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The Museum of Modern Art

To Carl Laanes

c.c.: John Szarkowski

From Jane Fluegel

Date March 8, 1976

Re Final Corrections for William Eggleston's Guide

Carl Morse and Sandra Glasser just confirmed that there would be only one edition of the book. It will have the plastic "album" material wrapped around boards-- with no jacket and therefore no flap copy. That means there will be a single ISBN number, and page 1 of the repros has been so marked.

On the same repro are corrections for the credit to underwriters of the show and book, spine copy, and copy for the signature to appear at the end of the essay.

Pat Walker called me this morning requesting an additional change: Robert Adams has changed the name of his book from "Places to Stand" to "Denver: A Photographic Survey of the Metropolitan Area." The correction appears at the end of a paragraph, so we should have no trouble fitting it in (appears on repro page 3).

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20 October 1975

Ms. Maria Morris
The Museum of Modern Art
11 West 53 Street
New York, N.Y. 10019

Dear Maria:

It was very good to meet you the other day - I was sorry to be a bit on the run but I hope the next visit will be longer.

Thank you for the Eggleston list. When I talked to him finally on Thursday, he indicated that he did not regard the designations as titles but rather as identification so your idea of using "untitled" with the description in parens is the best, I think.

I should have remembered when I talked with you that, quite naturally, MOMA received example #1 at Bill's request. So the #1 can be inserted on the individual prints.

All best wishes,

Sincerely,



Harry H. Lunn, Jr.

HHL/ma

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1—6526 Museum of Modern Art

William Eggleston's Guide

Essay by John Szarkowski

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

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*Ex-officio

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the exhibition it accompanies
have been made possible
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a Federal agency.

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Photography Exhibitions

Fiscal 1975-76

William Eggleston

Date: November 5 - December 14, 1976
 Gallery: Northwest/Far West Galleries (first floor)
 Director: John Sarkowski
 Contents: 60 color prints, slide presentation
 Funding: National Endowment for the Arts application requesting grant of \$17,410. pending.
 Estimated income from publication sales, rental fees: \$34,910.

This project proposes an exhibition and accompanying publication of the color photography of William Eggleston. For over half a century, the promise of color photography as a creative medium has remained largely unfulfilled. Although many photographers of talent have done impressive work in color, the consensus among photographers and critics has been that the most important and original work of this century was done in black and white. During recent years however, greater photographers have brought a new spirit to color photography, which has begun to resemble the intellectual demands of representational photography. The aesthetic demands of color. In this work the role of color is to be descriptive or decorative, and assume a central place in the construction of the picture's content. In the consensus judgment William Eggleston is the most talented and accomplished of these photographers. His pictures also comprise a remarkable and surprising testimony on contemporary American life. Much of the best and potentially most original work that has been done in color has remained a secret, because of the very high cost of good color reproduction. The proper exhibition and publication of Eggleston's work has already been considerably delayed because of the lack of adequate subsidy. The Museum of Modern Art has now obtained a significant pledge of private support for this project, and has earmarked funds and staff time from its own resources. Additional assistance is however required to make the project a reality.

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The Museum of Modern Art

2145

To: Dick Palmer

cc: Mr. Szarkowski

From: Betty Barnham

Date: Dates: November 5 - December 14, 1976
 Gallery: Northwest/Far West Galleries (first floor)
 Director: John Szarkowski
 Contents: 40 color prints, slide presentation
 Funding: National Endowment for the Arts application requesting grant of \$17,418. pending.
 Estimated income from publication sales, rental fees: \$34,250.

As you know, there is still no preparation schedule for this exhibition (or its alternate) and since I am going to be away for several weeks I would like to

This project proposes an exhibition and accompanying publication of the color photography of William Eggleston. For over half a century, the promise of color photography as a creative medium has remained largely unfulfilled. Although many photographers of talent have done impressive work in color, the consensus among photographers and critics has been that the most important and original work of the period has been done in black and white. During recent years however younger photographers have brought a new spirit to color photography, which has begun to reconcile the intellectual demands of representational photography with the aesthetic demands of color. In this work the role of color is more than descriptive or decorative, and assumes a central place in the definition of the picture's content. In the considered judgment William Eggleston is the most talented and accomplished of these photographers. His pictures also comprise a remarkable and surprising commentary on contemporary American life. Much of the best and potentially most seminal work that has been done in color has remained a secret, because of the very high cost of good color reproduction. The proper exhibition and publication of Eggleston's work has already been considerably delayed because of the lack of adequate subsidy. The Museum of Modern Art has now obtained a significant pledge of private support for this project, and has earmarked funds and staff time from its own resources. Additional assistance is however required to make the project a reality.

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The Museum of Modern Art

To Dick Palmer
From Betty Burnham
Date June 21, 1975
Re WILLIAM EGGLESTON EXH.

cc: Mr. Szarkowski ✓

Dear Dick:

As you know, there is still no Preparation Schedule for this exhibition (or its alternate) and since I am going to be away for several weeks I would like to confirm in writing that you understand that we will be unable to record any material until after Labor Day.

WILLIAM EGGLESTON
Dates: [unclear]
Gallery: [unclear] War War Galleries (first floor)
Exhibitor: [unclear]
Description: [unclear] prints, slide presentation
Budget: [unclear] 255,000. (including publication)
Funding: [unclear] 255,000. pending.
Estimated income from publication sales, rental fees: 255,000.

