

The Museum of Modern Art

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Large photographic mosaics by Ray K. Metzker will be on view in the Edward Steichen Photography Center of The Museum of Modern Art from October 25 through December. Selected by John Szarkowski, Director of the Museum's Department of Photography, the exhibition presents unique photographs each of which synthesizes many separate exposures.

A teacher at the Philadelphia College of Art, Ray K. Metzker was born in Milwaukee in 1931 and received his B.A. from Beloit College and an M.S. from the Institute of Design of the Illinois Institute of Technology. Metzker's work is included in the collections of the Art Institute of Chicago and the George Eastman House as well as The Museum of Modern Art.

Metzker investigates the multiple image which has become familiar in modern technology. Sometimes his work consists of neat rows of photographs containing fragments of recognizable subjects; others contain a single image repeated over and over, with subtle variations, until a new meaning emerges.

"Where photography has been primarily a process of selection and extraction, I wish to investigate the possibilities of synthesis," states the photographer. "To date my works have formed three categories: repetition with tonal variation in prints; juxtaposed images formed at different moments but linked in the camera by the interval between frames; and overlapping successive exposures on roll film so that the entire strip is seen as one prints.... I intend the elements to be presented for simultaneous viewing... like a mosaic or mural."

Metzker's methods of dealing with the problem of synthesizing "collected and related moments" often require him to organize a large number of photographs of the same size into large-scale photographic mosaics; the largest of the works in the exhibition is about four by five feet. These large works, exploring photography's potential for infinite reproductions from the same negative, have become the basis

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for a new and larger scale of photographic work. "Visual ambiguities arise from the tension between the scale of the modular units and the scale of the work as a whole," observes Bruce MacDonald, graduate intern in the Department of Photography. "At one distance the photographic mosaic may be read as sequential fragments of reality; further back it may be seen as a pattern of blacks against white; at another distance, positive shapes become negative ones. In every case the viewer is forced to accept the work as a sum which is greater than its parts."

Several smaller photographs also exploring these techniques will be included in the exhibition. Ray K. Metzker is one in a continuing series of small shows in part of the Steichen Center which focus upon the works of individual photographers or specific themes. On October 25, a new exhibition of about 150 works selected from the Museum's collection of over 10,000 prints will also open in the Steichen Center galleries.

Photographs and additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, and Patricia B. Kaplan, Associate, Press Services, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019. 245-3200.

RAY K. METZKER

October 25, 1967 - January, 1968

Wall Label

Ray K. Metzker rejects the conventional photographic realism of the isolated view in order to find increased freedom to interpret and create. His works consist not of a preserved moment but of assembled related moments presented for simultaneous viewing. Through controlled juxtaposition of modular visual fragments he creates a multi-view, a fine-spun net to catch and combine the commonplace though normally elusive visual nuances of his subject.

Photographic techniques such as multiple exposure, tone control, and cropping exploit the visual possibilities within the modules. At close range perceptual variety is emphasized by the differences between individual modules. From a greater distance visual ambiguities and implications arise from the tension between the scale of the modules and the scale of the work as a whole; subject is transmuted into pattern. At one distance a work may read as fragmented reality; step back and it becomes a configuration of blacks and whites; positive shapes may become negative ones. Each of Metzker's statements offers to the visual faculties a sum greater than its parts.

Bruce K. MacDonald

Ray K. Metzker was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1931. He received his B.A. degree from Beloit College in 1953 and his M.S. degree from the Institute of Design of the Illinois Institute of Technology in 1959. In 1966 he was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship for experimental studies in black and white photography. He is currently teaching photography at the Philadelphia College of Art. Metzker's work is represented in the collections of the Art Institute of Chicago, the George Eastman House and The Museum of Modern Art.