

# The Museum of Modern Art

West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 245-3200 Cable: Modernart

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No. 32

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PRESS PREVIEW:

Friday, April 5, 1968

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PHOTOGRAPHS BEFORE SURREALISM, an exhibition of about 40 works, many by unknown photographers, from the 1860's through the first two decades of the 20th century, will be on view in the Edward Steichen Photography Center of The Museum of Modern Art from April 6 through June.

"Images provide vocabulary for the dialogue between reality and the logicless realm of the subconscious," states Bruce K. MacDonald, Curatorial Intern in the Department of Photography and Director of the exhibition. "The Surrealists used dreams, trances, and automatic writing to expand insight into this hidden area of the mind. Photographs provided a related opportunity by preserving instantaneous fragments of vision -- reflections of reality -- which could thereafter be slowly digested by the viewer's expanding awareness."

The documentary photographer freezes and crystallizes the juxtapositions of the real world at a precise instant. His images are created without intervention of the extended rational processes which underlie the manually rendered images of other artistic media. "Before automatic techniques of rendering were developed by the Surrealists, the slow processes of drawing and painting caused art's images to be filtered through the defensive fabric of reason. Tradition often guided the pen or brush. By such art the jagged edges of reality were rubbed smooth. But photographs -- especially 'artless' photographs -- exposed the subliminal implications of images taken directly from reality."

The juxtapositions captured by documentary photography can give rise to varied implications and associations -- of sex, violence, or humor, for example. The Surrealists were receptive to these subliminal implications, which they exploited in their imagery. Photographs like the ones exhibited here were reproduced in the early Surrealist periodical La Révolution Surréaliste, first published in 1924.

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In Joseph Byron's Incubator, Sloane Maternity Hospital (1899) the associations are obvious. The baby in the incubator is "fed" by a long "umbilical" cord attached to the wall, the mechanical mother. This "artless" depiction of objective reality rewards further contemplation. In George Barnard's Federal Cavalry at Sudley Ford, Bull Run, Va. (c. 1863), the implications are more subtle. A group of children sits by a river while a row of cavalry pauses in its advance on the far bank. This moment, frozen in time, is at once factual and mysterious, tranquil and sinister.

The viewer brings the same psychological defenses to photographic imagery as to the ephemeral images of reality. But these defenses are less effective against the implications rising from the factual images immobilized by photography. "The photographs in this exhibition were chosen to exemplify this challenge to insight as it existed in photographs before Surrealism."

PHOTOGRAPHS BEFORE SURREALISM includes important loans from The Library of Congress and The Museum of the City of New York.

\* \* \* \* \*

Photographs and additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, and Patricia B. Kaplan, Associate, Press Services, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019. 245-3200.

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## PHOTOGRAPHS BEFORE SURREALISM

April 6 - June, 1968

### Wall Label

Images provide vocabulary for the dialogue between reality and the logicless realm of the subconscious. The Surrealists used dreams, trances, and automatic writing to expand insight into this hidden area of the mind. Photographs provided a related opportunity. They did so by preserving instantaneous fragments of vision which could thereafter be slowly digested by the viewer's expanding awareness. This exhibition consists of photographs drawn from many facets of the medium's development previous to the first articulation of Surrealist principles. They are rich in those aspects of reality which can be more quickly seen than comprehended.

Before automatic techniques of rendering were developed by the Surrealists, the slow processes of drawing and painting caused art's images to be filtered through the defensive fabric of reason. Tradition often guided the pen or brush. By such art the jagged edges of reality were rubbed smooth. But photographs--especially "artless" photographs--exposed the subliminal implications of images taken directly from reality. Many photographs of this nature were published in the early Surrealist publication, La Révolution Surréaliste. The viewer brought the same defenses to photographic imagery as to the ephemeral images of reality. But these defenses were less effective against implications rising from factual images immobilized by photography. The photographs in this exhibition were chosen to exemplify this challenge to insight as it existed in photographs before Surrealism.

Bruce K. MacDonald

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## PHOTOGRAPHS BEFORE SURREALISM

April 6 - June, 1968

### Checklist

#### ATGET, Eugène

1. Saint Cloud. c.1910  
The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Edward Steichen Purchase Fund. 136.50.
2. Saint Cloud. c. 1910  
The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Edward Steichen Purchase Fund. 115.50.
3. Window of Tailor Shop. c. 1910.  
The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Anonymous gift. 1628.40.

#### BARNARD, George N.

4. Federal Cavalry at Sudley Ford, Bull Run, Va. c. 1863.  
Courtesy of The Library of Congress (LC-B8171-313). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Study Collection.
5. Pettit's Battery in Fort Richardson, Fair Oaks Station, Va. 1862.  
Courtesy of The Library of Congress (LC-B8171-476). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Study Collection.

#### BARNARD, George N. ?

6. Steps of the Capitol with Covered Guns, Nashville. c. 1864.  
Courtesy of The Library of Congress (LC-B8171-2629). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Study Collection.

#### BELLOCCO

7. New Orleans. c. 1913.  
Lent by Lee Friedlander.

#### BENNETT, H. H.

8. Canoeists in a Boat Cave, Wisconsin Dells. c. 1890-5.  
Courtesy of H. H. Bennett Studio. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. 40.66.