While progress has been made in exhibition and accompanying publication of the color photographs of William Eggleston, over half a century, the promise of color photography as a creative medium has remained largely unfulfilled. Although many photographers of talent have done superb work in color, the consensus among photographers and critics has been that the most important and original work of the period has been done in black and white. During recent years however, photographers have brought a new spirit to color photography, which has begun to revitalize the intellectual demands of representational photography with the greatest demands of color. To this end the role of color is more than descriptive or decorative, and assumes a central place in the definition of the picture. In the considered judgment of the curators, William Eggleston is the most talented and accomplished of these photographers. His subjects also comprise a remarkable and surprising variety of contemporary American life, much of the best and potentially most original work that has been done in color photography in recent years, because of the very nature of good color reproduction. The proper exhibition and publication of Eggleston's work has been delayed because of the lack of adequate subsidy. The Museum of Modern Art has now obtained a significant grant of private support for this exhibition and has committed itself to the project a reality. Additional financial support is being required to make the project a reality. The exhibition will be directed by [unclear], Director of the program.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series/Folder:
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EDWARD WESTON (continued)

This project will result in the first critical retrospective exhibition in America since 1946 of the work of Edward Weston, and the first to cover his entire oeuvre. Weston is universally regarded as one of the greatest photographers in the history of the medium; his stature as one of the important original artists of this century has become progressively secure. In addition, the uniquely American character of Weston's sensibility and his subject matter makes this exhibition of special significance for the Bicentennial period. Selections from the Museum's superb collection of 231 Weston prints, collected over the past forty years, will provide a large part of the exhibition; loans from other important public and private collections will be requested, to make the exhibition fully worthy of his achievement. It is anticipated that the exhibition will include about 300 prints.

Following its showing at The Museum of Modern Art, the exhibition would be made available for showings at approximately 4 or 5 other institutions in the United States over the space of about one year.

WILLIAM EGGLESTON

Dates: _____
 Gallery: Northwest/Far West Galleries (first floor)
 Director: John Szarkowski
 Contents: 40 color prints, slide presentation
 Expense: preliminary estimate: \$58,000. (including publication)
 Funding: National Endowment for the Arts application requesting grant of \$17,418. pending.
 Estimated income from publication sales, rental fees: \$34,250.

This project proposes an exhibition and accompanying publication of the color photography of William Eggleston. For over half a century, the promise of color photography as a creative medium has remained largely unfulfilled. Although many photographers of talent have done impressive work in color, the consensus among photographers and critics has been that the most important and original work of the period has been done in black and white. During recent years however younger photographers have brought a new spirit to color photography, which has begun to reconcile the intellectual demands of representational photography with the aesthetic demands of color. In this work the role of color is more than descriptive or decorative, and assumes a central place in the definition of the picture's content. In the considered judgement of the applicant, William Eggleston is the most talented and accomplished of these photographers. His pictures also comprise a remarkable and surprising commentary on contemporary American life. Much of the best and potentially most seminal work that has been done in color has remained a secret, because of the very high cost of good color reproduction. The proper exhibition and publication of Eggleston's work has already been considerably delayed because of the lack of adequate subsidy. The Museum of Modern Art has now obtained a significant pledge of private support for this project, and has earmarked funds and staff time from its own resources. Additional assistance is however required to make the project a reality. The exhibition will be directed by John Szarkowski, Director of Photography.

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The Museum of Modern Art

To
Yeri Varveris
From
John Sparkowski
Date
July 11, 1975
Re
Special Insurance

June 6, 1975

Dear Ms. Ivory:

As I indicated on the phone, our Eggleston exhibition will be timed to coincide with the publication of the book, which will be published by the Museum. It is possible, but by no means definite, that the book will be out by the time of your show in March, 1976. Inquiries regarding distribution of the book should be directed to the Museum's Publications Department. request that the 32 Kodachrome slides by

Good luck with the show. We would appreciate receiving notice of it and a checklist. Could you also put us on your photography exhibition mailing list? pictures are

Thanks.

Sincerely,

Peter Galassi
Curatorial Intern

Ms. Jane Ivory
Grape State Gallery
2876 California Street
San Francisco, California

SHOW TO CONSIST OF THE PORTFOLIO
PUBLISHED BY LUNN AND OTHER
PICTURES UP TO A TOTAL 40 WHICH
WILL ALL COME FROM LUNN

72

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
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The Museum of Modern Art

To Teri Varveris
From John Szarkowski, Dept. of Photography
John Szarkowski
Date July 11, 1975
Re Special Insurance on William Eggleston Kodachromes

Dear Teri:

I would like to request that the 52 Kodachrome slides by William Eggleston, listed on the attached sheet, be insured at \$1,000 each for the remainder of 1975. These pictures are tentative selections for our projected exhibition and publication of Eggleston's work. They will be out of the building at least twice during the coming months, once in the next few days for the purpose of having reference prints made, and later for the purpose of having separations made for reproduction. If you require any further data for the purpose of insurance, please let Peter Galassi in this Department know, since I do not want them to leave the building until the insurance is in effect. Thank you very much.

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DELIVERED TO T.V. 7/14 AT 2PM.
INSURANCE IN EFFECT AS OF THAT TIME.

