

**MoMA PRESENTS EXHIBITION OF PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN SZARKOWSKI**

**Exhibition Includes 75 Photographs That Depict Urban and Rural America**

***John Szarkowski: Photographs***

The Robert and Joyce Menschel Gallery, Third Floor  
February 1—May 15, 2006

**New York, January 4, 2005**—The Museum of Modern Art presents *John Szarkowski: Photographs*, on view in The Robert and Joyce Menschel Gallery on the third floor from February 1 through May 15, 2006. This touring exhibition, the first retrospective of Szarkowski's work in more than four decades, features 75 gelatin silver prints, including 50 of his early works—pictures of the Midwest dating from 1943 to 1962, when he became director of MoMA's Department of Photography—and 25 of his later works, many of which were made around his farm in upstate New York following his retirement from MoMA in 1991. Though they vary in subject and date, the black-and-white prints present a remarkable and consistent vision, imparting a sense of history, place, and the way Americans have regarded the land.

The exhibition is organized by Sandra S. Phillips, senior curator of photography at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA), where the exhibition premiered (February 5 through May 15, 2005). The exhibition then traveled to the Center for Creative Photography at the University of Arizona (June 11—September 5, 2005) and the Milwaukee Art Museum (September 30, 2005—January 1, 2006). After the MoMA presentation, which is organized for the Museum by Peter Galassi, Chief Curator of the Department of Photography, the exhibition will travel to its final stop, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (June 18 through September 10, 2006).

Mr. Galassi says: "Before coming to MoMA, John Szarkowski had published two distinguished books of photographs and had begun work on a third major project, in the Quetico-Superior wilderness. While serving the work of other photographers for three decades, he put his own work aside. This carefully selected exhibition at last enables a broad public to appreciate his achievement as an artist."

Szarkowski was born in 1925 in Ashland, Wisconsin, where he spent his formative years in an environment characterized by the agricultural traditions of the Midwest. His interest in photography began at about the age of 11. In 1943, Szarkowski went to Madison to attend the University of Wisconsin, where his studies were interrupted by U.S. Army service during World War II, and he received his BS degree with a major in art history in 1948. After graduation, Szarkowski was hired to be the museum photographer for the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis. The Walker gave Szarkowski the opportunity to learn about contemporary art while experimenting with new ideas, and in 1949 he had his first solo exhibition there.

In 1951 he joined the staff of the Albright Art School in Buffalo, New York, and shortly thereafter began photographing Louis Sullivan's Prudential (Guaranty) Building. These photographs, some of which are included in the exhibition, fueled his interest in creating a book about Sullivan, and he moved to Chicago to pursue the idea. In 1954, Szarkowski received a Guggenheim fellowship for the Sullivan project and the book, *The Idea of Louis Sullivan*, was published in 1956.

Between 1958 and 1962, Szarkowski reestablished residence in northern Wisconsin and continued work on a variety of photographic projects. In 1958 he published his second book, *The Face of Minnesota*, a portrait of the state and its inhabitants. In these photographs, as seen in the selection in the exhibition, Szarkowski celebrates the virtues of traditional agriculture, but he also acknowledges the social and economic pressures on rural life and the historical changes already in motion.

In 1961, he received another Guggenheim fellowship, which allowed him to work on a book about the value of the wilderness, specifically examining the Quetico-Superior area, a remote region of many lakes shared by northern Minnesota and Canada. Later that year he was offered the position of Director of MoMA's Department of Photography, succeeding Edward Steichen. Szarkowski's personal photographic pursuits were limited and private during his tenure at MoMA, but he returned to photography full time after retiring from the Museum in 1991, becoming the Department of Photography's Director Emeritus. His later pictures examine the old apple trees and nineteenth-century barn on his property in upstate New York and the changes of attitudes toward the land from the period after World War II to the present.

In his three decades at MoMA, John Szarkowski earned wide recognition as one of the most influential photography curators and critics of the twentieth century. As Director of the Department of Photography from 1962 through 1991, he oversaw the presentation of more than 100 exhibitions, the publication of more than 30 books and catalogues, the inauguration of the Museum's first photography collection galleries in 1964 and their expansion in 1984, the establishment of endowments to support the department's programs, and the continued development of the collection, which now includes more than 25,000 works spanning the history of photography.

**Sponsorship:**

*John Szarkowski: Photographs* is organized by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. The exhibition is generously supported by Randi and Bob Fisher and Charlotte and David Winton. The New York showing is supported by Bulfinch Press and Laurence and Barbara Kirshbaum.

**Publication:**

*John Szarkowski: Photographs* is accompanied by a fully illustrated book of the same title, published by Bulfinch Press. The 156-page hardcover volume features an introductory essay by Sandra S. Phillips, SFMOMA's senior curator of photography; a chronology; amusing and revealing excerpts from Szarkowski's personal correspondence; and 84 tritone photographs. Price: \$60.00.

**Programs:**

Lecture:

**John Szarkowski: *Being a Photographer***

Wednesday, February 8, 6:00 p.m.

Titus 1

John Szarkowski talks about his life and work as a photographer. He will sign books following the lecture. Tickets (\$10; members \$8; students and seniors \$5) can be purchased at the lobby information desk and the Film and Media desk, or online at [www.ticketweb.com](http://www.ticketweb.com).

Book Signing:

Friday, February 10, 11:00 am – 1:00 pm

John Szarkowski will sign copies of his books outside the Robert and Joyce Menschel Gallery, third floor.

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