#### BONE, E. H.

9. Grave of Patrick Gass. Copyright 1905.  
Lent by The Library of Congress (C)60796.

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BRADY, Mathew B.

10. Inside the Confederate Lines, Petersburg, Va. c. 1863.  
The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Anonymous gift. 259.42.

BYRON COMPANY

11. Biltmore Hotel. 1921.  
Lent by the Museum of the City of New York. (Neg. no. 1526).
12. "Bob" Fitzsimmons at Dr. Woodbury's. 1895.  
Lent by the Museum of the City of New York. (Neg. no. 967).
13. Free Lunch, E. R. Wessel's Bar. 1905.  
Lent by the Museum of the City of New York. (Neg. no. 19749).
14. Incubator, Sloane Maternity Hospital. 1899.  
Lent by the Museum of the City of New York. (Neg. no. 8512).
15. Richard Hall Painting Portrait of Mrs. Reginald Claypoole Vanderbilt. 1903.  
Lent by the Museum of the City of New York. (Neg. no. 15435).

DAVEY, Frank

16. Statue of Cries. Copyright 1906.  
Lent by The Library of Congress. (C)77471.

DUNLAP, O. E.

17. A Frozen Beauty. Copyright 1904.  
Lent by the Library of Congress. (C)42999.

GIVENS, J. D.

18. Captain Ross with Regimental and Company Mascots. Copyright 1898.  
Lent by The Library of Congress. (C)49100.

KERTÉSZ, André

19. Man Diving, Esztergom, Hungary. 1917.  
The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Purchase. 314.65.

KINSEY, Darius

20. Cedar Tree with 20' Diameter. c. 1906.  
Courtesy of Jesse E. Ebert, Seattle. The Museum of Modern Art, New York.  
72.66.

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21. Felling a Fir Tree with 51' Circumference. c. 1906.  
Courtesy of Jesse E. Ebert, Seattle. The Museum of Modern Art, New York.  
Study Collection.

LARTIGUE, Jacques Henri.

22. Avenue du Bois de Boulogne. c. 1911.  
Gift of the photographer. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. 47.63.
23. Wheeled Bobsleigh, Chateau Rouzat. c. 1909.  
Gift of the photographer. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. 62.63.

MUYBRIDGE, Eadweard

24. Animal Locomotion. Plate 556. c. 1884.  
Gift of the City of Philadelphia, Department of Commerce. The Museum of  
Modern Art. Study Collection.

O'SULLIVAN, T. H.

25. Historic Spanish Record of the Conquest, South Side of Inscription Rock,  
New Mexico. 1873.  
Made for the Wheeler Expedition. Gift of Ansel Adams in Memory of Albert M.  
Bender. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. 87.41-40.

"F. H. P."

26. Interior. About 1910.  
Gift of David Prince. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Study Collection.

PELHAM, E. S.

27. Electrocution Chair and Chamber, Sing Sing Prison. Copyright 1892.  
Lent by The Library of Congress. (C)20925x1.

PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN

28. Automobile. c. 1905.  
Courtesy of The Library of Congress. The Museum of Modern Art. Study  
Collection.
29. Conspirator George A. Atzerodt, Navy Yard, Washington, D. C. 1865.  
Courtesy of The Library of Congress. (LC-B8171-7781). The Museum of Modern  
Art, New York. Study Collection.
30. Dollmaker. Copyright 1918.  
Lent by The Library of Congress. (C)C1.J231561.
31. 15 in. Gun and Mounting. c. 1864.  
Courtesy of The Library of Congress. (LC-B8171-7909). The Museum of Modern  
Art, New York. Study Collection.

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32. Guinte de Loudus in a Bugatti, Monaco. 1911.  
Gift of Jacques Henri Lartigue. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Study Collection.
33. Immense Yield of Wheat at Robert Smith's Long Lake Farm, Alberta. c. 1906-10.  
Courtesy of the Public Archives of Canada. PA-11541. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Study Collection.
34. Signal Station on the Ogeechee at Fort McAllister, Georgia. 1864.  
Courtesy of The Library of Congress. (LC-B8171-3679). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Study Collection.
35. Stump Blasting Demonstration. About 1915.  
Gift of Paul Vanderbilt. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Study Collection.
36. Vallecitas Leopards, No. 87. Copyright 1906.  
Lent by The Library of Congress. (C)74413.

RIIS, Jacob A.

37. Police Station Lodger. c. 1893.  
Courtesy of the Museum of the City of New York. Riis 232. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Study Collection.
38. Sweeping Back the Sea. c. 1893.  
Courtesy of the Museum of the City of New York. Riis 4?. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Study Collection.

ROSENTHAL, Arthur

39. Cage. No date.  
Lent by The Library of Congress. (C)41529.

ROTHENGATTER and DILLON

40. Astarte. 1889.  
Lent by The Library of Congress. (C)1677842.

TOMLINSON, J. H.

41. Board of Rubber Stamps. 1891.  
Lent by The Library of Congress.

VAN SCHAICK, Charles J.

42. Special Car of Traveling Minstrel Show. c. 1905.  
Courtesy of The State Historical Society of Wisconsin. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Study Collection.