P.S.

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The Museum of Modern Art

To Modernage / Blue pickup truck
From John Szarkowski, Dept. of Photography
Date July
Re 3X Kodak Color prints of William Eggleston slides

Dear Al,

With this memo 52 original Kodachrome slides by William Eggleston will be delivered to you, for the purpose of having Kodak 3X color prints made for reference purposes.

We are intending to do an exhibition and publication of these pictures, which do not exist in any other form, and are therefore extremely precious to the photographer and to the museum. We have insured the slides, but it is essential that every precaution be taken to insure that they are returned to us in good condition.

If you can help us by impressing on Kodak the high importance we place on this work, I would be extremely grateful.

Thanks very much in advance

Please refer to Purchase Order No.

52 SLIDES RETURNED
IN GOOD CONDITION 7/22/75 PM

p.g.

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List of 52 original color transparencies by William Eggleston

1. Nude male / orange light
2. Dirt road vanishing
3. Wisteria / blue pick-up truck
4. Boy in crimson sweatshirt
5. Red, white and blue parka
6. Old man with pistol on bed
7. Gray door with flowers
8. Old woman / green room
9. Boy seated, hands over head, in green room
10. Night street with crescent moon
11. Stump with sprouts at night with flash
12. Dinner: baked ham and coke
13. Mustachioed man and Mississippi plate in back seat
14. Suburban street with 50's Cadillac
15. Woman in white / pink tree
16. Boy on garage floor
17. Woman, lamp and portrait in green room
18. Oven interior
19. Swimming pool / gray day
20. Young man and open refrigerator
21. Man Seated with espresso / pictures on wall
22. Suburban tricycle
23. Man with red practice plane
24. Graveyard / female monument profile
25. House and cornice / monochrome
26. Car, feet, boy and grass
27. Dog, dirt road and shack
28. Young boy with glasses and red berry bush
29. Rusty tank and field
30. Yellow prefab: King Cotton Beverage Co.
31. Symmetrical new suburban house
32. Girl in blue smock and her playhouse
33. Black poodle, red rose, man watering in front yard
34. Dog and two young boys on paved street
35. Man in blue jacket in graveyard
36. Black woman in green dress by the road
37. Red brick building with red awnings
38. Man in white shirt seated on hotel bed
39. White bottles on dirt road
40. High class pantry with portrait and silver
41. Ritz theatre
42. Portrait of man at airfield
43. Gray steps through white wall / crumpled paper
44. Round puzzle on card table
45. Woman in flowered dress on flowered outdoor couch
46. Suburban yard with stars and bard
47. Man in suit, black butler and car
48. Green tiled shower
49. Tan dog drinking from puddle
50. Girl with coke, back seat of black convertible
51. Flaming barbecue with kid's bike
52. Woman in blue dress seated on yellow curb

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Modern Photo Services			319 E. 44 St.		New York		<input type="checkbox"/> 1. 11 W. 53 St. <input type="checkbox"/> 5. 4 W. 54 St. <input type="checkbox"/> 2. 21 W. 53 St. <input type="checkbox"/> 6. 20 W. 54 St. <input type="checkbox"/> 3. 23 W. 53 St. <input type="checkbox"/> 7. 405 E. 76 St. <input type="checkbox"/> 4. 27 W. 53 St. <input type="checkbox"/> 8. Other			
Ship <input type="checkbox"/> U.P.S. <input type="checkbox"/> Motor Frt. <input type="checkbox"/> Messenger Via <input type="checkbox"/> P.P. <input type="checkbox"/> Vendor's Truck <input type="checkbox"/> Other:			F.O.B. <input type="checkbox"/> Delivered <input type="checkbox"/> Other:		Terms <input type="checkbox"/> N-10 <input type="checkbox"/> 1-10 <input type="checkbox"/> N-30 <input type="checkbox"/> 2-10		Date: 7/14/75		Dept. Authorization: [Signature] Date: 7/14/75	
Deliver to Department:			Account Number: 7532-2145		Requisitioner: P. Giosi		Date: 7/14/75		Dept. Authorization: [Signature] Date: 7/14/75	
Item	Quantity	Unit	Complete Part Number and Description	One item per line Skip a line whenever possible	Estimated Unit Price	Purchased Price				
1			print from 52 original color slides by Wm. Eggleston		.67	34.84				
SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS: Confirmed to:										
Special Instructions, Suggested Vendor, etc.:										
* Over 500.00 Chief Accountant										
* Over 2500.00 Director of Finance										
Delivery Date Required:										
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PICK UP	MSNGR.	MAIL	AIR	SPEC. DEL.	INS. REG.	UPS	OTHER	PROMISED DAY	TIME
R.									A.M. P.M.

	HOW MANY EACH	SIZE	SWG	DWG	SEMI GLOSSY	MATTE	EXHIBIT	TOTAL	UNIT PRICE	AMOUNT
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1 each of 52 slides 3xPrint 52									.67	34 84
COPY NEGS. 4 x 5		5 x 7				8 x 10				
B & W Negs. from Transp.		4 x 5				8 x 10				
STRIPPING & OPAQUING										
MOUNTING ST DT FLUSH										

EXTRA CHARGES:

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS:

- ☐ Number Prints
- ☐ Credit Stamp
- ☐ Number Copy Neg.
- ☐ Return Negs.
- ☐ File Negs.

