Face Time

MATTHEW S. WITKOVSKY

LOOKING FOR WORK

Photography came into circulation around 1840, in the grand age of the bourgeoisie, and before it could be accepted as art, it had to be shown to be honorable work. According to literary historian Franco Moretti, "The creation of a culture of work has been, arguably, the greatest symbolic achievement of the bourgeoisie as a class."[1] In his compactly sweeping study *The Bourgeois* (2013), Moretti traces the rise and fall of this class, which he asserts has lately disappeared from discourse, though its standards and aspirations remain everywhere embedded in popular consciousness. Near the start of his chronology Moretti places Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), whose protagonist, Moretti points out, puts in far more hours tending to his abundantly well-provisioned castaway's domain than the average English wage laborer did in the factory—even in Defoe's time of capitalism without fetters.[2] Although the novel's plot is predicated on the total otherness of its solitary, uncivilized setting, Crusoe demonstrates his continuing social value through over-compensation, presumably to avoid the appearance that he is enjoying an endless island vacation.

Such a dilemma would confront photographers repeatedly across photography's first century, for their traffic in "instantaneously" completed likenesses could seem unearned.[3] The enduring Pictorialist movement, which began in Victorian England in the 1880s and soon spread internationally among the middle classes, explained the art value of photography largely in terms of expenditure (of time and money), whether on complex printing processes or on matting, calligraphic adornment, and other presentational devices. To be art, it had to be serious effort: *Camera Work*, as Alfred Stieglitz called his leading Pictorialist journal. The Pictorialists declared they were striving for imagination, and in their love of soft focus and vague contours they may have in fact unwittingly provided one of the more imaginative analyses of their artistic inheritance: "many perspicuous details, adding up to a hazy whole," as Moretti terms the work of prose in Defoe's great novel.[4] Pictorialism performed a cultural service by putting the haze on view.

Photographic modernism of the 1910s and '20s overturned Pictorialist compositional habits, to be sure, but its American contingent, in a sad cliché, perpetuated the absolute insistence on effort as an index of artistic achievement. The Europeans, by contrast, struck a remarkable balance

fig. 1 Gertrud Arndt. *Untitled (Masked Self-Portrait, Dessau)* (*Ohne Titel [Selbstporträt mit Maske, Dessau]*). 1930. Gelatin silver print, 8 ⅜ × 5 ¼" (21.3 × 13.3 cm). The Art Institute of Chicago. David Travis Fund. © 2014 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn

between work and its denial. At the Bauhaus, entire careers were made in photography taken during "off hours," such as group portraits of students perched on the dormitory balcony or relaxing on the sand. These portraits emanate a lightness and portability that applies as much to the personal relationships memorialized as to the handheld cameras that memorialized them. Leisure scenes abound: the repertory of Bauhaus professor László Moholy-Nagy's photographic subjects, for example, stretches from dolls,

children, and house pets to foreign towns, activities like bathing and sailing, and viewing platforms at tourist sites such as the Berlin Radio Tower (MoMA 1793.2001) and the Rothenburg cathedral. Modernist photographic portraiture in Europe—at the Bauhaus and elsewhere—brought playfulness into the art world at an unprecedented scale. Whether capturing the mock seriousness of Claude Cahun and Gertrud Arndt costumed as mash-ups of respectable citizens with outcasts—the soldier meets the vamp for Cahun; the mademoiselle meets the madam for Arndt (fig. 1)—or the outright laughter of Czech surrealist Václav Zykmund holding a light bulb with his teeth (fig. 2), (self-) portrait photography in Europe in the 1920s and '30s became an expression of the irrepressible.

"Irrepressibility" stands opposite to the bourgeois keywords that Moretti so brilliantly analyzes, including "utility," "seriousness," "comfort," and "precision." The opposition is so perfect that one could argue for European modernist photography as a mere safety valve in an otherwise thoroughly repressive civilization. "Containing one's immediate desires is not just repression: it is *culture*," Moretti observes, offering as example an analysis of Crusoe's contorted narration as he reluctantly kills a mother goat and her kid to ease his hunger.[5] Not denial, but containment. In an analogous fashion, leisure and even sleep—another great occasion for Moholy-Nagy and many others to make portraits (e.g., MoMA 1688.2001)—have long been understood
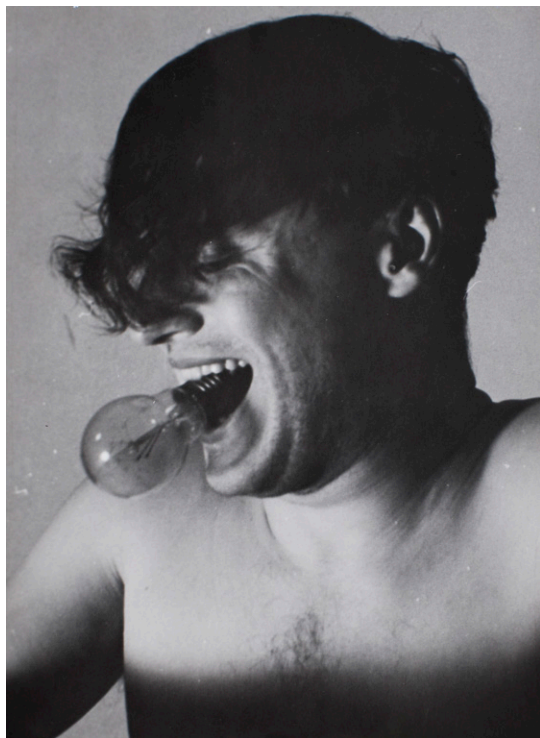
as necessary but limited escapes from the otherwise all-encompassing world of work.

In that sense, no amount of fooling around could seriously challenge the workaday life of the bourgeoisie. Only photography as redolent of labor as labor itself might perform this analysis—and not by imitating high art, which was itself conventionally understood as a refuge or escape. August Sander's life project, *People of the Twentieth Century* (*Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts*), gives such an analysis in exemplary form. The very model of a bourgeois professional, Sander also turned his thousands of sitters into citizens of an upstanding, thoroughly bourgeois nation. Yet the signal feature of his great project was its necessary incompleteness, a thoroughly sober form of irrepressibility. There could and must always be more types of citizens to portray and add to the infinitely expanding archive. This challenge to containment lay in the very structure of Sander's project. In addition, his encyclopedic undertaking nuanced the terms by which the bourgeoisie typically made creativity into labor, through close management and control. Products of an unstoppable tradesman, Sander's photographs hyperbolize the terms of Moretti's analysis and thus induce a reflection on those terms akin to Moretti's own.

Sander gradually formulated his proposal to "map" the German character in portrait photographs, beginning at the start of the 1920s, some two decades into his career. The exceedingly ambitious plan to group all his existing and future portraits according to heteronomous portfolios of "types," such as farmers, intellectuals, and women, depended on the outright incompatibility of its constituent subjects. This project would take shape as "a mosaic picture," as the photographer later characterized it to fellow artist Peter Abelen.[6] Sander pointedly displayed his photographs two per frame, and in two rows, at the first public showing of his work-in-progress, in a Cologne group exhibition in 1927. Each portrait could be seen only alongside others. In the foreword to Sander's 1929 book, *Antlitz der Zeit* (The face of our time), subtitled *60 Fotos deutscher Menschen* (60 photos of German people), novelist Alfred Döblin pointed up the value of this approach, calling it "comparative photography."[7]

One can argue the other side, too: a mosaic is made of differently colored pieces, but it does typically form a unified picture. Sander may be said to have contained, not heightened, conflicting social truths in his portraiture by assimilating his multicolored subjects to a graying bourgeois nation. To return to Moretti's keywords, one sees that it is work above all that unites the many citizens portrayed by Sander, just as it is a bourgeois ideal of work that defines Sander's project, and arguably the general ethos of *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity), the movement to which his photographs are generally assigned by art historians.

It is a constitutive fact of Sander's photographs that everyone, even intellectuals and the unemployed, has a job

fig. 2 Václav Zykmund. *Self-portrait* (*Vlastní podobizna*). 1936. Gelatin silver print, 7 × 5" (18 × 13 cm). Moravská Galerie, Brno. © Václav Zykmund/heirs

fig. 3 Georg Scholz. *Self-Portrait in front of an Advertising Column* (*Selbstbildnis vor der Litfaßsäule*). 1926. Oil on pasteboard, 23 ½ × 31" (59.5 × 78.5 cm). Staatliche Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe. © Georg Scholz Estate, Waldkirch

and living space. Although his subjects are identified by occupation, the spaces of Sander's portraiture emanate a comfort and intimacy typically associated with the domestic interior, the single most vaunted bourgeois location. White-collar professionals pose in their studies; painters sit in chairs or stand in their studios; women of leisure sway or relax in living rooms. Sander rarely photographed in a larger work environment, such as a factory, a street, or an office building. Most sitters are pictured against a warmly neutral background that suggests a spatial refuge. Coming close for his exposure, and softening the focus around their bodies, Sander made all his subjects look at home.

Even a setting clearly associated with gatherings away from home, such as the restaurant kitchen in which the famous pastry chef greets the photographer (as one professional to another), appears as a home away from home (fig. 4). The chef fills this workspace with his bulk and solidly takes possession of it. His surroundings dissolve from focus, as in a painting by Vermeer, so that the workplace becomes a space of comfort. *Comfort*—*cum* plus *forte*,

to do. Furthermore, Sander shows service professions but no servants—each sitter appears in his portraits as master of his or her occupation.

Sander did not exempt himself from these bourgeois values. Why should he? Photography was a respected part of industrial labor and had been since the later nineteenth century. Portrait photography was a trade, not a form of fine art, and Sander, like so many others looking to be modern, explicitly distanced himself from colleagues who strove for the qualities of fine art: "Nothing is more hateful to me than sugarcoated photography with tricks, poses, and special effects."[8] Contempt for *Kunstphotographie* was widely shared among progressive photographers as well as avant-garde artists. What is surprising, in retrospect, is not that these modernists disliked banalizing a potentially useful profession (photography) with the trappings of fine art, but that, in *Neue Sachlichkeit*, not just photographers but also so many modern artists—inheritors of a great tradition of anti-bourgeois, anti-careerist bohemianism—depicted themselves demonstratively as professionals. Painter Georg Scholz, in his self-portrait of 1926 "in front of an advertising column" (fig. 3), might be mistaken for a banker, protectively overcoated as he fronts for a small universe of consumer goods and advertisements that he could as well have financed or purchased as painted. Scholz the creator carries no association with bohemians in this canvas; he could even be an ad man or a product or graphic designer, a maker of *useful* images, pictures that serve a purpose for capital.

