

# The Museum of Modern Art

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11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Circle 5-8900 Cable: Modernart

No. 18

FOR RELEASE

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PRESS PREVIEW:

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1 p.m. - 4 p.m.

The photographs of JERRY N. UELSMANN, on view at The Museum of Modern Art from February 15 through April 16, use multiple-printing and other darkroom techniques shunned by most contemporary photographers and are, thus, a challenge to the prevalent assumption that the photograph is defined in the artist's eye at the moment the shutter is released. The 38 photographs, dating from 1960 to 1966, are shown in the third floor Edward Steichen Photography Center.

"It is my conviction that the darkroom is capable of being, in the truest sense, a visual research lab; a place for discovery, observation and meditation." Mr. Uelsmann says, "To date, but a few venturesome souls have tentatively explored the darkroom world of the cameraless image, the negative sandwich, multiple printings and the limited tonal scale."

Uelsmann suggests that today's photographers should not be afraid of "post-visualization" and should be willing to change the image at any point in the entire photographic process. This is opposed to the traditional attitude of "pre-visualization" in which the finished print is conceived, complete in every detail of texture, movement and proportion, before exposure, allowing for no redefinition later.

Uelsmann points out that, "The contemporary artist, in all other areas, is no longer restricted to the traditional use of his materials....he is not bound to a fully conceived, pre-visioned end. His mind is kept alert to in-process discovery and a working rapport is established between the artist and his creation.

"One of the major changes evidenced in modern art is the transition from what was basically an outer-directed art form in the 19th century to the inner-directed art of today....To date, photography has played a minor role in this liberation."

John Szarkowski, Director of the Department of Photography, who selected the exhibition, notes that Uelsmann's photographs are related in technique to the Victorian photomontages of Rejlander and Robinson but are unmistakably contemporary in

their surrealistic and ambiguous imagery.

Thus, in a photograph entitled "Self-Portrait" a figure stands in the background, surrounded by superimposed images of a tree-trunk forming a series of arches around him. The foreground is dominated by an ambiguous spore-like form. In another, the lacy leaves of a tree drift fan-like across what Uelsmann calls a "Poet's House" and in a third, a sculptured lion bites into an alligator's tail while a sea growth floats in the foreground. Sculpture and plant forms, distorted and superimposed figures, all play an important role in Uelsmann's imagery.

The exhibition is part of the continuing series of smaller shows devoted to a particular artist or theme shown in the third floor galleries of the Edward Steichen Photography Center, where works from the Museum's Collection are continuously on view.

Jerry Uelsmann was born in Detroit in 1934; he received his BFA degree from the Rochester Institute of Technology and his MS and MFA degrees from Indiana University. He is an Assistant Professor of Art at the University of Florida in Gainesville, where he has taught photography since 1960.

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Mr. Uelsmann will be in New York for the opening of the exhibition and will be available for interviews. Photographs and additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, and Lynn Traiger, Assistant Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019. Circle 5-8900.

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JERRY N. UELSMANN

February 15 - April 16, 1967

## Wall Label

Creative photography during the past half century has for the most part been based on the straight approach, in which the photograph is defined in the photographer's eye at the moment the shutter is released, and in which darkroom manipulations that would basically modify that image are rejected. Jerry Uelsmann challenges this concept:

"It is my conviction that the darkroom is capable of being, in the truest sense, a visual research lab; a place for discovery, observation, and meditation. To date, but a few venturesome souls have tentatively explored the darkroom world of the cameraless image, the negative sandwich, multiple printings, the limited tonal scale, etc. Let us not be afraid to allow for 'post-visualization.' By post-visualization I refer to the willingness on the part of the photographer to re-visualize the final image at any point in the entire photographic process."

Uelsmann's pictures, which make frank and visible use of all manner of darkroom artifice, are not analytic but synthetic. Related in technique to the Victorian photomontages of Rejlander and Robinson, they are unmistakably contemporary in their surrealistic and ambiguous imagery.

They are also unashamedly romantic, and like all romantic art they must tread a narrow path between bathos and sentimentality. In traveling this difficult and recently unfrequented track, Uelsmann's balance is remarkable.

John Szarkowski

Jerry Uelsmann was born in Detroit in 1934; he received his BFA from the Rochester Institute of Technology and his MS and MFA from Indiana University. He is an Associate Professor of Art at the University of Florida at Gainesville, where he has taught photography since 1960.

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## Checklist

1. SELF PORTRAIT AS ROBINSON AND REJLANDER. 1964. 67.11.
2. BLESS OUR HOME AND EAGLE. 1962. 67.33.
3. UNTITLED. 1966. 67.30.
4. QUEST OF CONTINUAL BECOMING. 1965. 67.41.
5. THE RETURN # 1. 1963. 67.36
6. UNTITLED. 1966. 67.7.
7. MARILYN AND THE SHEEP. 1964. 67.38.
8. YESTERDAY'S CHILD. 1966. 67.27.
9. INTROSPECTION. 1961. 67.25.
10. UNTITLED. 1966. 67.21.
11. SYMBOLIC MUTATION. 1961. 67.12.
12. UNTITLED. 1964. 67.32.
13. UNTITLED. 1961. 67.43.
14. UNTITLED. 1966. 67.22.
15. SELF PORTRAIT. 1963. 67.15.
16. DWELLING OF THE WISE. 1960. 67.19.
17. UNTITLED. 1966. 67.15.
18. CONJECTURE OF A TIME. 1965. 67.42.
19. IN SEARCH OF A CAUSE. 1966. 67.39.
20. ROOM # 1. 1963. 67.4
21. UNTITLED. 1966. 67.24.
22. UNTITLED. 1966. 67.9.
23. UNTITLED. 1966. 67.35.

(more)

24. SELF PORTRAIT. 1966. 67.10.
25. MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS. 1964. 67.6.
26. POET'S HOUSE (FIRST VERSION). 1965. 67.5.
27. UNTITLED. 1966. 67.29.
28. UNTITLED. 1964. 67.3.
29. THE FEEL OF LIGHT. 1966. 67.8.
30. UNTITLED. 1965. 67.28.
31. UNTITLED. 1964. 67.40.
32. UNTITLED. 1966. 67.18.
33. MECHANICAL-MAN # 1. 1960. 67.14.
34. ME. 1965. 67.23.
35. UNTITLED. 1966. 67.16.
36. UNTITLED. 1963. 67.31.
37. UNTITLED. 1965. 67.37.
38. HOME IS A MEMORY. 1963. 67.34.

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