. (pp. 7-8)

This last statement not only elevates the purpose of Adams' book to the ideographic level, but suggests that to get there his symbology will be drawn as much from the characteristics of formalistic and equivalence photography (as well as straight photography) as it is from the documenting of the Denver sprawl. Adams intends to make one form undercut and thus ironically reinforce the other so that levels of meaning are intensified. Thus, the photograph earlier cited (the Spanish bayonet and paper on page 14) moves from the exact record of straight photography which allows interpretation of man and nature to a photograph of form, a tool for vision, to an equivalent where the subject is recognizable but charged with symbolic meaning. Adams' purpose is to *document* by standing the conventions of documentary on their heads. His is a "disjunctive" mode, what Northrop Frye in *The Anatomy of Criticism* calls ironic; as John Barth notes of this post-modern characteristic in fiction:

The forms and modes of art live in human history and are therefore subject to used-upness, at least in the minds of a significant number of artists. . . . In other words, that artistic conventions are liable to be retired, subverted, transcended, transformed, or even displayed against themselves is to generate new and lively work.<sup>31</sup>

A few selected pictures will illustrate. In "Land Surrounded; To Be Developed." "Sunflowers" (p. 16) suggests an essentially "expeditionary" view. That is, in the tradition of these photographers, the composition is balanced between the sunflower in the left foreground and the houses to the right of center in the background. Typically, such use of foreground granted a sense of scale or a sublime feeling (due to the dropping off of focus and thus the haze of the background). Here, however, the com-



Robert Adams, from *Denver*

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position is ironically used. The foreground flower is too large, taking up all of the frame and the houses puny, rather than sublime, in their recession from the eye. If nature seems bigger than civilization (the houses), then not romantically so, for the sunflowers are hardly beautiful. Therefore, the implied relationship of the narrator with the land is ambiguous: the tall, ugly sunflower appears to dwarf him; the houses, softly focused, are more evocative physically than we expect urban sprawl to be. Expectations thus are reversed as Adams suggests a necessary equivalence between man-made environment and the land.

In another photograph (p. 18), the same idea is communicated. An arroyo, worn smooth by erosion and littered with building materials, leads the eye to the edge of apartment development bled off at the upper right of the picture. Again, the style of the expeditionary photographers is evoked: like a river bed leading to distant and awesome peaks, the arroyo moves to the apartment buildings. Telephone poles even stand like trees in the middle ground reminiscent of Watkins' multiple depths and overlapping planes which he used to suggest the infinite gradations of pebble to mountain. But here again Adams ironically juxtaposes an artistic way of seeing with an ugly subject. The suggestion is not only that we see beauty in the wrong things (our own urban devastation) which we perpetuate onto the land), but that—due to the formalistic nature of the photograph—there is a truth beyond this seeming disharmony. If this photograph finally is viewed metaphorically, then Adams' doctrine of radical inclusion comes clear: there is a co-existence, an equivalency between the worn out arroyo and the new buildings.

Again, on page 26 and 27, Adams shows us how blind we really are. The photograph of a lone motorcycle rider on page 27 again makes use of the triangular or classical composition of the expeditionary photographers. Because the cyclist is darker than other objects in the photograph and because he is moving to the left on the corner of the triangulation, he perhaps attracts us first. A lonely cyclist, a blank, white sky, a nondescriptive foreground would seem to suggest the purity of space, indeed, freedom. Yet, upon closer examination, the other two parts of the triangle

emerge—a house, seen barely behind the hill on the right, and in the center, almost blanked out by its own pollution, a factory. Thus, the central object in the frame is a factory, and the evocative haze so typical of nineteenth century landscape shots, is today pollution. Similarly, on page 27, a river bed takes up the foreground with trees behind. We think we are only looking at a natural, albeit sparse, terrain. But barely distinguishable in the background are transformer towers. The photograph is an illusion.

In some photographs, Adams plays more with the illusion of art—of shape, tone, texture. Thus, in the photograph on page 63, the long distance view of a settler (what an expeditionary photographer would have seen with his large plate camera) is a panorama of forms. The sky becomes a flat surface, pressing darker forms toward the bottom of the frame on a smaller flat surface. But these are houses—hundreds of them, advancing (as the central point of the development suggests) onto the foreground. Like the formalists, Adams seems to be discovering a vision by virtue of taking the picture. Even more dramatically, the photograph on page 117 illustrates this technique. Viewed formalistically, the shapes of bent grass and houses make equivocal designs. Again, due to the seemingly cool and detached point of view of the photographer, the reader is deluded by the very beauty of the forms. It is only when he recognizes them as raw prairie and suburban crawl does he entertain a value judgment.

Certainly, many more examples of Adams' methodology and meaning could be cited, but perhaps these aptly illustrate his purpose. By feigning objective detachment, yet framing in various degrees according to seemingly contradictory modes, Adams ironically documents the changes in the Denver landscape by showing the viewer his own visual, and hence, philosophic delusions. Do we see urban sprawl as a beautiful harmonic plane of evocative shapes and tones? Do we expect of a classical arrangement the harmony and spiritual energy depicted by the expeditionary photographers only to finally perceive this symmetry as a spirituality of pollution? Do we note in these forms a reality that suggests the equivalencies between man and nature to be devastation? Then, ultimately, Adams' posed

limited mediation really is the opposite. He is very subjectively narrowing the gap between audience and maker so as to make his point of view our own. Thus, finally, in a true post-modern sense, his work is self-reflexive; in order to transcend the exhausted forms of nineteenth century documentary and the "modern" view of the twentieth century straight, formalist, and equivalent photographers, he uses form upon form in order to make a new document.

In his book, *The Illusion of Life*, Harold H. Kolb states that point of view in the period of realism rejected the omniscient author in favor of a first person or modified first person point of view. This reflected the realistic novelists belief that fiction did not present a predetermined truth, but that the experience of the fiction was wedded to point of view inasmuch as character and reader journeyed together into the fictional world, learning as they went.<sup>32</sup> The symbolic matrix of Adams' work operates on the same premise so that the ultimate meaning of the work is not marred by the usual "reform" ethic of traditional documentary, but rather the reader is tricked into a new objectivity that only comes with the replenishment of forms. Given the tendency of traditional documentary to warp from poignant topicality to art in time, Adams' attempt to deflate the beautiful and elevate the ugly—to woo the viewer into a contemplation of a subject he later discovers is ambiguous—is an attempt to assure a document's integrity so that his meaning may be constant. It is, as he tells us in a recent article entitled "Landscape Includes Mankind, a 'truth beyond the need for reform.'"<sup>33</sup>

I continue to wonder about the wisdom of muckracking; ultimately all photographs are of nature, a subject only ambiguously ours to judge. Given the facts of where most of us are compelled to live, did I help more by condemning what I saw in that scene than I would had I tried to discover a truth beyond the need for reform?<sup>33</sup>

This is the new job of photography, Adams claims, "to reconcile us to half a wilderness, to what novelist Walker Percy described in *The Moviegoer* as our common 'estate,' an inheritance reminiscent of 'the pictures in detective magazines of the scene where a crime was committed: a bushy back lot.'"<sup>34</sup> To further explain, Adams cites the

work of C.A. Hickman, an amateur whose "imperfect" photographs (which contain broken-down wagons and women who shade their eyes against confusing obscurity) are important for their "inclusiveness": they are

pictures of significance that help us, a long way from Eden, endure and even enjoy life. The people stand there, virtually in the way; yet at the same time, they establish for us the vast dimensions of the pictures and thus reassure us that they and we are not all-important—certainly not powerful enough to cause anyone despair. We end with a paradox: in some nature pictures, it is precisely the troublesome, intrusive people that disclose nature's best truths. In order to endure our age of apocalypse, we have to be reconciled not only to avalanche and earthquake, but to ourselves.<sup>35</sup>

The "inhabited landscape" is, therefore, the "New West." Adams' symbology, operating as it does on multi-levels of meaning, ends ultimately in myth. If the Old West "meant" through the iconography of formulaic symbols which suggested a sublime landscape, then Adams' manipulation of the symbology makes for a new myth. As both Richard Slotkin and Will Wright have suggested, formulaic forms not only promote ideas by virtue of their repetition, but may change these ideas if they are themselves altered.<sup>36</sup> "To take possession of America in the eye," as Richard Poirier suggests of the language of American literature,<sup>37</sup> is for the photographer to manipulate the symbolic capacity of the camera: to capture concrete experiences which are emblematic of abstract thoughts. Thus, Adams' New West operates on an ideographic level so that meaning is determined by analyzing the purpose and source of his ambiguity, that is, to understand what William Gass means when he writes "certain symbols may have the power . . . to represent their own representational skills, and in signs which are both other and the same as the signified, to picture the very act of that picturing itself."<sup>38</sup>