Job #

RUSH { 50%
100%

SUB-TOTAL

SALES TAX

TRUCKING/DELIVERY/MAILING

TOTAL PRINTS _____ Checked _____ Paid in Advance _____ TOTAL

Total Negs. _____ Spotted _____ Deposit _____

39 84

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JS

MD

RP pending

exhibi. files

Fred Cozen

Richard L. Palmer

March 1, 1976

Upcoming Frame Shop work

Dear Fred and Bill:

This will follow-up on the Frame Shop jobs which I mentioned to you on the telephone yesterday and this morning and which I hope we can get into the shop before we are flooded with MASSON work:

1. NARRATIVE PRINTS - Howardena Pindell

Ay-o work, 38 parts, each ca. 8 1/2 x 11"

to be mounted on rag board (4' sections) which will be wall-mounted in the Sachs Gallery behind 8' plexi sections.

Please ask Howardena to work out spacing of the prints with the shop and proceed with the job as soon as possible. If Collins cannot store these mounted works and the plexi cut to size until we will need them for the installation - ca. May 10 or so - please advise Howardena she will need to retrieve and store them until they can go to the gallery.

2. WILLIAM EGGLESTON - John Szarkowski

John Szarkowski expects to give me on Monday a listing of ca. 30 Eggleston prints now in his possession. Of these about 15 are loans and will have to be checked by Registrar (Holly) before they could go to the shop. I hope this checking can be done next Tuesday or Wednesday. After that, Photography would do a Frame Instruction sheet(s) and the work could begin. Again, I would like to get moving on this quickly before we get involved in MASSON. There will be another 45-50 prints for Eggleston but they will not be available until sometime in April and possibly into early May as they must be printed. John will determine the type of frame he wants to utilize and I presume will order them directly from an outside source.

3. Drawings Acquisition Meeting - Magdalena called this morning (and I advised Bill Williams of this) to say that they needed to have one large David Smith drawing mounted in order to present it at their meeting on Tuesday. I said I didn't think this should be a problem. Can you call Magdalena and arrange to have the work delivered if this has not already been done.

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not corrected

then get back to DRAFT - WILLIAM EGGLESTON'S GUIDE ~~that be~~ see xerox
to what part of the content of 1. work answered to life, and what part copy

At this writing I have not yet visited Memphis, or northern Mississippi, and thus have no basis for judging how closely the photographs in this book might seem to resemble that part of the world, and the life that is lived there. I have however visited other places that have been described by works of art, and have observed that the poem or picture is likely to seem a faithful document if we get to know it first, and the unedited reality afterwards. Whereas a new work of art that describes something we had known well is likely to seem as unfamiliar and arbitrary as our own passport photos. Thus if a stranger sought out in good season the people and places described here they would probably seem clearly similar to their pictures, and the stranger would assume that the pictures mirrored real life. It would be marvelous if this were the case - if the place itself, and not merely the pictures, were the work of art. It would be marvelous to think that the ordinary, vernacular life in and around Memphis might be in its quality more sharply incised, formally clear, fictive, and mysteriously purposeful than it appears elsewhere, endowing the least pretentious of raw materials with ineffable dramatic possibilities. Unfortunately, the character of our skepticism makes this difficult to believe; we are accustomed to believing instead that the meaning in a work of art is due altogether to the imagination and legerdemain of the artist. with a focus a portion of one's cone of vision, while standing

Artists themselves tend to take absolutist and unhelpful positions when addressing themselves to questions of content, either pretending with Degas that the work has nothing to do with ballet dancers, or pretending with James Agee that it has nothing to do with artifice. Both positions have the virtue of neatness, and allow the artist to answer unanswerable questions briefly, and earlier work by a great and revered master.

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then get back to work. If an artist were to admit that he was uncertain as to what part of the content of his work answered to life, and what part to art, and was perhaps even uncertain as to precisely where the boundary between them lay, we would probably consider him incompetent.

I once heard William Eggleston say that the nominal subjects of his pictures were no more than a pretext for the making of color photographs, the Degas position. I did not believe him, although I can believe that it might be an advantage to him to think so, or to pretend to think so. To me it seems that the pictures reproduced here are about the photographer's home, about his place, in both unimportant meanings of that word. One might say his identity. If this is true, it does not mean that the pictures are not also entirely about photography, for the two issues are not supplementary but coextensive. Whatever else a photograph may be about, it is inevitably about photography, the container and the vehicle of all its meanings. Whatever a photographer's intentions or intuition, they must be cut and shaped to fit the possibilities of his art. Thus if we see the pictures clearly as photography, we will perhaps also see, or sense, something of their other, more private, willful, and anarchic meanings. Photography is a system of visual editing. At bottom, it is a matter of surrounding with a frame a portion of one's cone of vision, while standing in the right place at the right time. Like chess, or writing, it is a matter of choosing from among given possibilities, but in the case of photography the number of possibilities is not finite but infinite. The world now contains more photographs than bricks, and they are, astonishingly, all different. Even the most servile of photographers has not yet managed to duplicate exactly an earlier work by a great and revered master. In brief, to discover a tension so

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The reader can demonstrate the point by clicking off a roll with the family Instamatic or Leica without moving from his chair: point the machine at random this way and that, quickly and without thought. When the film is developed every frame will define a subject different than any defined before. To make matters worse, some of the pictures are likely to be marginally interesting. Even the cameras in the noses of fighter planes, and those that record bank robberies, describe facts and relationships that surprise mere eye-witnesses.

