

The Museum of Modern Art

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WALKER EVANS' SUBWAY, an exhibition of 41 portraits made in the New York subways from 1938 to 1941, will be on view in the Edward Steichen Photography Center at The Museum of Modern Art from October 5 through December 11. John Szarkowski, Director of the Photography Department, has selected and installed the show.

For more than two decades this particular group of photographs was deliberately withheld by the artist from public exhibition and publication. They are released now for the Museum exhibition because, Evans says, the "rude and impudent invasion involved has been carefully softened and partially mitigated by a planned passage of time."

With an unobtrusive camera the photographer caught his captive riders unaware. This was a technical feat at that time, as the photographs were taken in available light and with the relatively slow film then on the market.

What has been recorded are the moments when the individual human being is revealed - "as matchless as a thumbprint or a snowflake," according to James Agee's foreword to the forthcoming book of these subway pictures, Many Are Called (Houghton Mifflin, November 1966). Agee continues: "Each carries in the posture of his body, in his hands, in his face, in the eyes, the signatures of a time and a place in the world upon a creature for whom the name immortal soul is one mild and vulgar metaphor."

Walker Evans was born in St. Louis in 1903, and has been a photographer for 40 years. From 1935-37 he was an influential member of the remarkable group of men and women who photographed America during the Depression for the Farm Security Administration. "His work has helped to define not only the whole documentary tradition of photography, but every American's sense of his past and his present," John Szarkowski says.

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