Painting and photography of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* are aligned, beyond any question of form or facture, in their shared assimilation to the bourgeoisie. To this point, Sander's chosen settings unprecedentedly conflate working

fig. 4 August Sander. *Pastry Cook* (*Konditor*). 1928. Gelatin silver print, 12 × 10" (30.5 × 24 cm). Die Photographische Sammlung/SK Stiftung Kultur–August Sander Archiv, Cologne. © 2014 Die Photographische Sammlung/SK Stiftung Kultur–August Sander Archiv Köln/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

or "with strength"—is a word that once meant succor but came to mean well-being: a state finely balanced between necessaries and luxuries. Moretti observes that comfort is a key term of desire for that class of humanity that need not worry over basic survival but does fret at ostentation. "Comfort is no longer what returns us to a 'normal' state from adverse circumstances," he writes, "but what takes normality as its starting point and pursues well-being as an end in itself."[9]

What in Sander's photographic project could disturb that well-being? Only its state of perpetual incompletion. Scholar Susanne Lange has asserted that Sander was aware from the start that his project must remain forever partial, or what one could call, following Marcel Duchamp, "definitively unfinished." She cites as evidence his earliest written announcement of *People of the Twentieth Century*, made in a letter to photography historian and collector Erich Stenger in 1925: "As soon as my work is completed, *if one can even speak of completion in this context*, I am thinking to publish the entire oeuvre in an exhibition tour through various cities."[10] The quixotic nature of Sander's oft-expressed hope of publishing the full series is of a piece with the inherent infinitude of his chosen task. He persevered after the Nazis destroyed the printing plates for *Antlitz der Zeit*; and he continued to make some new photographs as well as to promote his older ones even after losing twenty-five to thirty thousand glass negatives in a fire that consumed the basement of his Cologne studio in January 1946.[11] (This after the photographer had spent years secreting his life's work around the Westerwald countryside, to avoid its destruction by Allied bombs.) Nothing would stop him—nor could the project ever find an end.

Sander repeatedly expanded an original list of seven portfolio headings that he had typed up in the mid-1920s, adding categories that addressed, for example, National Socialism. A true encyclopedist, he also wished to update and extend those subjects that had formed his earliest interest, creating subgroupings like "Farmers in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century."[12] The point of origin is clear, while the end point cannot even be imagined. It is only fitting that Sander's son, grandson, and great-grandson have all continued to tend to his life project.[13] The creator of a colossal monument to work creates more work even from beyond the grave.

At the same time, there can be no new photographs by Sander himself; his descendants are handling a mosaic to which further tesserae will not be added. Its incompleteness remains, perversely, its greatest promise, that of society as a montage without end. "Description as a form was not neutral at all," Moretti writes, referring to the advent of realism in nineteenth-century literature and art: "Its effect was to inscribe the present so deeply into the past that alternatives became simply unimaginable."[14] Not so when the picture was conceived as a necessarily incomplete inscription. In that case there must always be more to write.

MACHINE WORK

Sander was far from the only artistically ambitious photographer attracted to portraiture in the 1920s and '30s. To work in photography and consider oneself an artist took a strong degree of self-consciousness, which manifested itself most directly in portraits or self-portraits in which the sitters are depicted alongside cameras. Such images proliferated in the 1920s and '30s; photographers, historically the greatest advocates for their profession in print, now seemed delighted to recommend it through pictures as well. Following in the lineage of mid-nineteenth-century views of photographers standing surrounded by assistants, chemistry vials, or other signs of mastery and knowledge, such pictures would traditionally have been classed in the genre of the occupational portrait. A self-portrait by Edward Steichen from around 1917 (fig. 5) is one such modern example. Steichen, a protean character whose one life constant was an unflagging hold on power, projects a confidence in his ability to connect that was indispensable to a career spent taking portraits of the rich and famous, from Auguste Rodin or J. P. Morgan to actresses such as Gertrude Lawrence (MoMA 1869.2001). In his self-portrait (one of a few that he composed just prior to joining the United States military as Commander of Aerial Photography), the camera itself, shrouded in marginal shadow, is notably insignificant compared to its artificially illumined operator.
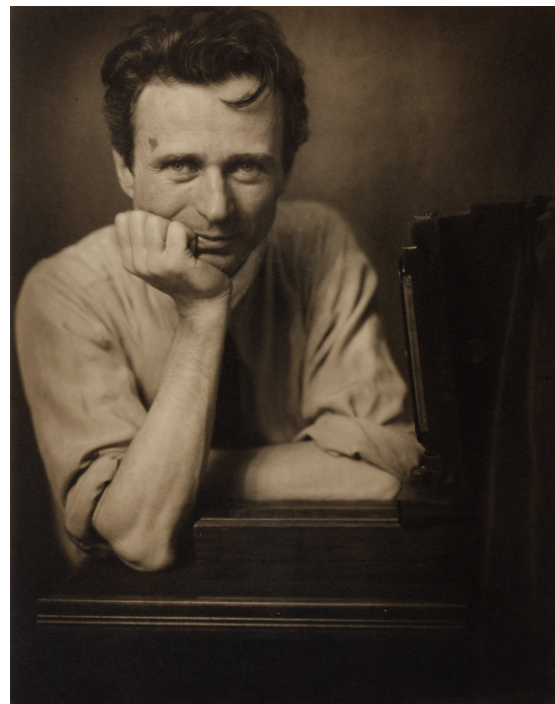

