

74
THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 WEST 53RD STREET, NEW YORK

TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 7-7470

18636 - 17

FOR RELEASE Monday, June 22, 1936

WEATHER PERMITTING!

Because of the recent cold, rainy weather, the dates given below may have to be postponed a day or two so that the delphiniums may be in full bloom. Please mention this weather-permitting clause and suggest that all interested persons consult their newspapers Wednesday for any postponement of the opening.

This release is for publication Monday, June 22. If the opening date should need postponing, all newspapers* will receive word to that effect Tuesday afternoon, June 23.

The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, announces a very unusual one-man, one-week show which will be opened to the public Wednesday, June 24, at one p.m. It will be an exhibition of "Steichen Delphiniums"---rare new American varieties developed through twenty-six years of cross-breeding and selection by Edward Steichen. Although Mr. Steichen is widely known for his photography, this is the first time his delphiniums have been given a public showing. They are original varieties, as creatively produced as his photographs. To avoid confusion, it should be noted that the actual delphiniums will be shown in the Museum---not paintings or photographs of them. It will be a "personal appearance" of the flowers themselves.

Mr. Steichen is President of the Delphinium Society of America. His interest in cross-breeding and selection of flowers began thirty years ago, but in 1906 he became interested chiefly in the breeding of delphiniums. He now devotes ten acres in Connecticut to that purpose and uses about one plant in forty for cross-breeding. The rest are plowed under. Some day when he feels satisfied with his work he hopes to give the results of it to the world in a few rare varieties of delphinium.

The delphiniums will be shown in relays at the Museum of Modern Art. The first group starting Wednesday, June 24th will consist of the garden hybrids of the true-blue or pure-blue colors, and the fog and mist shades. The final group, with giant spikes

*in the Metropolitan area

75
from four to six feet high, will be placed on exhibition Monday, June 29th. The flowers will be shown on the first floor of the Museum in connection with the current exhibition of Modern Exposition Architecture on that floor.

The modern delphinium grown in this country is a fusion of qualities of countless species that have existed in many parts of the world: North America, Tibet, the Swiss Alps, the Mediterranean countries, Central Europe, Asia. The name was given the flower in its primitive state by the botanists of Ancient Greece, who saw in its unopened buds a resemblance to the dolphin. As the dolphin was the fish into which Apollo Delphinus transformed himself on occasion, the derivation of the name goes directly back to the god of the arts and music. One of the early Greek festivals was the Delphinia, held in April, when young girls proceeded to the principal temple of Apollo, the Delphinium, bearing flowering branches.

Edward Steichen was born in Hancock, Michigan, in 1879, and received his schooling in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He showed early evidence of strongly marked artistic and scientific-mechanical qualities, an unusual combination no doubt responsible for his later success as a master photographer. At the age of fifteen he was signed as a four-year apprentice with the American Lithographing Company of Milwaukee at a salary of nothing a week the first year, \$2 the second year, \$3 the third, and \$4 the fourth. But he made money constantly on the side drawing program designs, painting water colors and annexing himself as unofficial photographer to all picnics in the vicinity. There were many picnics and Steichen's fund for following art out into the world grew. He also found time to organize the Milwaukee Art Students League, and direct activities as its president. The League employed instructors, held art classes and exhibitions.

After his apprenticeship, Steichen was promoted to the drafting room at \$25 a week, which was soon increased to \$50. He designed posters for beer, patent medicines, farm products and so on but the poster whose influence was felt round the world was the one he designed for Cascarets--a luscious lady reclining in the lower curve of a giant capital letter C.

Nights, noons, holidays and Sundays Steichen worked with his

76

camera and paint brushes. For three years he submitted paintings to the Chicago Art Institute, only to have them rejected by the jury; but in 1898 all the photographs he sent to the Philadelphia photographic Salon were accepted. The next year several photographs were accepted for an exhibition held by the Chicago Art Institute. Then Steichen gave up his job, took his savings, his paintings and his photographs and set out for New York. One of the first things there to greet his eyes was a huge billboard showing his Lady of the Cascarets in giant proportions. He went to the New York Camera Club and there met Alfred Stieglitz, who was already familiar with his work. Stieglitz bought his photographs, encouraged and advised him. In 1901 an exhibition of Steichen photographs was held in London. Bernard Shaw was one of his most enthusiastic critics and became his friend.

Steichen, now dividing his time between camera and brush, went abroad. He met Rodin and confessed his ambition to make a great photograph of him. Rodin gave him the freedom of his studio and twice a week for six months Steichen cycled out there. One day he took his camera with him and after ten minutes posing carried away a superb photograph of the sculptor. For a year he traveled over Europe, photographing and making friends of the great ones of the day. In 1902 he had two paintings in the Paris Salon. He returned to New York that same year, when he was only 23, and was associated with Stieglitz in founding 291--the little room at that number on Fifth Avenue which for years was the chief stimulus in this country for the modern trend in the arts.

Internationally known, Steichen photographed and painted with increasing success until the World War. He entered the air service in the first group of American air corps that was sent to France and during the second battle of the Marne was made chief of the photographic division. He came out of the war with the rank of Colonel, and with the red ribbon of the Legion of Honor. The necessity for clarity and detail in aerial work had given him a new concept of photography. In 1920 he gave up painting to devote his time to photography. He is an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain.