

MoMA EXHIBITION PRESENTS AN OVERVIEW OF PHOTOGRAPHIC HISTORY ROOTED IN INNOVATIVE EXERCISES—FROM PHOTOGRAAMS AND PHOTOMONTAGES TO EXPERIMENTAL FILMS AND PHOTOBOKS

MoMA Reinstalls Photography Galleries with some 250 Works from the Collection Covering 100 Years of History

The Shaping of New Visions: Photography, Film, Photobook

April 18, 2012–April 29, 2013

The Edward Steichen Photography Galleries, third floor

NEW YORK, March 28, 2012—The Museum of Modern Art draws from its collection to present the exhibition ***The Shaping of New Visions: Photography, Film, Photobook*** on view from April 18, 2012, to April 29, 2013. Filling the third-floor Edward Steichen Photography Galleries, this installation presents more than 250 works by approximately 90 artists, with a focus on new acquisitions and groundbreaking projects by Man Ray, László Moholy-Nagy, Aleksandr Rodchenko, Germaine Krull, Dziga Vertov, Gerhard Rühm, Helen Levitt, Robert Frank, Daido Moriyama, Robert Heinecken, Edward Ruscha, Martha Rosler, Bernd and Hilla Becher, Philip-Lorca diCorcia, Paul Graham, and The Atlas Group/Walid Raad. The exhibition is organized by Roxana Marcoci, Curator, Department of Photography, The Museum of Modern Art.

Punctuated by key photographic projects, experimental films, and photobooks, *The Shaping of New Visions* offers a critical reassessment of photography's role in the avant-garde and neo-avant-garde movements, and in the development of contemporary artistic practices. The shaping of what came to be known as "new vision" photography in the 1920s bore the obvious influence of "lens-based" and "time-based" works. The first gallery begins with photographs capturing the birth of the 20th- century modern metropolis by Berenice Abbott, Edward Steichen, and Alfred Stieglitz, presented next to the avant-garde film *Manhatta* (1921), a collaboration between Paul Strand and Charles Sheeler.

The 1920s were a period of landmark constructions and scientific discoveries all related to light—from Thomas Edison's development of incandescent light to Albert Einstein's theory of relativity and light speed. Man Ray began experimenting with photograms (pictures made by exposing objects placed on photosensitive paper to light)—which he renamed "rayographs" after himself—in which light was both the subject and medium of his work. This exhibition presents Man Ray's most exquisite rayographs, alongside his first short experimental film, *Le Retour à la raison* (*Return to Reason*, 1923), in which he extended the technique to moving images.

In 1925, two years after he joined the faculty of the Bauhaus school in Weimar Germany, László Moholy-Nagy published his influential book *Malerei, Fotografie, Film* (*Painting, Photography,*

Film)—part of a series that he coedited with Bauhaus director Walter Gropius—in which he asserted that photography and cinema are heralding a “culture of light” that has overtaken the most innovative aspects of painting. Moholy-Nagy extolled photography and, by extension, film as the quintessential medium of the future. Moholy-Nagy’s interest in the movement of objects and light through space led him to construct *Light-Space Modulator*, the subject of his only abstract film, *Ein Lichtspiel: schwarz weiss grau* (*A Lightplay: Black White Gray*, 1930), which is presented in the exhibition next to his own photographs and those of Florence Henri.

The rise of photographic avant-gardism from the 1920s to the 1940s is traced in the second gallery primarily through the work of European artists. A section on Constructivism and New Objectivity features works by Paul Citroën, Raoul Hausmann, Florence Henri, Germaine Krull, El Lissitzky, Albert Renger-Patzsch, and August Sander. A special focus on Aleksandr Rodchenko underscores his engagement with the illustrated press through collaborations with Vladimir Mayakovsky and Sergei Tretyakov on the covers and layouts of *Novyi LEF*, the Soviet avant-garde journal of the “Left Front of the Arts,” which popularized the idea of “factography,” or the manufacture of innovative aesthetic facts through photomechanical processes. Alongside Rodchenko, film director Dziga Vertov redefined the medium of still and motion-picture photography with the concept of *kino-glaz* (cine-eye), according to which the perfectible lens of the camera led to the creation of a novel perception of the world. The exhibition features the final clip of Vertov’s 1929 experimental film *Chelovek s kinoapparatom* (*Man with a Movie Camera*), in which the eye is superimposed on the camera lens to form an indivisible apparatus fit to view, process, and convey reality, all at once. This gallery also features a selection of Dada and Surrealist works, including rarely seen photographs, photocollages, and photomontages by Hans Bellmer, Claude Cahun, George Hugnet, André Kertész, Jan Lukas, and Grete Stern, alongside such avant-garde publications as *Documents* and *Littérature*.