fig. 5 Edward Steichen. *Self-Portrait with Studio Camera.* c. 1917. Gelatin silver print, 13½ × 10⅝" (34.3 × 27 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Thomas Walther Collection. Gift of Sandro Mayer, by exchange (MoMA 1868.2001). © 2014 The Estate of Edward Steichen/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

fig. 6 Marianne Breslauer. *Paul Citroen.* 1928. Gelatin silver print, 8 5/16 × 6 ¾"
(21.1 × 17.2 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Thomas Walther
Collection. Abbott-Levy Collection funds, by exchange (MoMA 1638.2001).
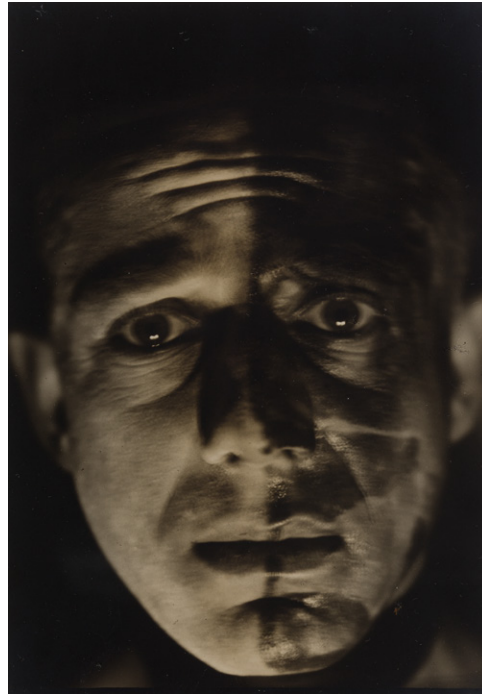© Marianne Breslauer/Fotostiftung Schweiz

fig. 7 Umbo (Otto Umbehr). *Warriorlike Face* (*Kriegerisches Antlitz*). 1926–27. Gelatin
silver print, 6 13/16 × 4 13/16" (17.3 × 12.2 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.
Thomas Walther Collection. Gift of Thomas Walther (MoMA 1886.2001). © 2014
Umbo/Gallery Kicken Berlin/Phyllis Umbehr/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn. Reproduced by
permission of Sotheby's

It is the machine that dominates its operator, by
contrast, in many of the most progressive portraits or self-
portraits with cameras made in the early twentieth
century—again, principally in Europe. For one, the defer-
ence of the typical occupational portrait toward its subject,
which equates (as in the Steichen) to a sense of distance,
is replaced in these more progressive works by a sense of
proximity that can seem either intimate or claustrophobic.
In addition, the proud *ego feci* of artistic self-portraiture,
which has a grand lineage in painting traceable to Velázquez
and Dürer, falters when the brush is replaced by an imaging
device that has its own, impersonal stare. As Paul Citroen
looked into a mirror to make his self-portrait in 1930, the
camera on its tripod looked with him (MoMA 1653.2001);
and though he clearly pressed the button, the third eye of
the lens projected its own, monocular force of capture,
seemingly unbidden by the artist. Is this independence of
the apparatus the reason why Citroen's fingers seem
only tentatively posed atop the camera body, and why his
look—lips apart, eyes raised slightly, head inclined toward
the machine as his body crouches unsteadily behind a
far more stable tripod—registers expectant uncertainty?
The camera knew what it could deliver. Citroen's own sense
of himself, by contrast, seems to have been as unformed
at the moment of exposure as the abstract background that
rises softly behind him.

Citroen had taken up photography suddenly in
December 1926, together with his close friend Otto Umbehr
(Umbo), in a two-week portrait-making binge at the
Bauhaus that proved decisive for Umbo's career.[15] Unlike
Umbo, who continued thereafter in photojournalism
and other camera ventures, Citroen made photographs only
sporadically, although he did earn his living in the early
1930s as a portrait photographer in Berlin and Amsterdam.
Citroen was also among the first to try to sell photographs
as collectible art; exactly at the moment of his experimental
portrait sessions with Umbo, he wrote to curator and
dealer Hildebrand Gurlitt (in the news again recently, via
his hoarder son Cornelius Gurlitt, for the energetically self-
serving and exploitative career he led during the Nazi
era) to propose that he sell gelatin silver prints the artist
made of his own photomontages, including an already
iconic work, *Metropolis (City of My Birth)* (*Weltstadt [Meine
Geburtsstadt]*) (1923; MoMA 1651.2001). Gurlitt, as Maria
Hambourg recounts elsewhere in this project, would in
turn become an adviser to the art-photography collection
of Dresden manufacturer Kurt Kirchbach, likely the earli-
est European private collection of vanguard contemporary
photography, which included at least three of Citroen's pho-
tographs of his own photomontages.[16]

