

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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

TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900

RETROSPECTIVE EXHIBITION OF PAUL STRAND'S PHOTOGRAPHSOPENS AT MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

The work of a distinguished American photographer is being shown at the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, in a retrospective exhibition entitled Photographs 1915-1945 by Paul Strand. The thirty-year-period is represented by 172 photographs and includes examples from Strand's first New York series and from his Maine, Gaspé, New Mexico, Mexico and Vermont series. The exhibition, opening Wednesday, April 25, will continue through June 10. Later, part of the exhibition will be sent to other museums and art galleries throughout the country by the Museum's Department of Circulating Exhibitions.

Born in New York City in 1890, Strand is of Bohemian descent. He lived in a brownstone house on the upper West Side and, at the age of fourteen, entered the Ethical Culture School. There Lewis Hine, a young biology instructor just beginning to be a photographer himself and later to become famous for his pictures of immigrants at Ellis Island, started a photography class in 1907. Seventeen-year-old Strand joined Hine's class and came under the influence that was to shape his life and career. One winter afternoon Hine took his student group to Stieglitz's Photo-Secession Gallery at 291 Fifth Avenue and through its open door Strand walked into a new world of which he was to become one of the acknowledged masters.

Nancy Newhall, Acting Curator of the Museum's Department of Photography, has directed the exhibition and written the introduction to the Strand catalog which the Museum is publishing. Of the impact and influence which "291" and its presiding genius, Stieglitz, had on the young man, Mrs. Newhall writes:

"Here Strand received his first real illumination: Stieglitz pointed out that photography in its incredible detail and subtle chiaroscuro has powers beyond the range of the human hand. To destroy this miraculous image, as some members of the Photo-Secession, and Strand himself at the time, were doing, was to deny photography. To realize the full resources of his medium, the photographer must accept the great challenge of the objective world: to see, profoundly, instantly, completely. After that, during the slow, painful years of groping towards what he had to say, Strand went back to Stieglitz whenever he felt he had some advance to show...."

Strand joined the Camera Club of New York and, at eighteen,

decided to make photography his life work. He had, however, to make a living and, in 1909 when graduated from the Ethical Culture School, he began two years of unsuccessful attempts at business: enamelware, slaughter house, insurance. In 1911 he spent savings, accumulated since childhood, on a two months' trip to Europe. On his return to New York, he set up for himself as a commercial photographer, doing portraits and hand-tinted platins of college campuses. At the same time, of course, he continued a separate life in the development of his individual photography.

Mrs. Newhall writes of him at this period as follows:

"Dropping in now and then to see the exhibitions at '291,' he found in Picasso, Braque and Matisse something which at first puzzled him and then became a great generative force. He began to understand their need to re-examine reality in the light of the twentieth century, their search for the elements--form, line, tone, rhythm--whose counterpoint underlies all art. He found the same structural sense in Picasso and El Greco, in Stieglitz and Hill."

In 1916 Stieglitz gave an exhibition at "291" of his first first New York series, of which Mrs. Newhall writes:

"Here was the city, now entering its climactic period of stricture and thrust, dwarfing its inhabitants, engulfing them in speed, terror, and frustration. Other photographers had looked down from the city's towers before, but not with this formidable realization of abstracted form. Here too were the hurt, eroded people in the streets and parks. These huge, astonishing closeups are the first true 'candid.' ..."

Stieglitz himself wrote of Strand:

"His work is rooted in the best traditions of photography. His vision is potential. His work is pure. It is direct. It does not rely upon tricks of process. In whatever he does, there is applied intelligence.... These photographs are the direct expression of today."

In 1918-19 Strand served in the Army as an x-ray technician. Returning to civilian life, he made his first landscapes, in Nova Scotia in 1919, and worked on a second New York series. With Charles Sheeler, the noted painter and photographer, Strand made a motion picture with sub-titles from Whitman's poems, which was released in July 1921 as New York the Magnificent. The film was the first to use an abstract and poetic approach to documentary material.

Strand became a free-lance motion picture cameraman and for some years made newsreels for Fox and Pathé and background shots for Famous Players and Metro-Goldwyn. In the years 1925-1928 he made the remarkable series of closeups of wood, rock and plant forms in Colorado and Maine.

In 1929 he went to the Gaspé, before its discovery as a tourist paradise, and made an exquisite photographic series in which the moving forces of clouds, people and boats are played against

static landscape elements. He further developed this almost symphonic handling of a land and its people in his New Mexico series 1930-32. From New Mexico, Strand went on to Mexico where the people become the predominant element in his photographs of that country.

