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THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

NEW YORK

11 WEST 53rd STREET
TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900
CABLES: MODERNART, NEW-YORK

SARAH NEWMAYER, PUBLICITY DIRECTOR

December 28, 1940.

TO Photography Editors
City Editors
Art Editors

Dear Sir:

The Museum will make an important announcement Monday afternoon at the preview of its exhibition Sixty Photographs: A Survey of Camera Esthetics.

I hope you can attend or send a representative to the preview, which is from 2 to 6 P.M. Monday, December 30.

Sincerely yours,



Sarah Newmeyer
Publicity Director

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART**11 WEST 53RD STREET, NEW YORK****TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900**

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MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ESTABLISHES NEW DEPARTMENT OF PHOTOGRAPHY

The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, announces the establishment of a Department of Photography. Beaumont Newhall, Librarian of the Museum, has been appointed Curator of the department. In addition to his new position Mr. Newhall will for the present continue his work as Librarian.

The announcement was made by Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Director of the Museum, at the preview yesterday of the first exhibition organized by the new department, Sixty Photographs: A Survey of Camera Esthetics. The exhibition opens to the public today (Tuesday, December 31) and will continue through Sunday, January 12. In announcing the new department Mr. Barr said:

"Eleven years ago, when the Museum of Modern Art was founded, the arts of painting and sculpture were its principal concern. Gradually other departments were formed: Architecture in 1933, to which was added Industrial Art; then the Film Library in 1936 and now Photography.

"One of the most vigorous and popular arts of our time, photography has long been recognized by the Museum. Several important exhibitions have been organized: notably, in 1932, Murals by American Painters and Photographers; in 1937 the large retrospective show Photography 1839-1937; in 1938, American Photographs by Walker Evans; and in 1940, War Comes to the People, A Story Written with the Lens by Therese Bonney. Under the auspices of the Library, a collection of photographs has been founded, and a reference library of photographic material established. The success of these enterprises has led the Trustees to create a Department of Photography.

"By exhibitions, both in the Museum and throughout the country, by increasing in size and scope the photograph collection and reference library, by publications and lectures, it is hoped that the Department will serve as a center for those artists who have chosen photography as their medium, and will bring before the public work which, in the opinion of the Curator and the Committee, represents the best of the present and the past."

The Department of Photography has been organized and its preliminary program worked out by a Photography Committee working in close cooperation with the Museum. The Committee consists of David H. McAlpin, Chairman; Ansel Adams, Vice-Chairman; John E. Abbott, Alfred H. Barr, Jr.; Dr. Walter Clark, Beaumont Newhall, Archibald MacLeish, Laurance Rockefeller and James Thrall Soby.

Mr. McAlpin, who collects photographs as others collect prints, makes a statement for the Committee in the Museum's current Bulletin which is devoted to the new Department of Photography. Mr. McAlpin's statement is in part as follows:

"The history of painting, sculpture and the other arts has been studied, discussed and analyzed exhaustively and is widely accessible to all. By reason of the perishable nature of plates, films and prints, original photographic material is scarce. Much of it has disappeared. What remains is scattered, its whereabouts almost unknown. Too little has been done to assemble, correlate and appraise what is still extant and make it generally available for study and comparison.

"It seems timely and logical that more systematic attention should be devoted to photography, to orient our judgment by a greater knowledge and understanding of its history and development, both technical and esthetic. We hope, through the Museum's collection, in its exhibitions and by publications, to help evaluate what has been achieved and what is now being done."

Also in the Museum Bulletin Mr. Newhall has written briefly of the program for the new department. Mr. Newhall writes in part as follows:

"The Department of Photography will function as focal center, where the esthetic problems of photography can be evaluated, where the artist who has chosen the camera as his medium can find guidance by example and encouragement, and where the vast amateur public can study both the classics and the most recent and significant developments of photography."

"Practical steps have already been taken. A collection of seven hundred original prints can now be seen on application in the library reading room. These prints, supplemented by others borrowed for the occasion, will be presented in various regularly planned exhibitions. Many of the exhibitions will not be limited to the New York showing, but will be available to camera clubs, schools, colleges and museums outside the city by the Museum's Department of Circulating Exhibitions. Every effort will be made to have small, intimate exhibitions always on view at the Museum so that, besides the permanent collection, the student will always find something of photographic value in the building!"

The exhibition of Sixty Photographs, organized by Mr. Newhall and Ansel Adams, noted California photographer, is not inclusive and is not intended to define but to suggest the possibilities of photographic vision. Color, commercial, scientific and advertising photography are not represented. The sixty photographs range from objective interpretation of fact to abstract creation of form by the cameraless shadowgraph. Several printing methods are included: the now obsolete calotype, albumen and platinum processes; direct photogravures, palladiotypes, as well as the more usual chloride and bromide developing-out paper.

The exhibition ranges from portraiture to informal studies of people in relation to things, including photographs which comment upon social problems, or simply reflect the daily life of people; architectural subjects; photographs of broad landscape and close detail; and in some prints interest in the discovery of form is uppermost, even to the exclusion of reality.

Among the photographers represented in the exhibition are the following: Berenice Abbott, Ansel Adams, Eugene Atget, Matthew B. Brady, Walker Evans, Dr. Arnold Genthe, D. O. Hill, Man Ray, Charles Sheeler, Edward Steichen, Alfred Stieglitz, Paul Strand, Edward Weston, Clarence H. White.

After the exhibition closes on January 12 the Museum's circulating department will send it to museums, galleries, colleges, and schools throughout the country. Mr. Newhall and Mr. Adams will give lectures at some of the places where the exhibition is shown.

Beaumont Newhall, Harvard A.B. 1930, A.M. 1931; was a lecturer at the Pennsylvania Museum of Art in 1931-32. In 1932-33 he was Assistant in the Department of Decorative Arts in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. He attended the University of Paris in 1933 as a Carnegie Scholar, and the University of London in 1934. He directed the Museum's exhibition Photography 1839-1937, and is the author of Photography, A Short Critical History. In addition to publishing articles and reviews on art he has lectured at leading museums and colleges in the East. He was appointed Librarian of the Museum of Modern Art in 1935.