The third gallery features artists exploring the social world of the postwar period. On view for the first time is a group of erotic and political typo-collages by Gerhard Rühm, a founder of the Wiener Gruppe (1959–60), an informal group of Vienna-based writers and artists who engaged in radical visual dialogues between pictures and texts. The rebels of street photography—Robert Frank, William Klein, Daido Moriyama, and Garry Winogrand—are represented with a selection of works that refute the then prevailing rules of photography, offering instead elliptical, off-kilter styles that are as personal and controversial as are their unsparing views of postwar society. A highlight of this section is the pioneering slide show *Projects: Helen Levitt in Color* (1971–74). Capturing the lively beat, humor, and drama of New York’s street theater, Levitt’s slide projection is shown for the first time at MoMA since its original presentation at the Museum in 1974.

Photography’s tradition in the postwar period continues in the fourth gallery, which is divided into two sections. One section features “new topographic” works by Robert Adams, Bernd and Hilla Becher, Stephen Shore, and Joel Sternfeld, along with a selection of Edward Ruscha’s self-published books, in which the use of photography as mapmaking signals a conceptual thrust.

This section introduces notable works from the 1970s by artists who embraced photography not just as a way of describing experience, but as a conceptual tool. Examples include Eleanor Antin's *100 Boots* (1971–73), Mel Bochner's *Misunderstandings (A theory of photography)* (1970), VALIE EXPORT's *Einkreisung (Encirclement)* (1976), On Kawara's *I Got Up...* (1977), and Gordon Matta-Clark's *Splitting* (1974), all works that reevaluate the material and contextual definitions of photography. The other section features two major and highly experimental recent acquisitions: Martha Rosler's political magnum opus *Bringing the War Home* (1967–72), developed in the context of her anti-war and feminist activism, for which the artist spliced together images of domestic bliss clipped from the pages of *House Beautiful* with grim pictures of the war in Vietnam taken from *Life* magazine; and Sigmar Polke's early 1970s experiments with multiple exposures, reversed tonal values, and under-and-over exposures, which underscore the artist's idea that "a negative is never finished." The unmistakably cinematic turn that photography takes in the 1980s and early 1990s is represented with a selection of innovative works ranging from Robert Heinecken's *Recto/Verso* (1988) to Philip-Lorca diCorcia's breakthrough *Hustler* series (1990–92).

The final gallery showcases major installations by a younger generation of artists whose works address photography's role in the construction of contemporary history. Tapping into forms of archival reconstitution, The Atlas Group/Walid Raad is represented with *My Neck Is Thinner Than a Hair: Engines* (1996–2004), an installation of 100 pictures of car-bomb blasts in Beirut during the Lebanese civil war (1975–1990) that provokes questions about the factual nature of existing records, the traces of war, and the symptoms of trauma. A selection from Harrell Fletcher's *The American War* (2005) brings together bootlegged photojournalistic pictures of the U.S. military involvement in Southeast Asia, throwing into sharp focus photography's role as a documentary and propagandistic medium in the shaping of historical memory. Jules Spinatsch's *Panorama: World Economic Forum, Davos* (2003), made of thousands of still images and three surveillance video works, chronicles the preparations for the 2003 World Economic Forum, when the entire Davos valley was temporarily transformed into a high security zone. A selection of Paul Graham's photographs from his major photobook project *a shimmer of possibility* (2007), consisting of filmic haikus about everyday life in today's America, concludes the exhibition.

WEBSITE:

The exhibition will be accompanied by an online slideshow that features new acquisitions. The site, MoMA.org/TheShapingofNewVisions, will launch on April 18, 2012.

No. 18

Press Contact: Sarah Jarvis, 212-708-9757 or sarah_jarvis@moma.org

For downloadable high-resolution images, register at MoMA.org/press.

Public Information:

The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, NY 10019, (212) 708-9400, MoMA.org

Hours: Wednesday through Monday: 10:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Friday: 10:30 a.m.-8:00 p.m. Closed Tuesday

Museum Admission: \$25 adults; \$18 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D.; \$14 full-time students with current I.D. Free, members and children 16 and under. (Includes admittance to Museum galleries and film programs). Tickets can be purchase online at a reduced rate of: \$22.50 adults; \$16 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D.; \$12 full-time students with current I.D. Target Free Friday Nights 4:00–8:00 p.m.

Film Admission: \$12 adults; \$10 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D. \$8 full-time students with current I.D. (For admittance to film programs only)