

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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

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EXHIBITION OF DANCE PHOTOGRAPHS TO BE CIRCULATED IN SOUTH AMERICA

A happy marriage of two contemporary arts--the modern dance and high-speed photography--provides an outstanding exhibition of enlargements and blowups of a series of photographs by Barbara Morgan entitled Modern American Dance, which will be sent in both a Spanish- and Portuguese-text version to many cities in Cuba, Brazil and other South American countries. The exhibition has been prepared under the auspices of the Inter-American Office of the National Gallery of Art and will be shown for the first time anywhere in the Auditorium galleries of the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, from March 28 through April 29.

The exhibition illustrates the evolution of the modern dance in the United States during the past ten years, and emphasizes the leaders who have brought the movement to its present artistic maturity. The photographs center the attention, therefore, chiefly upon such brilliant exponents of the modern dance as Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, Charles Weidman, José Limon, Hanya Holm, Helen Tamiris, Daniel Nagrin, Merce Cunningham, and Pearl Primus.

As an integral part of the exhibition, John Martin, Dance critic of The New York Times, has written a Perspective of the dance in the United States, and Mrs. Morgan has supplied a short introduction which explains the relation of the photographer to the dance as exemplified in this exhibition. Mrs. Morgan writes:

"Modern dance and action photography in the U.S.A. are both on the upsurge in their contemporary development.

"In this great dancing we can read the flux of joys and sorrows, the conflicts and certainties universally experienced by modern man - yet colored by the people and place, the atmosphere and living dynamics peculiar to the North....

"As a photographer, I have had the joyful responsibility of capturing and communicating these phenomena of the human spirit which otherwise would not endure beyond performance. The pictures were composed in action while the dancers performed especially for my modern speed cameras and lights. I continually sought to discover the fluid relationships of light-time-motion-space-spirit by which I could release - not the mere record - but the essence of dance into the photographic image."

The exhibition is composed of about fifty large panels on which text and pictures are mounted separately. In preparing them, special attention has been given to protection against the contingencies of travel, climate, and multiple showing, to which they will be exposed on their Latin-American tour.

To carry on the program of art exchange with the other American republics, formerly operated by the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, the Inter-American Office of the National Gallery was established about a year ago. It is in connection with this program that the current exhibition has been prepared, as one of the chief functions of the Inter-American Office is to supply Latin-American institutions with exhibitions representing such artistic fields as the Dance, towards which the United States has made distinctive and original contributions.

In the Perspective text which accompanies the pictures in the exhibition, Mr. Martin has written in part as follows:

"In the field of the dance the United States has made its most distinctive and original contribution to the fine arts. Like every other country it has, of course, developed its own folk forms, as well as its popular ballroom dances; but instead of acquiescing without question in the general acceptance of the academic ballet as the only possible art form for the dance in the Western World, it has also developed its own quite independent creative approach to the dance as a fine art....

"The characteristic dance which it has evolved instead owes nothing whatever to tradition. It goes directly to life and individual emotional experience for its materials and its techniques, and deliberately avoids the setting up of any standardized vocabulary of movements or any arbitrary 'school.' The basic principle of the art is that the human body when acted upon from within by emotion, moves in its own creative way and by means of such movement conveys to the spectator the substance of the artist's intent, however subtle. Without resort to established symbols or literary connotations it translated inner experience directly through kinesthetic means.

"Isadora Duncan was the great prophet of the new art in the first years of the present century. Her dance was purely lyrical, the outpouring of her own deep feeling, with the music of the masters as her inspiration....

"With Isadora Duncan the new dance went to Europe where it spread its influence widely. In Russia the reforms of Michel Fokine in the strict and tradition-bound Imperial Ballet were made possible by the success of Isadora's revolutionary appearances in St. Petersburg. All over Europe her ideas bore fruit, and in the days between the wars there developed a widespread movement which produced such great artists and teachers as the Austrian Wiesensthal Sisters, The Swedish Ronny Johansson, the Hungarian Rudolf von Laban, the German Mary Wigman.

"If this art is sometimes known as the 'American dance' because of its origin, it is in no wise nationalistic, but is based on a universal principle. Among its leading practitioners in the contemporary field in New York are the German-born Hanya Holm, and the Mexican-born José Limon (now in the United States Army), who fall naturally into place beside such native-born leaders as Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, Helen Tamiris, and Charles Weidman."

At the conclusion, on April 29, of its showing at the Museum of Modern Art, the exhibition will be shown in Cuba and other Spanish-speaking countries to which convenient transportation facilities exist. A duplicate version of the exhibition, provided with Portuguese text, will be forwarded to Brazil, where it will be circulated by the Ministry of Education.