Carlos Chavez, the great Mexican composer and conductor, was at that time Chief of the Department of Fine Arts in the Secretariat of Education. He appointed Strand chief of photography and cinematography and asked him to make a film of Mexico. Under the title Redes, Strand completed this film and in 1936 it was released in the United States as The Wave, a simple story of fishermen in the Bay of Vera Cruz. A great artistic success, The Wave was shown widely in Mexico and also achieved considerable critical and popular acclaim in France, Cuba, Chile and the United States. It ran five weeks in New York City.

For approximately ten years Strand spent most of his time as a film maker. In 1935 he photographed with Ralph Steiner and Leo Hurwitz The Plow that Broke the Plains, under the direction of Pare Lorentz. In 1937 Frontier Films was formed, with Strand as president. This non-profit organization produced China Strikes Back, Heart of Spain, People of the Cumberland, and Cartier-Bresson's Return to Life. Native Land, the only Frontier film actually photographed by Strand, was released in 1942.

After finishing Native Land and short films made for government agencies, Strand returned to photography. In the Fall and Winter of 1943-44, he went to Vermont, where he made the latest series shown in the exhibition. Of it Mrs. Newhall writes:

"Here, as in the Gaspé, in Mexico and New Mexico, where generations of painters and photographers have found only the superficial and the picturesque, Strand reached into the essence of New England. The shuttered white church stands on patches of snow like the terrifying grip of an ideal. In the worn doorlatch, the tar paper patch, the crazy window among rotting clapboards, appear the ancient precision and mordant decay of New England. In the glimpse of delicate woods in snow through the side of a shed he expresses its frail and stubborn loveliness."

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Exhibition of
PHOTOGRAPHS 1915-1945
by PAUL STRAND
April 25 - June 10, 1945

The Museum of Modern Art
11 West 53 Street, New York

CHECKLIST

New York 1915-1916

- 1 CENTRAL PARK. 1915.
- 2 NEW ORLEANS. 1915.
- 3 CITY HALL PARK. 1915.
- 4 WALL STREET. 1915. Lent by Alfred Stieglitz.
- 5 FROM THE VIADUCT. 1915.

The above five photographs are original platinum prints, contact prints from 11 x 14 negatives, enlarged from $3\frac{1}{4}$ x $4\frac{1}{4}$ inch negatives.

- 6 PORTRAIT, NEW YORK. 1915-16. (Old woman with cherries on hat)
- 7 " " " " (Sandwich-man)
- 8 " " " " (Yawning woman)
- 9 " " " " (Man with derby)
- 10 " " " " (Blind woman)
- 11 BOWLS---ABSTRACTION. 1915.
- 12 JUG AND FRUIT. 1915.
- 13 CHAIR---ABSTRACTION. 1915.
- 14 BACKYARDS, PORT KENT. 1916.
- 15 UNDER THE EL, NEW YORK. 1916.
- 16 NEW YORK. 1916. (Sidewalk, rooftop)
- 17 SNOW, BACKYARDS, NEW YORK. 1915.
- 18 WHITE FENCE, PORT KENT. 1916.

The above thirteen prints were made by Strand in 1945 from 11 x 14 negatives and printed on chlorobromide paper, toned with gold and selenium.

- 19 FAMILY BUGGY, LAKE GEORGE. 1922. Chloride print.
- 20 GASTON LACHAISE. 1927. Japine platinum print.
- 21 TRUCKMAN'S HOUSE, NEW YORK. 1923. Chlorobromide print, 1945.
- 22 PORTRAIT. 1923. Platinum print.
- 23 FREIGHTER. 1921. Japine platinum print, 1937.
- 24 REBECCA. 1923. Japine platinum print.

Machines 1922 (8 x 10)

- 25 LATHE I.
- 26 MOTION PICTURE CAMERA.
- 27 CAMERA: GEARS.

28 CAMERA: FILM MOVEMENT.

The above four photographs are chlorido prints.

29 LATHE II. 1922. Chlorobromide print.

Colorado 1926 (8 x 10)

30 CAVE DWELLING, MESA VERDE.

31 CLIFF DWELLING, FREJOLES CANYON.

The above two photographs are chlorido prints.

32 BLASTED TREE.

33 TREE ROOT FORMS.

34 UPROOTED TREE AND WHITE BRIAR.

The above three photographs are Japine platinum prints.

Maine 1927 (8 x 10)

35. ROCK FORMS.

36 FERN AFTER RAIN.

37 BEACH GRASS.

38 DRIFTWOOD I.

39 TOADSTOOLS AFTER RAIN.

40 DRIFTWOOD II, GASPE. 1929.

41 DRIFTWOOD III.

42 IRIS AND FERNS.

43 TOADSTOOL AND ROCK.

44 MULLEN AND STUMP, CONN. 1921.

45 IRIS I.

46 MULLEN. Blue-black platinum print.

47 FOREST. Platinum print, gold-toned.

48 TOADSTOOL AND GRASSES. Japine platinum print. Lent by Mrs. Charles Liebman.

49 DRIFTWOOD IV, GASPE. 1929. Japine platinum print.

50 COBWEB AFTER RAIN. Chlorido print.

51 WAVE-WORN STONE. Chlorido print.

52 FERN IN WOODS. Platinum print. Lent by Mrs. Mitchell Ittelson.

53 MULLEN IN DEW. Japine platinum print.

54 IRIS II. Platinum print, gold-toned.

55 EDGE OF THE FOREST. Japine platinum print.

Gaspé 1929 (4 x 5)

56 THE HARBOR.

57 FISHING VILLAGE.

58 SAILS AND CLOUDS.

59 THE BLACK HORSE.

60 PERCE ROCK.

61 WHITE HOUSE - STORM SKY.

- 62 THE WHITE SHED.
- 63 SEA CLOUD.
- 64 THE ST. LAWRENCE.
- 65 BEACHING THE BOAT.
- 66 FRENCH BEACH.
- 67 FISH-HOUSES, PERCE.

The above twelve photographs are chloride prints.

New Mexico 1930

- 68 NEAR RINCONADA. 1932.
- 69 WINDOW, RED RIVER. 1930.
- 70 FALSE FRONT AND MOUNTAIN. 1931. Gold-toned.
- 71 ABANDONED ADOBE HOUSE. 1932.
- 72 NEW MEXICAN HOUSE. 1932.

The above five photographs are contact prints on Japine platinum paper, 8 x 10.

- 73 HACIENDA. 1930.
- 74 ARROYO. 1930.
- 75 BADLANDS NEAR SANTA FE. 1930.
- 76 RODEO. 1930.

The above four photographs are contact prints on Japine platinum paper, 4 x 5.

- 77 WINDOW, GHOST TOWN. 1932. Collection Museum of Modern Art.
- 78 GHOST TOWN HOUSE, RED RIVER. 1931.
- 79 DESERT. 1932.
- 80 RUINED CHURCH I. 1932.

The above four photographs are 8 x 10.

- 81 RANCHOS DE TAOS CHURCH I. 1931.
- 82 RINCONADA CHURCHYARD. 1931.
- 83 CHURCH NEAR ESPANOLA. 1932.
- 84 RANCHOS DE TAOS CHURCH II. 1931. Collection Museum of Modern Art.

The above four photographs are 5 x 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ contact prints on Japine platinum paper.

- 85 CITY HALL, ST. ELMO, COLORADO. 1932.
- 86 DESERTED SALOON, ASPEN, COLORADO. 1932.
- 87 STORE, ASPEN, COLORADO. 1932.
- 88 STORE WINDOW, ASPEN, COLORADO. 1932.

The above four photographs are 8 x 10 contact prints on chloride paper.

- 89 FALSE FRONT, COLORADO. 1932. Chloride print.
- 90 INDEPENDENCE PASS, COLORADO. 1932. Chloride print.
- 91 SAND DUNES, ABIQUIU. 1931. 5 x 6 $\frac{1}{4}$.
- 92 BLACK MOUNTAIN, CERRO. 1932. 5 x 6 $\frac{1}{4}$.

- 93 APACHE FIESTA. 1930. 4 x 5.
- 94 HACIENDA, NEW MEXICO. 1932. 5 x 6 $\frac{1}{4}$.
- 95 BUTTRESS, RANCHOS DE TAOS CHURCH. 1931. 5 x 6 $\frac{1}{4}$.
- 96 WHITE HORSE, TAOS. 1932. 5 x 6 $\frac{1}{4}$.
- 97 SKY AND DESERT, PERA BLANCA. 1932. 4 x 5.
- 98 CANYON OF THE RIO GRANDE. 1930. 4 x 5.
- 99 TALPA. 1931. 5 x 6 $\frac{1}{4}$.
- 100 ABANDONED CHURCH, NEW MEXICO. 1932. 8 x 10.
- 101 HOUSE IN TRUCHAS. 1931. 5 x 6 $\frac{1}{4}$.
- 102 CHURCH, TESUQUE PUEBLO. 1932. 5 x 6 $\frac{1}{4}$.
- 103 ELISABETHTOWN, NEW MEXICO. 1931. 8 x 10.