Therefore, as Adams obviously intends, these photographs should communicate symbolically. As the "inhabited landscape" represents idea, the traditional categories of "documentary" and "art" photography are found wanting even as ideographic communication is beyond language. Adams' obviously hopes for that post-modern silence beyond words; not the muteness of devastation as

## Robert Adams / Armitage

indicated by Rubinien, but the quality Susan Sontag prescribes to the work of Walker Evans. William Stott explains:

Evans' work has frequently been called 'timeless' and in a sense it is. His vision is timeless, a cool and unqualified staring. His is a contemporary art, an 'art of silence,' as Susan Sontag defines it. 'Traditional art invites a look. Art that is silent engenders a stare. Silent art allows—at least in principle—no release from attention, because there never, in principle, has been any soliciting of it. A state is perhaps as far from history, as close to eternity, as contemporary art can get.' But if his vision is timeless, what it sees is not.<sup>39</sup>

This is Adams' "truth beyond a need for reform": Eden is gone, but our lives are a fragment of landscape, a thoroughly ambiguous one which photographs help us cope with.

### Notes

1. *The Act of Creation* (New York: MacMillan, 1964), p. 195.
2. Koestler, p. 201.
3. Quoted in Northrop Frye, *The Educated Imagination* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964), p. 23.
4. Robert Adams, *Denver: A Photographic Survey of the Metropolitan Area* (Denver: Colorado Associated University Press, 1977), p. 18. The paper will deal exclusively with images from this most recent book and subsequent references to this work will appear parenthetically in the text.
5. *The Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 48.
6. *Exposure*, 6 (Summer 1979), pp. 36-45.
7. Quoted in Nathan Lyons, *The Great West: Real/Ideal* (Boulder: Department of Fine Arts, University of Colorado, 1977), p. 9.
8. Plagens, p. 39.
9. *Artforum*, January 1975, p. 45.
10. "In Our Image," *The Massachusetts Review* Vol. 19, no. 4 (Winter, 1978), pp. 633-43.
11. See Charles Desmarais, "Topographical Error," *Afterimage* (November 1975); Carter Ratcliff, "Route 66 Revisited: The New Landscape Photography," *Art in America* (Jan.-Feb. 1976); Lewis Baltz, *The New West: Landscapes Along the Colorado Front Range*, *Art in America*, March-April, 1975; Joan Murray, *Artweek*, March 8, 1975; Phil Patton, "City Portrait," *Art in America* (Nov.-Dec. 1977); Leo Rubinien, *Artforum*, Summer 1976.
12. Patton, p. 60.
13. Rubinien, p. 81.
14. See William Jenkins, "New Topographics, Photographs of a Man-Altered Landscape," (Rochester, New York, 1975).
15. John Barth, "The Literature of Replenishment," *Atlantic Monthly*, January 1980, p. 70.
16. Quoted in Lyons, p. 3.
17. Quoted in Beaumont Newhall, *The History of Photography* (The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1978, p. 99.
18. Quoted in Newhall, p. 142.
19. Edward Weston, *Daybooks: Vol. I, Mexico* (Rochester, N.Y., 1961), p. 52.
20. Quoted in Lyons, p. 10.
21. *Anatomy of Criticism*, p. 91.
22. *The Educated Imagination*, p. 44.
23. William Gass, *The World Within the Word* (Boston: Nonpareil Books, 1979), pp. 316-317.
24. Gass, p. 321.
25. "Photographers and Photographs of the Civil War," *The Documentary Photograph as a Work of Art*, edited by Joel Snyder and Doug Munson (The University of Chicago: David and Alfred Smart Gallery, 1976), p. 21.
26. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1942, pp. 93-96.
27. *Art in America*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (1958), p. 54.
28. "History—or Anthropology—of Art?" *Critical Inquiry* (June 1975), Vol. 1, p. 761.
29. See Robert Adams interview, Thomas Dugan, *Photography Between Covers* (Rochester, New York: Light Impressions Corporation, 1879), p. 171.
30. This category, along with those of documentary, formalistic, and equivalence, are discussed in Newhall, pp. 197-199. In summary, straight photography explored as an aesthetic approach the ability of the camera to record exact images with rich texture and great detail in order to interpret man and nature, never losing contact with reality; formalistic is a product in the arts for the search for form for its own sake. Unlike straight photography, the image is seldom previsualized but is characteristically produced accidentally and used as a tool for vision. In documentary, there is a desire to record without intrusion, to inform honestly, accurately, and convincingly; the subject is paramount. The equivalent operates as metaphor; the subject is recognizable but only as a means for comparison.
31. Barth, p. 81.
32. (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1964).
33. *Aperture*, 18, 1980, p. 23.
34. Adams, *Aperture*, p. 24.
35. Adams, *Aperture*, p. 24.
36. See Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence* (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1973) and Will Wright, *Six Guns and Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