That artists from a premier modern art school and a
leading art dealer were involved with photography

suggests how high the stakes for the medium as modern art had become—which makes the doubt portrayed in Citroen's self-portrait the more interesting to observe. While one would expect to see Steichen's look of self-assurance, or the outright heroism and virility common to portraits of Edward Weston (MoMA 1908.2001), the tentativeness shown by Citroen next to his apparatus is surprising and compelling. One sees comparable expressions of submission to the camera in portraits of Citroen taken by Marianne Breslauer and Umbo in the late 1920s. In the portrait by Breslauer (fig. 6), Citroen seems to be halfheartedly shielding his blankly gazing eyes from the glare of a light bulb (or perhaps an early flash). The camera is intrusive and was welcomed as such in the '20s—a bizarre invitation to the invasion of privacy that has flagrantly become the norm today, and that makes these nearly hundred-year-old portraits newly relevant to our era of web cams and "selfies." When Umbo depicts Citroen in "warriorlike" paint (fig. 7), the makeup is stunningly out of step with the demeanor of the man wearing it. Only half of Citroen's face is painted, whereas all of him seems riven by doubt: raised eyebrows, furrowed brow, slack lips and chin. Lit and photographed from below, he should be preparing to deal a conquering blow yet instead looks worried that he may be the captured prey. Portraits in and by the Bauhaus circle were famously clownish (see MoMA 1808.2001 and 1916.2001), but this one shows a hurt that, while undoubtedly intended as comic, appears all too serious in its woundedness.

Loss and lack are common features of interwar portraiture in Europe, and they give the camera more power than should logically be held by a mere instrument of human interests. Looking at the portraits in the Thomas Walther Collection, at least, one imagines the camera not as an auxiliary weapon but as a force of command that enervates and even debilitates its bearers or subjects. James Joyce sports an eye patch (fig. 8). Jean Cocteau covers his face—he hides and cannot see (MoMA 1753.2001). František Vobecký, in the act of taking a picture, converts himself into a shadow (MoMA 1896.2001). El Lissitzky is blinded and overcome by his own drafting equipment (MoMA 1764.2001).[17] On a lighter note, Herbert Bayer regards with mock astonishment his arm turned to wood and sectioned off (fig. 9)—a (perhaps vulgar) comedic recollection of World War I, when wounded veterans in Austria and Germany were judged fit for continued military action according to percentages of serviceability. Many memorable photographic portraits from the interwar period involve a degree of amputation.

Often, such photographs bear clear signs that the wounding is constructed, giving the camera machine an even more active role. Bayer achieved his effect through montage—cutting and pasting—which he then "made whole" through retouching and rephotography. In a 1927 portrait of Ruth Landshoff (MoMA 1885.2001), Umbo

fig. 8 Berenice Abbott. *James Joyce*. 1926. Gelatin silver print, 1935–55, 4 ⅜ × 3 ¹³⁄₁₆" (11.1 × 9.7 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Thomas Walther Collection. Abbott-Levy Collection funds, by exchange (MoMA 1598.2001). © 2014 Berenice Abbott/Commerce Graphics

fig. 9 Herbert Bayer. *Humanly Impossible* (*Self-Portrait*) (*Menschen unmöglich [Selbst-Porträt]*). 1932. Gelatin silver print, 1932–37, 15 ⁵⁄₁₆ × 11 ⁹⁄₁₆" (38.9 × 29.3 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Thomas Walther Collection. Acquired through the generosity of Howard Stein (MoMA 1611.2001). © 2014 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn

scrubbed her nose off through overexposure, either in the negative or in darkroom enlargement. The following year, graphic designer Max Burchartz redefined cropping as vivisection in creating *Lotte (Eye)* (*Lotte [Auge]*) (1928; MoMA 1646.2001), his one masterpiece in photography. Burchartz took pains to preserve the sense of a living eye-ball, glinting with moisture, and he inpainted the eyelashes and eyebrow as well. But he also registered Lotte's shock, in what remains of her nose and lips, at having her face halved vertically and sliced at the top and bottom by the apparatus. The innocent girl has a bit of the cyborg in her stare. Her remaining eye no longer connotes human binocularity, but rather the implacable single eye of the camera.

In Lissitzky's magnificent 1924 portrait of Kurt Schwitters (fig. 10), the artist and poet from Hannover is likewise split in two—but also doubled—as he recites his now classic concrete poetry piece, the *Ursonate* (Primeval sonata, 1922–32). Schwitters has two faces here, and the one with both eyes visible seems overcome by the other, in which Schwitters's right eye and open mouth assault the viewer: binocularity outdone once more by a monocular stare. The basic principle of ego formation is cast into question here, for the work must be understood as a shared creation. Schwitters's doubling is a metaphor for a collaborative effort—one in which the camera operates as an equal partner with the two artists.