It is not easy for the photographer to compete with the clever originality of mindless, mechanized cameras, but the photographer can add intelligence. By means of photography one can in a minute reject as unsatisfactory ninety-nine configurations of facts, and elect as right the hundredth. The choice is based on tradition and intuition - knowledge and ego - as it is in any art, but the ease of execution and the richness of the possibilities in photography both serve to put a premium on good intuition. The photographer's problem is perhaps too complex to be dealt with rationally. This is why photographers prowl with such restless uncertainty about their motif, ignoring many potentially interesting records, while they look for something else.

The American photographer Robert Adams has written about this process of prowling, and its purpose: "Over and over again the photographer walks a few steps and peers, rather comically, into the camera; to the exasperation of family and friends, he inventories what seems an endless number of angles; he explains, if asked, that he is trying for effective composition, but hesitates to define it. Edward Weston, a photographer who demonstrated he knew what it was, said simply that good composition was "the strongest way of seeing." What he appears to have meant was that a photographer wants form, an unarguably right relationship of shapes, a visual stability in which all components are equally important. The photographer hopes, in brief, to discover a tension so expressive possibilities of the detail.

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Gifted photographers, learning from the successes of their predecessors, quickly acquire the ability to recognize and anticipate certain aspects of exact that it is peace."

"Pictures that embody this calm are not synonymous, of course, with what we might see casually out of a car window (they may, however, be more effective if we can be tricked into thinking so). The form the photographer records, though discovered in a split second of literal fact, is different because it implies an order beyond itself, a landscape into which all fragments, no matter how imperfect, fit perfectly."

Form is perhaps the point of art. The goal is not to make something factually impeccable, but seamlessly persuasive. In photography the pursuit of form has taken an unexpected course. In this peculiar art, form and subject are defined simultaneously. Even more than in the traditional arts, the two are inextricably tangled. Indeed, they are probably the same thing. Or, if they are different, one might say that a photograph's subject is not its starting point but its destination.

In practice it works like this: the photographer cannot freely redispense the elements of his subject matter, as a painter can, to construct a picture that fits his prior conception of the subject. Instead, he discovers his subject within the possibilities proposed by his medium. If the broad landscape refuses to compose itself economically within the viewfinder's rectangle, the photographer contrives a different but consonant subject, composed perhaps of two trees and a rock.

In historical terms it was perhaps not until the time of Stieglitz and Atget that photographers of exceptional talent learned to use the entire plate with consistent boldness. The new graphic economy that characterizes the best photography of the Edwardian period could be described in terms of the conventional concept of composition, but it is perhaps more useful to think of it as the result of a new system of indication, based on the expressive possibilities of the detail.

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Gifted photographers, learning from the ~~successes~~ of their predecessors, quickly acquire the ability to recognize and anticipate certain aspects of subject matter, situation, perspectives, and qualities of light that might produce effective pictures. Original photographers enlarge this shared sense of possibilities, by discovering new patterns of facts that will serve as metaphors for their intentions. The continuing, cumulative insights of these exceptional artists have formed and reformed photography's tradition: a new pictorial vocabulary, based on the specific, the fragmentary, the elliptical, the ephemeral, and the provisional. This new tradition has revised our sense of what in the world is meaningful, and our understanding of how the meaningful can be described.

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Imagine, then, after the photographer had spent a century learning how to use his medium in monochrome, what chaos, resulted when he was suddenly presented with cheap and virtually fool-proof color film. The ~~Tehhnical~~ geniuses who developed this wonderful advance assumed, naturally, that more was better, and that the old pictures plus color could only be more natural.

The photographers understood that the old pictures were not natural to begin with; they were merely conceits, black-and-white photographs, infinitesimal bits of experience chosen because they looked good, and seemed to mean something, as pictures.

To the photographer who demanded from his pictures formal rigor, color was an enormous complication or a problem already cruelly difficult. And not merely a complication, for the new medium meant that the syntax that the photographer had learned - the patterns of his educated intuitions - were perhaps worse than useless, for they led him toward the discovery of black-and-white photographs. Most serious photographers, after a period of frustrating experimentation, decided that since black-and-white had been good enough for David Octavius Hill, Brady, and Stieglitz, it was good enough for them.

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Professionals used color when they were paid to, doing their very best, without quite knowing what they meant by that.

Considering the lack of enthusiasm and confidence with which most ambitious photographers have regarded color, it is not surprising that most work in the medium has been puerile. Its failures might be divided into two categories. The more interesting of these might be described as black-and-white photographs made with color film, in which the problem of color is solved by inattention. The better photographs of the old National Geographic were often of this sort: no matter how cobalt the blue skies and how crimson the red shirts, the color in such pictures is extraneous - a failure of form. Nevertheless such pictures are often interesting, even if shapeless and extravagant, in the same way that casual conversation is often interesting.

The second category of failure in color photography has been comprised of photographs of beautiful colors in pleasing relationships. The nominal subject matter of these pictures is often the walls of old buildings, or the prow of a sailboat reflected in rippled water. Such photographs can be recognized by their resemblance to reproductions of synthetic cubist or abstract expressionist paintings. It is their unhappy fate to remind us of something similar but better.