37. *A World Elsewhere: The Place of Style in American Literature* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1967), p. 30.

38. Gass, p. 315.

39. *Documentary Expression and Thirties America* (New York: Oxford Press, 1973), p. 288.

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**Corrections:** During production of *Exposure* 18:1, an error was introduced into Leroy Searle's article, "The Imaginary Eye and the Place of Vision." The article will make considerably more sense if page 57 is read immediately after page 47. We apologize to both the author and our readers. Also, author Thomas J. Schlereth informs us that he has learned that the project cited as "Gary Truman's study of German immigrant culture in New Ulm, Minnesota" (*Exposure* 18:1, p.22) was actually carried out by Truman, photographer Flip Schulke, and others.

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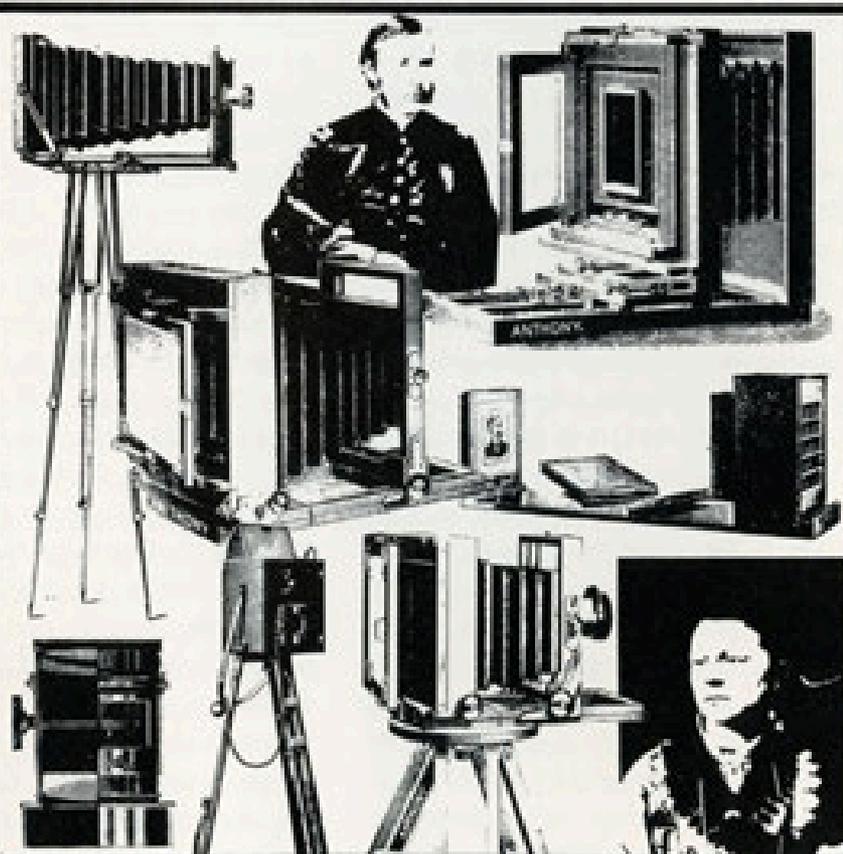
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## Book Review

**Dorothea Lange and the Documentary Tradition**, by Karen Becker Ohrn (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980).

