

# THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53 STREET, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900

YELLOW AND BUFF

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FOR WEDNESDAY RELEASE

ABSTRACT PHOTOGRAPHY OF MANY TYPES TO BE SHOWN AT MUSEUM

"Abstraction in Photography," an exhibition of photographs organized by Edward Steichen, will be on view on the first floor of the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, from May 2 through July 4. Mr. Steichen, Director of the Museum's Department of Photography, has selected 150 photographs, both in color and black and white, by 75 photographers, to illustrate abstract images ranging from the scientific document to contrived arrangements and from mechanical pattern to organic design. The abstract phase exhibited as part of "In and Out of Focus," shown at the Museum in 1948, and in the "Color Photography" exhibition in 1950, is expanded in this survey, in some cases utilizing later work by the same photographers.

The present exhibition follows the Museum's Korean war exhibition, just terminated, with a definite intention of contrasting the reality of sensitive reportorial photography of the impact of war on human beings with the scientist's penetrating camera findings through microscope and telescope, coupled with a record of the work of photographers concerned with evolving another reality by probing into the realm of the abstract.

The historical survey of abstract photography presented begins with Matthew Brady's famous photograph of the silhouette of Richmond's ruins in 1865 and then the chronophotography studies of Marey's made between 1883-1886. Shadowgraph images by Coburn and an abstraction by Strand, published in 1917, shadowgraphs and montages by Schad, 1918, are followed by Man Ray "Rayograms," Moholy-Nagy "Photograms," Stieglitz "Equivalents" and prints by the Westons, Sheeler, Evans, Adams, Steiner, Tina Modotti, Steichen and others who produced abstractions in the 1920s.

In the recent work, which makes up most of this exhibition, there are numerous, purely scientific photographs with resulting incidental abstractions; there are images by photographers interpreting scientific subjects; and there are photographs of a purely inventive intent and

light drawings without resource to camera. These various approaches sometimes overlap and impinge.

The exhibition juxtaposes examples wherein the accidental parallels the intentional. A greatly enlarged scientific photograph of chemical crystals producing an exciting irregular geometric pattern is shown with a picture taken looking up into a radio transmitter tower where the photographer found an unusual geometric pattern in an engineer's design.

A series beginning with a naturalistic color photograph of the parallel tree trunks of a grove of aspens continues the theme of vertical parallels in work by different photographers ending in a completely abstract design.

To supplement this exhibition Mr. Steichen will present a selection of experimental motion picture films, including films by the Whitney brothers, Douglas Crockwell, Len Lye and Jim Davis. They will be shown in the museum auditorium at a date and evening to be announced later.

The exhibition poses a number of questions about the visible influence of the modern arts on much of even the most precisely realistic photography, as well as the relationship of modern science and technology to all contemporary art.

Mr. Steichen comments on the exhibition as follows:

"The term 'abstraction' used here in connection with photography is hardly more than a convenient handle with which to tag a wide range of intelligent artful experimentation as well as the significant creative achievements.

"The discipline of an enforced objectivity in laboratory photography is countered by the creative control of selection exercised by the photographer. The aesthetic factor in the scientific photograph is read or imagined into it by the observer. The creative photographer initiates the aesthetic factor.

"A cloud chamber photograph showing disintegration and conversion under bombardment of one hundred million electron volt neutrons from the giant University of California cyclotron and a photograph of a fragment of a wall by Frederick Sommer, both represent a reality and both convey a feeling of immutable force and power that goes beyond the actual facts of the photographs. In the one, this feeling is incidental to facts portrayed; the other originates in the perception and creative ability of a major American artist in photography."



- 85
40. Yuichi Idaka, Chicago 2 color transparencies
  41. Herbert R. Isenburger, St. John AVIATION SPARK PLUG INSULATORS  
X-ray Laboratory, Califon, N.J.  
Herbert R. Isenburger GAMMA RAY PHOTOGRAPH
  42. Lotte Jacobi (Abstraction)  
" " ( " )
  43. Andrew Karabet (Light filtering through boards) (color)
  44. Erich Kastan (Plastic abstraction)
  45. Gyorgy Kepes (Abstraction)  
" " ( " )  
" " ( " )
  46. Jeannette Klute, Rochester DERIVATION (Apple & pear) (color)  
" " " (Orange, avocado & banana) (color)
  47. John B. Kuiper, Chicago (Verticals & white circles)
  48. Arthur Lavine 4 color transparencies
  49. Gita Lenz (Door handle & cracked glass)
  50. Richard Litwin (Reflections: 5th Avenue at 49th Street)
  51. George Platt Lynes (Sepia tone abstraction)
  52. R. C. Lucas (Sculptor) From a series: STUDIES OF EXPRESSION 1865  
Lent by George Eastman House, Rochester
  53. Jack Manning 5 color transparencies
  54. E. J. Marey CHRONOPHOTOGRAPHY - ANALYSIS OF MOVEMENT 1883-86  
a. MOVEMENTS OF LIQUID  
b. REPEATED IMAGES OF BIRD IN FLIGHT  
c. LIGHT TRACING FLIGHT OF BIRD  
d. IMAGES OF RUNNER REDUCED TO A SYSTEM OF BRIGHT  
e. FENCING LINES  
f. STRIKING WITH CANE
  55. W. M. Massey, Jasper, Ala. (Fire escapes)
  56. Leo C. Massopust, Milwaukee, Wis. HYDROQUININE CRYSTALS  
" " " " SALICYLIC ACID & CALCIUM CARBONATE  
" " " " POTASSIUM DICHROMATE CRYSTALS  
" " " " SALICYLIC ACID
  57. Sol Mednick (Black & grey abstraction)  
" " (Photogram - industrial) (Ochre & black)
  58. Laszlo Moholy-Nagy BERLIN WIRELESS TOWER 1928  
" " " " PHOTOGRAM
  59. George Montgomery, Boston, Mass. (Splash on pavement)
  60. Barbara Morgan LIGHT DRAWING 1940  
Laszlo Moholy-Nagy (Design in colored plastics) (color)
  61. National Advisory Committee for End-section view of model airfoil installation  
Aeronautics, Official Test Photographs
  62. Naval Ordnance Testing Station MODEL TORPEDO ENTERING WATER
  63. Fritz Neugass LOOKING UP INTO RADIO TRANSMITTER TOWER
  64. Isamu Noguchi, (Portfolio) JAIPUR OBSERVATORY  
" " " " " "
  65. Alan Palmer, San Francisco (Corrugated glass) (color)  
" " " " 6 small color transparencies
  66. Sally Perls (Iron rail & shadow)
  67. Edison Pettit, Yerkes Observa- SOLAR PROMINENCE Height of prominence: 280,000  
tory, Univ. of Chicago miles
  68. Eliot Porter, Santa Fe, N.M. (Birch logs and leaves) (color)  
" " " " " " (Rocks with lichen) (color)  
" " " " " " ARCTIC TERN  
" " " " " " ASPENS
  69. Dr. Wilson Powell, University Cloud chamber photograph - University of Califor-  
of California nia cyclotron
  70. Man Ray TORSO 1923  
" " RAYOGRAPH 1922
  71. Ben Rose (Dancer)  
" " (Wires)
  72. Rauschenberg-Weil BLUE PRINT PHOTOGRAM FOR MURAL DECORATION
  73. Arnold Sadow (Verticals and dots)
  74. Ralph Samuels EARTH PATTERNS  
" " " "
  75. H. Sapiro (Scrap of paper on white)