Mexico 1933

- 104 POTTERY VENDOR, URUAPAN.
- 105 BOY, HIDALGO.
- 106 YOUNG WOMAN AND BOY, TOLUCA.
- 107 WOMEN OF SANTA ANNA, MICHOACAN.
- 108 WOMAN AND BOY, TENANCINGO.
- 109 MAN, STATE OF HIDALGO.

The above six photographs are 5 x 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ contact prints on Japine platinum paper.

- 110 HOUSE, SALTILLO.
- 111 VIRGIN, OAXACA.
- 112 CALVARIO PATZCUARO.
- 113 CHURCH, TLACOCHOAYA. Chlorobromide, gold-toned.
- 114 CRISTO, OAXACA. Platinum print.

The above five photographs are 8 x 10.

- 115 OLD MAN ASLEEP, URUAPAN.
- 116 MEN OF SANTA ANNA, MICHOACAN.
- 117 CHURCH, NORTHERN MEXICO.
- 118 WOMAN WITH HEN, TENANCINGO.
- 119 BOY, MILPA ALTA. Gold-toned.
- 120 PLAZA, STATE OF PUEBLA.

The above six photographs are 5 x 6 $\frac{1}{4}$.

- 121 DOORWAY, URUAPAN.
- 122 BOY, URUAPAN. Lent by Rebecca James.
- 123 VIRGIN, SAN FELIPE, OAXACA. Gold-toned.
- 124 CRISTO, HUEXOTLA.
- 125 VIRGIN, URUAPAN.

The above five photographs are 8 x 10.

- 126 BOY, TENANCINGO.

- 127 GIRL AND CHILD, OCOYOCOC.
- 128 MAN AND BOY, MILPA ALTA.
- 129 HOUSE, TLAXCALA.
- 130 SAINT AND LADDER, PATZCUARO.
- 131 HACIENDA, SALTILLO.
- 132 CRISTO WITH THORNS, HUEXOTLA.
- 133 CRISTO, TLACOCOHOAYA, OAXACA.
- 134 GATEWAY, HIDALGO.
- 135 CHURCH GATEWAY. (Portfolio)
- 136 WOMAN AND BABY, MILPA ALTA.
- 137 BORRACHO, MILPA ALTA.
- 138 TWO MEN, OCOYOCOC.
- 139 JANITZIO.
- 140 WOMAN, PATZCUARO.
- 141 WOMAN, IXMAQUILPAN.
- 142 NEAR SALTILLO.
- 143 CHURCH, STATE OF PUEBLA.
- 144 MAN, TENANCINGO.

Gaspé 1936

- 145 CHILDREN, WOLF RIVER. Japine platinum print.
- 146 FISHERMEN'S HOUSES, WOLF RIVER. Gold-toned platinum print.
- 147 WOLF RIVER, GASPE. " " "
- 148 OLD FISHERMAN, WOLF RIVER. " " "
- 149 BARNS, LOUISEVILLE, QUEBEC. Chloride print.
- 150 TWO YOUNG FISHERMEN, WOLF RIVER.
- 151 WHARF, GASPE.

The above four photographs are 5 x 6 $\frac{1}{4}$.

- 152 BARN GATE, LOUISEVILLE, QUEBEC. 8 x 10 Japine platinum print.

Vermont 1944

- 153 ROAD INTO THE FARM. 8 x 10 chlorobromide, gold-toned.
- 154 WORKSHOP WINDOW. 8 x 10.
- 155 MR. BOLSTER OF WESTON. 5 x 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ gold-toned.
- 156 SLAB HOLLOW. 5 x 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ selenium-toned.
- 157 STOCKBERGER'S PASTURE. 8 x 10 selenium-toned.
- 158 SHED. 8 x 10 gold-toned.
- 159 CORN CRIB. 8 x 10 selenium-toned.
- 160 WAR BRIDE. 5 x 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ selenium-toned.
- 161 BIRCH, HILL, AND SKY. 5 x 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ gold-toned.
- 162 OLD KEG SHIP. Gold-toned.

- 163 APPLE TREE. Selenium-toned.
- 164 OLD HEN HOUSE. "
- 165 THE TAR PAPER PATCH. Gold-toned.
- 166 BARN WINDOW AND FROST. "
- 167 DOOR LATCH. "
- 168 BARN, DUMMERSTON CENTER. Selenium-toned.
- 169 TOWARDS THE SUGAR HOUSE.

The above eight photographs are 8 x 10.

- 170 MR. BENNETT. 5 x $6\frac{1}{4}$ selenium-toned.
- 171 GRAVEYARD AND MOUNTAIN, EAST JAMAICA. 5 x $6\frac{1}{4}$.
- 172 BAPTIST CHURCH, JAMAICA. 8 x 10.