Photography is still a young enough medium to be dominated by a few issues in theory and technique. The relation of photography to painting and the other pictorial arts, the meaning of its dependence on technology as well as human craft, and the consequences of the rapid proliferation of photographs in public and private life are common topics in the criticism of photography. But perhaps no issue has stimulated photographers, critics and historians of photography more than the debate over the nature and uses of the documentary style. Definitions differ as do practitioners. Yet we now have general agreement at least on the chief criteria for evaluating documentary photographs: *authenticity*, the value of the photograph as a historical record; *artistry*, the skill with which the photograph is framed, composed and lighted; and *impact*, the effect that the photograph has on expected and unexpected audiences. In addition, in a documentary photograph the *intentions* of the photographer are usually dominated by the wish to make a social, political or economic statement about the subject. In fact, the photographer can feel so strongly about the subject that the actual photograph seems subordinate to the need to understand and rectify injustice. As Dorothea Lange once said about the need to be close to the poor and dispossessed rural people whose circumstances she documented in the 1930s, "One is a photographer second." The documentary style, therefore, requires a unique relationship between subject and photographer and the

artistry to produce photographs which reflect it.

Important documentary photographs have a way of imposing themselves on us. For instance, when he chose the images for *Making a Photograph* in 1935, Ansel Adams included only one by another photographer: Lange's "White Angel Breadline." Like most of her photographs it differed from Adams' in its deliberate social and political implications. Though he was well known early in his career for his insistence that the subjects of photographs were just that, the raw material for photo-images and devoid of meaning outside the framework of the photographer's art, Adams was also sympathetic to Lange's purposes. "The most important contemporary photograph," he said in the mid-thirties, "is that which is related to the contemporary scene and the contemporary aesthetic tendencies." He insisted, however, that all good photographs, including those designated as documentary, cannot be effective "irrespective of the communicative, interpretive or esthetic quality of the image itself." Few would deny Lange's mastery of these qualities, but it took some very deliberate generosity and self-conscious adaptation of his own standards for Adams to acknowledge that "To my mind she presents the almost perfect balance between artist and human being. I am frankly critical of her technique in reference to the standards of purist photography, but I have nothing but admiration for the more important things—perception and intention. Her pictures are records of actuality and exquisitely sensitive emotional documents.

In her new and introductory study of Lange, Karen Becker Ohrn quite properly stresses the "White Angel Breadline" as a turning point in her subject's

career. Lange was a commercial and portrait photographer when she realized in 1929 that what she "had to do was to take pictures and concentrate upon people, only people, all kinds of people, people who paid me and people who didn't." She admired especially Paul Strand's professional manner, his near obsessive dedication to his work and his deliberate isolation from distractions. The Depression, of course, was not the most propitious time to make ambitious professional plans, but ironically it was economic hardship as a subject matter which shaped the changes in Lange's career. Lange was aware that "there was a very large world out there that I had entered not too well." Hence she ventured from her San Francisco studio one afternoon in 1933 to photograph a shabbily dressed man, part of a crowd of unemployed men waiting for a free meal from the philanthropic White Angel. Her pictures of this man, combining her new social interests and elegant sense of composition and design, are the first examples of Lange's documentary style. Many years later, in describing the impact of these photographs on her career at the time, Lange remembered having sensed that the "White Angel Breadline" photographs satisfied her desire to do something new and socially significant and demonstrated that the documentary attitude could be artistically interesting and socially responsible. "You know then that you are not taking anything away from anyone, their privacy, their dignity, their wholeness." It was attention to these qualities in her subjects which dominated Lange's style. Ohrn's biography illustrates this—in prose and in a good many photographs—as it offers an orderly review of

the stages of Lange's career and the satisfying synthesis she achieved in the posthumous and widely acclaimed retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art.