One could deny the force of that partnership with the machine only at one's peril. A 1916–17 portrait of Ezra Pound by Alvin Langdon Coburn (MoMA 1657.2001) depicts the poet concentrating, with a show of mastery that suggests the photographer is not collaborating with his subject but rendering homage to him. This portrait ostensibly transmits Coburn's fealty to Pound, consistent with Coburn's decision to take the name and guiding concept of his Vortographs (this portrait among them) from a movement declared by Pound just a few years earlier: "The image is not an idea. It is a radiant node or cluster; it is what I can, and must perforce, call a VORTEX, from which, and through which, and into which, ideas are constantly rushing."[18] Yet the portrait, deliberately left to chance, obeys not the will of the photographer but the operations of his equipment, and it fails to flatter its model. Deploying a setup of multiple mirrors and possibly multiple exposures,[19] Coburn showed Pound simply and wonderfully as a human vortex—that is to say, a chaotic mass at whose center lies no all-commanding power but an unpredictably moving void. Coburn suggested randomness, rather than mastery, as the guiding force in his Vortographs; this approach in turn caused Pound to appear a prisoner of swirling shards.

WORKER PORTRAITS

Important types of interwar portraiture are missing from the Walther Collection, or figure in it only marginally.
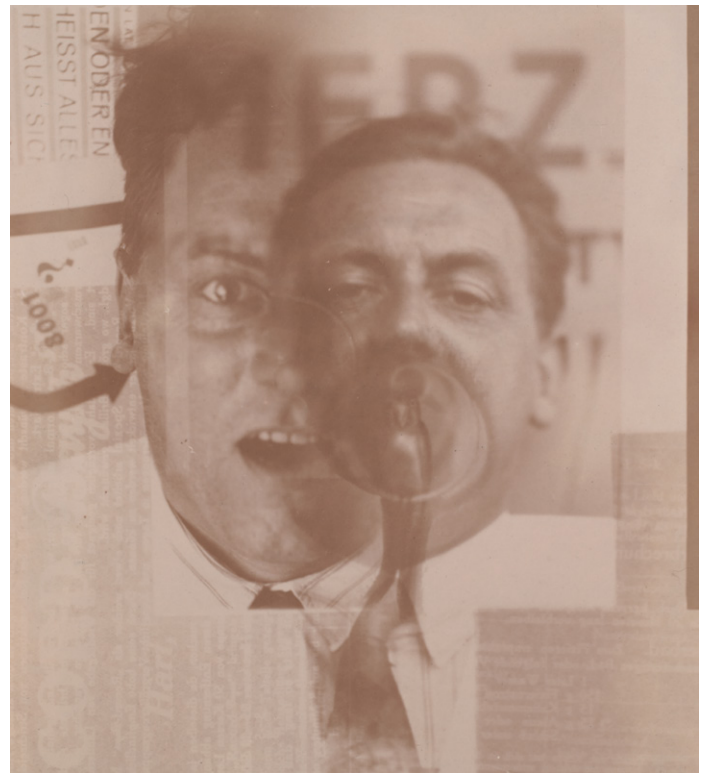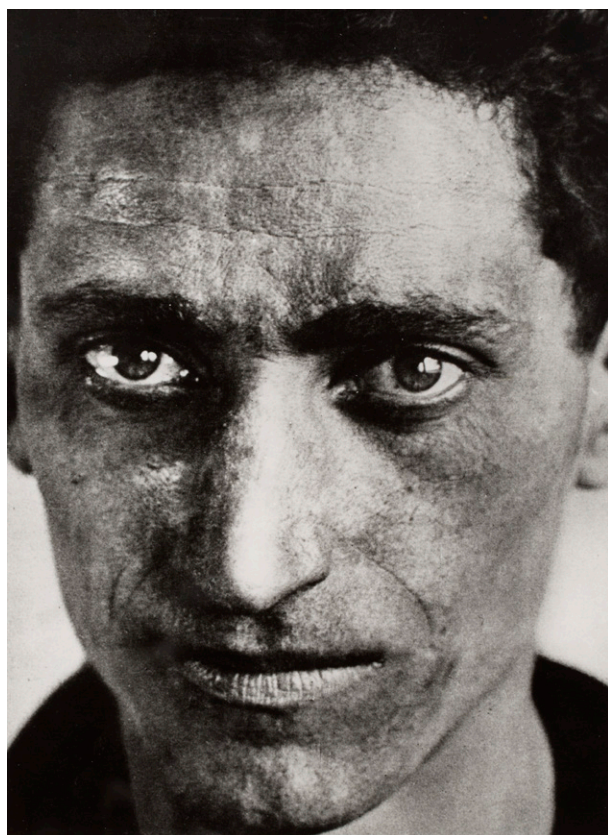

fig. 10 El Lissitzky (Lazar Markovich Lissitzky). *Kurt Schwitters.* 1924. Gelatin silver print, 4 ¼ × 3 ⅞" (10.8 × 9.8 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Thomas Walther Collection. Gift of Shirley C. Burden, by exchange (MoMA 1763.2001). © 2014 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn

Lisette Model's endearing yet unsentimental picture of a middle-aged lady on the Lower East Side (MoMA 1788.2001), from 1942, is nearly the only photograph to admit working-class subjects into a collection otherwise populated by cultural and popular elites. Paul Strand had shown with his famous 1916 photograph *Blind* that it was possible to depict individuals from circumstances vastly different from one's own with dignity and personality. (*Blind* also gives an early example of the association of camera work with wounding or disability.) But the most significant possibilities for portraiture of working subjects were developed later, within the Worker Photography movement, an internationally widespread tendency in photography of the later 1920s and '30s.[20] Worker Photography generated far more sustained bodies of portraiture, and also more innovations in portraiture, than could be addressed through the making of single pictures.

One such example is Kata Kálmán's great book *Tiborc* (1937). Like Sander's *Antlitz der Zeit*, Kálmán's is a book of portraits, but her subjects are all agricultural or urban workers (figs. 11, 12). Kálmán, unlike Sander, was looking for individuals rather than types; she brought her camera quite close to most sitters, and named them all in her titles, giving in addition a general job description (e.g., "factory worker"),

fig. 11 Kata Kálmán. *Ernő Weisz, 23-year-old Factory Worker, Budapest* (*Weisz Ernő, 23 éves gyári munkás, Budapest*). 1932. Gelatin silver print, 1955, 9 ¼ × 7" (23.5 × 17.6 cm). The Art Institute of Chicago. Restricted gift of Ashlee Jacob and Martin Modahl. © Kata Kálmán

fig. 12 Biographies of Kata Kálmán's subjects as reproduced in Kálmán, Zsigmond Móricz, and Iván Boldizsár. *Tiborc*. Budapest: Cserépfalvi, 1937. © Kata Kálmán

age, and, most unusually, a brief biographical sketch. Kálmán chose specificity over completeness. Her ambition could not be nearly as grand as Sander's, but it achieved, in word and image, the ascription of subjectivity to working people—a rare accomplishment for that time and one that deserves the term "portraiture" in the fullest sense.

The Worker Photography movement boasted other class-based innovations, principally in the areas of serial and collective portraiture, text-image combinations, and photography in print. As an example, composite portraits, pioneered in disparate ways by Stieglitz, Aleksandr Rodchenko, and Josef Albers in the decade 1918–28, took an explicitly proletarian turn with "A Day in the Life of a Moscow Working-Class Family." Commissioned by the Agitation and Propaganda Sector of the Comintern for a traveling Soviet exhibition in 1931, the story chronicled the joys and hardships of a family named Filippov. Over twenty-eight pages and the cover of the Berlin weekly *Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung*, the Filippovs were shown studying, working at the factory, eating, playing chess, and even preparing for a game of tennis, in a mixture of dramatized and deliberately undramatic images that the editors parsed in lengthy captions. Extensive commentary accompanied its publication and its reissue, in a strikingly different layout, in the Soviet magazine *Proletarskoe Foto* later the same year. As historian Erika
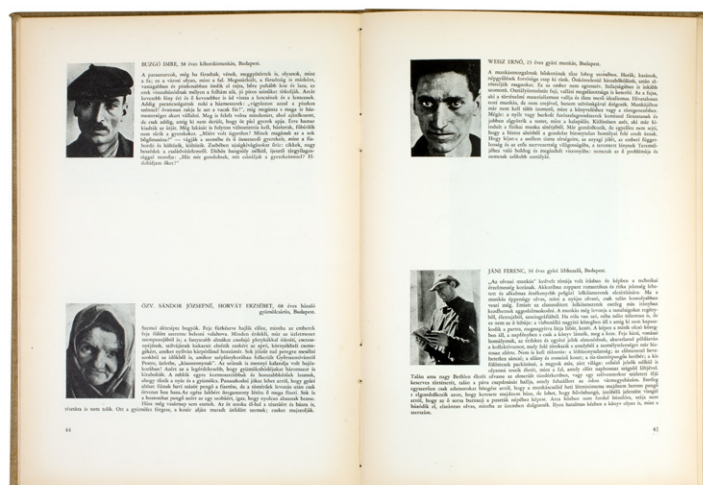
Wolf describes it, the Filippov story, and especially the authenticity imputed to it by interested political organizations, was "an elaborate media stunt," but it did truly change the terms for the portrayal of working people. Single and singular pictures were forsaken in favor of cumulative, at times banal exposure to the camera, and to a photo-text narrative that constructed portraiture through literary means.[21]

A radical destabilization of the individual ego was achieved, meanwhile, in photographic "mass portraits," such as views of demonstrations taken by Rodchenko (MoMA 1825.2001), which were intended in fact to discredit the genre of portraiture as a bourgeois inheritance insufficient to the needs or the will of a revolutionary collective. Rodchenko found the greatest expression of collective identity not in political rallies but in sports, and his photographs of the Spartakiada competitions (fig. 13) remain touchstones in the representation of countless bodies working as one. The oxymoronic nature of the phrase "mass portrait" comes across with a real sense of peril, meanwhile, in posters by Gustav Klutsis. In one of them (fig. 14), he achieved a seductive yet frightening fusion between the man and machine by replicating a view of a single hand—his own—numerous times to symbolize unity among the working masses. (A 1926 self-portrait with a view camera [MoMA 1741.2001] likewise projects Klutsis's confidence in the symbiosis of man and machine.) In posthumanist politics,

the single individual has no meaning apart from the collective cause.