The conspicuous successes of color photography are not many, and most of these have depended on a high degree of prior control over the material photographed. The still lifes of Irving Penn and the portraits of Marie Cosindas, for example, are masterly studio constructions, designed to suit the preferences of the camera. Outside the studio, where such control has been impossible, color has induced timidity, and an avoidance of those varieties of meaning that are not in the narrowest sense aesthetic.

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Most color photography, to put the matter bluntly, has been either formless or pretty. In the first case the meanings of color have been ignored; in the second they have been considered at the expense of allusive meanings. While editing directly from life, it has been simply too difficult to see simultaneously both the blue and the sky.

But what is at a given moment too difficult can bit by bit be grasped, and finally become possible. Clues garnered from a million failures and apparently unrelated successes educate the intuition, and make possible deductive leaps to progressively complex syntheses. The clues that have been of use to the evolution of color photography are labyrinthine and untraceable, but have surely included modern painting, color movies and television, drugstore postcards, and the heterogeneous flood of imagery that has come from the modern magazine.

In the past decade a number of photographers have begun to work in color in a more confident, more natural, and yet more ambitious spirit, working not as though color were a separate issue, a problem to be wolved in isolation (not thinking of color as photographers seventy years ago thought of composition), but rather as though the world itself existed in color, as though the blue and the sky were one thing. The best of Eliot Porter's landscapes, like the best of the color street pictures of Helen Levitt, Joel Meyerowitz, Stephen Shore and others, accept color as existential and descriptive; these pictures are not photographs of color, any more than they are photographs of shapes, textures, objects, symbols, or events, but rather photographs of experience, as it has been ordered and clarified within the structures imposed by the camera.

It could be said - it doubtless has been said - that such pictures often bear a clear resemblance to the Kodachrome slides of the ubiquitous amateur next door. It seems to me that this is true, in the same sense that the

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taken at face value, or whether this should be understood as a posture, as belles lettres of a time generally relate in the texture, reference, assumed insouciance designed to camouflage the artist's Faustian ambition, and rhythm of their language to the prevailing educated vernacular of

that time. In broad outline, Jane Austin's sentences are presumably artist, whose view is characteristically self-contained, social, and at similar to those of her _____ siblings. Similarly, it should not be surprising if the best photography of today is related in iconography and technique to the contemporary standard of vernacular camera work, which is and aspect from that with which we are familiar in the photography of the past generation. In that more familiar mode, photographic romanticism has a matter of intelligence, imagination, intensity, precision, and coherence. tended to mean the adoption and adaptation of large public issues, social

- 4 4

or philosophical, for private artistic ends (an activity that might be If it is true, as I believe it is, that today's most radical and termed applied romanticism, as distinct from pure Wordsworthian independence), suggestive color photography derives much of its vigor from commonplace and it has generally been expressed in a style heavy with special effects: models, this relationship is especially strong in the case of Eggleston's elicits and shadows, dramatic simplicities, familiar scenes, and idiosyncratic work, which is consistently local and private, even insular, in its nominal techniques.

The work seen here, selected from an essay of three hundred and seventy-five pictures completed in 197x, is on the surface as parochial as uncompromisingly private experience described in a manner that is restrained, a family album. It is true that much of the best photography of this century austere, and public, a style not inappropriate for photographs that might have been created from materials that one would, from an objective, historical perspective, call trivial, e.g., the wheel and fender of a Model T Ford, or

the face of an anonymous sharecropper, or the passers-by on an urban sidewalk, friends, pictures showing people and places the researcher may be misled but these materials, even if slight in terms of their intrinsic, specific by experiencing a deeper and more patient interest in the pictures of importance, are nevertheless public and potentially exemplary, and thus more unfamiliar people and places that are reproduced here. These subjects clearly available as the carrier of symbolic freight, whereas Eggleston shows appear to be no more overtly interesting or exotic than those in our own us pictures of aunts and cousins and friends, of houses in the neighborhood family albums, nor do they identify themselves as representatives of a and in neighboring neighborhoods, of local streets and sideroads, local strangers, odd souvenirs, all of this appearing not at all as it might in a social document, but as it might in a diary, where the important meanings the photographs would have us believe. In truth the people and places would be not public and general but private and esoteric. It is not altogether clear whether the bucolic modesty of the work's subject matter should be of subject matter. They serve Eggleston's interests.

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taken at face value, or whether this should be understood as a posture, an assumed ingenuousness designed to camouflage the artist's Faustian ambition. When Alfred Barr, Jr. first saw a selection of slides from

Preoccupation with private experience is a hallmark of the romantic artist, whose view is characteristically self-centered, asocial, and, at least in posture, anti-traditional. If Eggleston's perspective is essentially romantic, however, it is a romanticism different in spirit and aspect from that with which we are familiar in the photography of the past generation. In that more familiar mode, photographic romanticism has tended to mean the adoption and adaptation of large public issues, social or philosophical, for private artistic ends (an activity that might be termed applied romanticism, as distinct from pure Wordsworthian independence), and it has generally been expressed in a style heavy with special effects: glints and shadows, dramatic simplicities, familiar symbols, and idiosyncratic technique.

