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THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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THE MAKING OF A PHOTOGRAM OR PAINTING WITH LIGHT  
SHOWN IN EXHIBITION AT MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

The basic principle of photography--i.e., the action of light on certain metallic salts--will be shown in pictures made without camera or lens in an exhibition How to Make a Photogram opening at the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, Wednesday, September 16. This camera-less, lens-less process was employed in the earliest days of photography when in 1802 Thomas Wedgwood and Sir Humphrey Davy of England made silhouettes of objects placed over sensitized surfaces and exposed to the light. This process was revived in 1918; its greatest modern development was achieved by Man Ray, the Philadelphia painter and photographer who studied and worked chiefly in Paris.

Two of Man Ray's photograms will be shown in the exhibition. All other photograms shown are by members of the School of Design of Chicago, whose Director, L. Moholy-Nagy, designed the exhibition in collaboration with Georges Kepes and N. B. Lerner for the Museum's Department of Circulating Exhibitions.

A photograph is the recording of an image projected on a sensitized film or plate in a box by light transmitted through a lens. Sensitized paper, without benefit of lens or camera, will record a range of tonal values (i.e., a photogram) when exposed to light in a darkroom after being partially covered with an object or objects. By using transparent, translucent and solid objects flat, square, round, cylindrical or other shapes a variety of tones may be obtained.

To show the relationship between photograms and photographs the exhibition begins with photographs in which the photographer has recorded the interplay of light, shadow and reflection in intricate patterns made by objects clearly recognizable in the photograph. By concentrating on the light patterns in the photograph, the visitor is led to see the next step toward photogram-making. The succeeding panels in the exhibition are devoted to various types of photograms

and how they are made.

The process is clearly demonstrated in the exhibition, which consists of panels on which photograms in abstract designs and strange patterns are mounted side by side with the simple objects which are used to intercept the light and thereby form the shapes of the photogram. Some of these objects are a pine cone, an egg beater, pieces of broken glass, twisted strips of metal, an artificial flower, tinsel and perforated cardboard, toilet paper roll and drinking straws, marbles, rubber bands, strips of metal and a washer. All of these objects are shown on panels with the finished photograms; in some cases both a positive and a negative print are shown. Other photograms in the exhibition have been made by using watch parts, eggs, wire netting, wood shavings or spirals, the shadow of a hand and even watercolor, oil paints and other liquids placed between plates of glass and exposed to light.

How to Make a Photogram is returning to New York after a tour of eight cities where it was sent by the Museum's Department of Circulating Exhibitions. It will circulate again after it closes at the Museum on October 18.