The camera apparatus stands triumphant behind Klutsis's poster as a tireless laborer. Many of the brilliant portraits gathered in the Walther Collection show people wounded, at play, and in other states of unfitness for work; some of the images point by contrast to a potentially limitless expenditure of effort. It is in Klutsis's awesome poster composition, however, that the latent insights contained in interwar portraiture become fully manifest. Like a virus—an entity neither living nor dead—the apparatus will follow its program of division and replication to infinity. Awareness of such ceaseless invasiveness is the heritage of photographic modernism. The monocular lens never stops working, nor, in our own age, does it seem likely ever to become unemployed. It has become the endless, faceless face of our time.

NOTES

1. Franco Moretti, *The Bourgeois: Between History and Literature* (London: Verso Books, 2013), p. 41.

2. Ibid., p. 3 n. 27.

3. This statement applies to a fully commercialized "traffic in photographs"—made possible by industrially scaled reproduction technologies—that arose in the 1850s and after, approximately a quarter century after the viability of fixing a photographic image was established.

4. Moretti, *The Bourgeois*, p. 85.

5. Ibid., p. 87.

6. Letter from August Sander to Peter Abelen, January 16, 1951, cited in Olivier Lugon, "August Sander im Kontext der Avantgarde. Ein Panorama photographischer Positionen der 1920er und 1930er Jahre," ed. Susanne Lange and Gabriele Conrath-Scholl, *August Sander: Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts. Studienband* (Munich: Schirmer/ Mosel, 2001), p. 83.

7. Alfred Döblin, foreword to August Sander, *Antlitz der Zeit: 60 Fotos deutscher Menschen* (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 1976), n.p. An installation photograph is reproduced in Gerd Sander, ed., *August Sander: "In der Photographie gibt es keine ungeklärte Schatten!"* (Berlin: Ars Nicolai, 1994), p. 20.

8. August Sander, "Mein Bekenntnis zur Photographie 'Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts,'" 1927, reprinted in Gerd Sander, *August Sander*, p. 21. Sander did in fact make "fine art" prints at the very start of his trade, in the 1890s, but he had abandoned that approach before World War I.

9. Moretti, *The Bourgeois*, p. 46.

10. Letter from August Sander to Erich Stenger, July 21, 1925, cited in Lange, "Einleitung," in Lange and Conrath-Scholl, *August Sander*, p. 14. Emphasis added here.

11. Lange, "Einleitung," p. 33.

12. See ibid., p. 13.

13. Sander taught his son Gunther and grandson Gerd to print his works; the latter became a wide-ranging dealer in art and photography, handing that business to his son Julian in 2009. As Lange explains, further family members were involved in retouching, matting, and framing, and putting together portfolios from the 1920s through the 1950s. See Lange, "Einleitung," pp. 20–21.

14. Moretti, *The Bourgeois*, p. 93.

15. Herbert Molderings, "Paul Citroen and Photography. The Beginnings in Berlin," in Flip Bool, ed., *Paul Citroen 1896–1983* (Amsterdam: Focus Publishing, 1996), p. 12.

16. Ibid., pp. 21, 24, 25 n. 4. See also Molderings, interview with Christoph Schaden, *Photonews,* April 2007, pp. 14–15; available online at www. christophschaden.de/de/ schreiben/interviewen/herbert-molderings/herbert-molderings. For Maria Morris Hambourg's discussion of Hildebrand Gurlitt, see "Lost and Found: The Emergence and Rediscovery of European Avant-Garde Photography," in Mitra Abbaspour, Lee Ann Daffner, and Hambourg, eds., *Object:Photo. Modern Photographs: The Thomas Walther Collection 1909–1949* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2014).

17. See Leah Dickerman, "El Lissitzky's Camera Corpus," in Nancy Perloff and Brian Reed, eds., *Situating El Lissitzky: Vitebsk, Berlin, Moscow* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2003), pp. 153–76.

18. Ezra Pound, "Vorticism," *Fortnightly Review* no. 96 (September 1, 1914):461–71; available at http://fortnightlyreview. co.uk/vorticism/.

19. Nancy Wynne Newhall wrote that Coburn devised a setup of three mirrors placed in a triangle, with the camera lens in the middle, while photographing Pound (of whom he made several portraits). See Newhall, *From Adams to Stieglitz: Pioneers of Modern Photography* (New York: Aperture, 1989), p. 40. Coburn had already tested portraiture with multiple

exposures as well. See Valentina Branchini and Grant Romer, *The Photographs of Alvin Langdon Coburn at George Eastman House* (Rochester, N.Y.: George Eastman House, 2009), p. 95; available online at http:// issuu.com/bintphotobooks/ docs/valentinabranchini_ research_web.

20. See Jorge Ribalta, ed., *The Worker Photography Movement: Essays and Documents (1926– 1939)* (Madrid: Museo de Arte Reina Sofía, 2011).

21. Erika Wolf, "'As at the Filippovs': The Foreign Origins of the Soviet Narrative Photographic Essay," in ibid., pp. 124–30. The German and Russian versions of the published story are reproduced in full with translated captions on pp. 131–47, while commentary and related photo-essays appear on pp. 148–75.