In Eggleston's work these characteristics are reversed, and we see uncompromisingly private experience described in a manner that is restrained, austere, and public, a style not inappropriate for photographs that might be introduced as evidence in court.

Those of us with a limited appetite for the color slides made by our friends, pictures showing people and places that we cherish, may be puzzled by experiencing a deeper and more patient interest in the pictures of unfamiliar people and places that are reproduced here. These subjects appear to be no more overtly interesting or exotic than those in our own family albums, nor do they identify themselves as representatives of a general human condition. They are simply present: clearly realized, precisely fixed, themselves in the service of no extraneous roles. Or so the photographs would have us believe. In truth the people and places described here are no so sovereign as they seem, for they serve the role of subject matter. They serve Eggleston's interests.

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The simplicity of these pictures is (as the reader will have guessed) not so simple. When Alfred Barr, Jr. first saw a selection of slides from this series in 1972 he observed - surprisingly but in fact accurately - that the design of most of the pictures seemed to radiate from a central, circular core. In time the observation was relayed to Eggleston, who replied, after a barely perceptible hesitation, that this was true, since the pictures were based compositionally on the Confederate flag. Not the angles, asterisk, or the common daisy, or the dove of the Holy Ghost, but the Confederate flag. The response was clearly improvised and unresponsive, of interest only as an illustration of the lengths to which artists sometimes go to frustrate rational analysis of their work, as though they fear it might prove an antidote to their magic.

Barr's comment however is valuable, and suggests in concrete terms a quality, that fixes the subject as sharply as if it were recalled from eidetic memory.

Barr's comment however is valuable, and suggests in concrete terms a quality central to Eggleston's work - its lean, monocular quality, that fixes the subject as sharply as if it were recalled. The boundary between the city and the country, civilization and wilderness, the fall-safe point between community and freedom, the frontier of restrained protest or cautious adventure. And the boundary between the new and the old, the new neighborhood advancing into the old land, but the neighborhood itself not so new as last year, the House in the foreground no longer the last in the line, and the xx Buick that stands by its door already poised on the fulcrum of middle age, still well-shined and well-serviced, competent and presentable, but nevertheless no longer young. And the boundary that separates day from evening, the time of hard shadows and yellow heat from the cool blue opalescent dusk, the time of demarcation between the separate

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some large social or cultural question, such as, Whither the South?, or, Whither America, depending on one's viewing distance. The fact is that Eggleston's pictures do not seem concerned with large questions of this sort. They seem concerned simply with describing life.

This does not advance us very far, since it is difficult to conceive of a picture that does not in some sense describe life. That encompassing motif is itself so broad and hopelessly unformed, with so many aspects, angles, details, sotto voce asides, picturesque sub-plots, and constantly shifting patterns - and none of this clearly labelled - that in fact only the description itself identifies the thing described, and each new description redefines the subject. It is not possible to describe one subject in two different ways.

One can say then that in these photographs form and content are indistinguishable, which is to say that the pictures mean precisely what they appear to mean. Attempting to translate these appearances into words is surely a fool's errand, in the pursuit of which no two fools would choose the same unsatisfactory words. For example, consider the picture on page xx:

Think of it as a picture that describes boundaries. The boundary between the city and the country, civilization and wilderness, the fail-safe point between community and freedom, the frontier of restrained protest or cautious adventure. And the boundary between the new and the old, the new neighborhood advancing into the old land, but the neighborhood itself not so new as last year, the House in the foreground no longer the last in the line, and the xx Buick that stands by its door already poised on the fulcrum of middle age, still well-shined and well-serviced, competent and presentable, but nevertheless no longer young. And the Boundary that separates day from evening, the time of hard shadows and yellow heat from the cool blue opalescent dusk, the time of demarcation between the separate

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and public lives of the day and the private communal lives of evening, the point at which families begin to gather again beneath their atavistic roofs, and the neighborhood sounds with womens' voices crying the names of children. Such a reading might damage the picture only for the very impressionable, and might encourage some others to look at the picture longer than they' would have without the encouragement of words, But the meanings of words and those of pictures are at best parallel, describing two lines of thought that do not meet, and if our concern is for the meanings in pictures, verbal descriptions are finally gratuitous. One can say, to repeat, that in Eggleston's pictures form and content are indistinguishable, which seems to me true but also unsatisfactory, because too permissive. The same thing can be said of any picture. The ambitious photographer is not satisfied by so tautological a success, but seeks those pictures that have a visceral relation to his own self and his own privileged knowledge - those that belong to him by generic right, in which form matches not only content by intent.

This suggests that the pictures reproduced here are no more interesting than the person who made them, and that their intelligence, wit, knowledge, and style reach no farther than that person's; which leads us away from the measurable relationships of art historical science, toward intuition, superstition, blood-knowledge, terror, and delight.