Lange's liberation from studio work was accomplished finally in her work on the well known Farm Security Administration projects of the 1930s. These years in the history of photography, including the development of the documentary style, are now well known—perhaps the best known episode in the history of American photography. Ohn ably summarizes the scholarship on the period and seeks to place Lange within the new tradition. However novel in its time, Lange's own definition of documentary style makes the now familiar points. "Documentary photography records the social scene of our time. It mirrors the present and documents for the future. Its focus is man in his relation to mankind. It records his customs at work, at war, at play, or his round of activities through twenty-four hours of the day, the cycle of the seasons, or the span of a life. It portrays his institutions—family, church, government, political organizations, social clubs, labor unions. It shows not merely their facades, but seeks to reveal the manner in which they function, absorb the life, hold the loyalty, and influence the behavior of human beings." The style is one of the new tools of social science, according to Lange, the equal in significance of graphs, statistics, maps and texts. No doubt Lange's marriage to University of California social scientist Paul Taylor was an important factor in her association of pictures with traditional data. They collaborated on several documentary projects, notably *The American Exodus* (1939). Taylor confirmed for Lange her instinct to treat

photographs as a form of social information and together, according to Ohn, they modeled their work on the example of Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson, who added photographs to their fieldwork in studying socialization in the South Pacific.

Lange's belief in the uses of photography as information moved her to the use of captions for much of her best fieldwork. For the photograph was only part of the effort at explanation and then social change that Lange was committed to. The captions were based on her extensive field notes, social science research, and government reports and were meant, as Lange said, not to tell a viewer what to look for or to simply explain the picture but to "fortify it without directing the person's mind." Roy Stryker, director of the photographic unit at FSA, slowly accommodated himself to the captions—he finally endorsed the technique in principle—though he was frequently put out by the delay in getting the completed photo-documents to Washington. He and Lange also struggled over her desire to occasionally retouch a photograph and over her determination to process and keep her negatives in San Francisco, but he was generally supportive of her work.

Lange's captions were one feature of her technique while on FSA assignments that contrasted sharply with the styles of her colleagues, especially Arthur Rothstein and Russell Lee. At one time, in fact, Stryker asked Rothstein for more detailed captions for the Oklahoma dust bowl photographs which were "excellent pictures on which we need more data." Ohn suggests the important differences between Lange and her colleagues while illustrating their collegial efforts to fulfill the unique mission of

the FSA. Reproductions, for instance, of Lange and Rothstein photographs of the Yakima Valley in Washington reveal the differing styles. Rothstein's picture of a mother and child standing in front of a makeshift tent is titled simply "Yakima, Washington, July 1936. Wife of a worker in the fruit orchards." Lange's photograph of similar subjects taken in the same region carries the full caption: "Toppenish, Yakima Valley, Washington, August 1939. Champion hop pickers in a squatter camp before the season opens. This girl, married, age 23, has been on the road seven years, earned \$5.00 a day in the 1936 season. 'I think I did pretty well, only have one baby. I want to get out of this living like a dog.'" Ohn's choice of these photographs, however, suggests that Lange's FSA work was distinguished by more than elaborate and purposeful captions. For her Yakima photograph has dramatic and technical interest lacking in Rothstein's. Lange's captions, in short, do not simply explain or compensate for insufficient photographic achievement. They match her photographs in ambition and suggestiveness. Stryker understood this, and according to Ohn, was entirely sympathetic to Lange's desire to make her photographs historical documents and resources for social change.

After the FSA Lange worked for the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, the Office of War Information, and the War Relocation Authority. Her 1930s experience was adapted inevitably to the circumstances of the next decade. For as she wrote to Stryker in 1940, "Once an FSA guy, always an FSA guy. You don't easily get over it." Ohn illustrates this legacy by devoting considerable attention to Lange's work on behalf of the

## Book Review

WRA in 1942-43. Lange was angry, she claims, at the injustice of the entire effort to relocate Japanese-Americans in camps in the West. In contrast to Ansel Adams, who was willing to accept internment as a temporary dislocation of American political principles as well as of people, Lange was "motivated by her belief that the evacuation and internment were totally without legitimate foundation." In her choice of photographs and analysis of Lange's intentions and techniques, especially as contrasted with Adams, Ohn presents a model of compact historical criticism. Just a few of Lange's photographs of Manzanar and the other camps were ever used by the government and therefore Lange was at the time unsure of the success of her efforts. Only later, Ohn notes, did she see how well she had documented this human and political tragedy, though she did not live to see the photographs used in exhibits and films in the early 1970s.