These pictures are fascinating partly because they contradict our expectations. We have been told so often of the bland, synthetic smoothness of exemplary American life, of its comfortable, vacant insentience, its extruded, stamped, and molded sameness, in a word its irredeemable dullness, that we have come half to believe it, and thus are startled and perhaps exhilarated to see these pictures or prototypically normal types on their familiar

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New Exhibitions

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John

William Eggleston ☐ 1st floor

During recent years younger photographers have begun to use color photography in a new spirit of freedom and naturalness. In this work the role of color is more than descriptive or decorative, and assumes a central place in the definition of the picture's content. William Eggleston is one of the most talented and accomplished of these photographers. His pictures also comprise a remarkable and surprising

ground, grandchildren of Penrod, who seem to live surrounded by spirits, not all of them benign. The suggestible viewer might sense that these are subjects capable not only of the familiar modern vices (self-loathing, adaptability, dissembling, sanctimony, and license), but the ancient ones: pride, parochial stubbornness, irrationality, selfishness, and lust. This could not be called progress, but it is perhaps interesting.

Such speculations, however, even if not simple nonsense, presumably relate only to Eggleston's pictures - patterns of random facts in the service of one imagination - not to the real world. A picture is after all only a picture, a concrete kind of fiction, not to be admitted as hard evidence, or as the quantifiable data of social scientists.

As pictures, however, these seem to me perfect: irreducible surrogates for the experience they pretend to record, visual analogues for the quality of one life, collectively a paradigm of a private view, a view one would have thought ineffable, described here with clarity, fullness, and elegance.

American Drawings: Recent Acquisitions ☐ 1st floor

Drawings, recently acquired by the Museum, including works on paper by MacLennan, Gorky and David Smith as well as by several contemporary artists.

May 28

End gallery 1 →

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30 pt # →

New Exhibitions

William Eggleston ☐ 1st floor

During recent years younger photographers have begun to use color photography in a new spirit of freedom and naturalness. In this work the role of color is more than descriptive or decorative, and assumes a central place in the definition of the picture's content. William Eggleston is one of the most talented and accomplished of these photographers. His pictures also comprise a remarkable and surprising commentary on contemporary American life. The exhibition of approximately 80 prints will be accompanied by a publication on Eggleston's work entitled William Eggleston's Guide. The exhibition and book have been made possible by grants from the

National Endowment for the Arts, and Vivitar Corporation.May 24--July 6American Drawings: Recent Acquisitions ☐ 1st floor

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May 28--for
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30 pt # →

New Exhibitions

William Eggleston □ 1st floor

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May 28--for
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30 pt. # → Continuing Exhibitions

4

The "Wild Beasts": Fauvism and Its Affinities

1st floor

Although Fauvism was the first modern movement of the 20th century, its precise character and contribution are still too little known. Presented here are approximately 100 paintings and related drawings and sculptures created for the most part in 1905 and 1906 by the Fauves—the group of artists, led by Matisse, which earned the name "wild beasts" from its use of bold and "unnatural" colors. An orientation gallery offers the "proto-Fauve" works of these artists, with paintings by their predecessors and followers. More than 20 Matisse's, all of Derain's large-scale Fauvist figure compositions (exhibited together for the first time), and major Fauve landscapes by Derain and Vlaminck are included, as well as paintings by Braque, van Dongen and Dufy, among others. The exhibition has been made possible by grants from SCM Corporation and the National Endowment for the Arts, and will travel to San Francisco and Fort Worth after its New York showing.

through June 1

Spt # →

Morgan Russell 1st floor

This exhibition of paintings, with related drawings, notebooks, watercolors and oil studies, focuses on the development of Russell's Synchromist style between 1910 and 1922.

through May 25

Spt # →

Projects: William Wiley 1st floor

Works ~~have~~ constructed in the galleries especially for Projects, a continuing series made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

~~April 22~~ May 16

Spt # →

Posters from the Collection 2nd floor

Chronological presentation of selections from the Design Collection on view in the Goodwin Galleries.

through May 30

Spt # →

Cubism and Its Affinities 3rd floor

An exhibition of works on paper combining drawings and prints from the Museum's collection. The survey, which begins in 1906 and closes in 1922, mainly concentrates on the years 1910 through 1921. The selection includes the Italian futurists, as well as works by artists living in Czechoslovakia, Germany, Great Britain, Holland, Russia and the United States. The ramifications of cubism and futurism were considerable and on paper, as the exhibition demonstrates, sometimes unexpected.

through May 9

Spt # →

Projects: Video VIII Auditorium Gallery

Selected works shown daily 2:00—5:15 p.m.

~~April 22~~ June 30

Spt # →

Photography for Collectors Penthouse, 6th floor

An exhibition/sale presented by the Art Lending Service and made possible by a grant from Black & White Scotch.

through June 15

5 pt. # →

The Museum gratefully acknowledges the support of its exhibition program by the New York State Council on the Arts.

thanks - Linda G.

through

Sachs Galleries,

Is this O.K.?

through

offering works by more than 30 photographers, including the long-recognized masters Bill Brandt, Imogen Cunningham, Manuel Alvarez Bravo and Clarence White, as well as younger photographers.

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The Museum of Modern Art

To John —
 From Bob Adams
 Date 3-8-75
 Re quote in Eggleston book.

called to say that the title of his
 proposed book has changed from
 "A Place to Stand" to "DENVER: A PHOTOGRAPHIC
 SURVEY OF THE METROPOLITAN AREA."

16, and only if, the ^{Ex.} book has not gone
 to press, or if it's not much trouble
 to change ^{the title} ~~it~~, he'd appreciate it.
 Otherwise it really doesn't matter.

M. M.

I passed this
 info on to
 Jane Fluegel,
 p.w.