Lange was ambivalent about the popular photojournalism (in *Life* and *Look* especially) which appeared during and after the war. Ohn notes her resistance to the triviality of many of the photographic essays and the autonomy that Lange demanded. She was not interested in features on "going steady," fashions and celebrities. She did, however, accept a few assignments from *Life* but never, of course, achieved the wide audience in the new format that Margaret Bourke-White did. Ohn briefly but thoughtfully traces the transitions in Lange's career, her frequent illnesses and increasingly weakened condition and the need finally in the 1950s to work within the new limitations. "Narrowing the scope of her work, she began to focus on the more intimate relationships

that had not been her primary concern when she was exploring larger social problems." Lange herself admitted the change in 1952. "In the past, events have always played a major role in the work I've done. First there was the depression, then the dust bowl, then the war. All of these were big, harsh, powerful things, and it was related to them that, as a rule, I tried to photograph people. Now, however, I'm trying to get at something else. Instead of photographing men in relation to events, as I have, today I'm trying to photograph men in relation to men, to improve the exchanges and communications between people, to discover what they mean to each other and to themselves." Yet as Ohn says, Lange's work changed more in emphasis than in style or impact. Though she now often used her family as subjects, she did not altogether abandon documentary photography as she defined the style in photographs of the 1930s. Photographs made in Ireland, the Orient and Near East were without specific social purposes but had some of the documentary impact. As Ohn describes the distinction, "Unlike her documentary techniques of the 1930s and 1940s, when she tried to anchor a subject in time and place, her new method was an attempt to make photographs that cut across chronological and geographical labels, that were symbols which spoke of the human condition." And occasionally in her late work, Lange attempted a local documentary series, like the one made in 1957 on the legal aid system in Oakland.

Before she died in 1965 Lange worked with the Museum of Modern Art on a retrospective which certified her place in the documentary tradition. Ohn ac-

curately reports that when she died Lange was "on the verge of completing a cycle in her work, from personal portraits to photographs representing social issues to a more personal perspective again." But it was as a decidedly public photographer that Lange achieved her greatest success and it is within that tradition that she will be remembered. Even Ohn is forced to see her "home" and "foreign" photographs of the 1950s in the context of the photographs with plain social purposes.

*Dorothea Lange and the Documentary Tradition* is a useful introduction to her life and work. Though it lacks real originality in documentary scholarship (see William Stott's *Documentary Style and Thirties America* [1973] and F. Jack Hurley's *Portrait of a Decade: Roy Stryker and the Development of Documentary Photography in the Thirties* [1972]) and the biographical detail of Milton Meltzer's *Dorothea Lange: A Photographer's Life* (1978), it is a responsible effort in historical criticism and is enhanced by judiciously chosen and finely reproduced photographs. Certainly Lange satisfies the criteria for documentary photography proposed by Ohn and others. Her achievements in that tradition, moreover, compare favorably with those of other photographers which are often praised as more artistic. She shares with Strand, for instance, the ability to introduce a kind of narrative into her photographs. Critic John Berger has said that for Strand "the photographic moment is a biographical or historic moment, whose duration is ideally measured not by seconds but by its relation to a lifetime. Strand does not pursue an instant, but encourages a moment to arise as one might encourage a story to be told." Lange too adds this kind of background

to the immediacy and timeliness of her subjects. And she is master of the social and historical photograph as Berger defines it in an important essay on "The Uses of Photography" (published originally in England in *New Society* and recently reprinted by Pantheon in Berger's *About Seeing*). "If the living take [the] past upon themselves, if the past becomes an integral part of the process of people making their own history, then all photographs would reacquire a living context, they would continue to exist in time, instead of being arrested moments. It is just possible that photography is the prophecy of a human memory yet to be socially and politically achieved. Such a memory would encompass any image of the past, however tragic, however guilty, within its own continuity. The distinction between the public and private uses of photography would be transcended. . . . The task of an alternative photography is to incorporate photography into social and political memory."

Though she once declared herself "a photographer second," Lange's contribution to our social and political memory in photography proves that such a claim is mainly a sign of admirable modesty. Lange's achievement was part of her public and private identities. Since her personal integrity, artistry and social idealism were merged, "second" is less a statement of relative importance than a recognition that photography always serves some human and therefore social purpose. Lange was not only prophetic, she was effective and the photographs she made advanced the documentary tradition as they also defined it.

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