

The Museum of Modern Art

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WILLARD VAN DYKE

Willard Van Dyke, former director of the Department of Film of The Museum of Modern Art and noted filmmaker and photographer, died on January 23, 1986, in Jackson, Tennessee. He was seventy-nine years old. During his nine-year tenure at the Museum (1965-1974), Mr. Van Dyke set the future course of the Museum's film exhibition program, focusing on the broad areas of independent filmmaking, avant-garde works, and documentaries. He also secured from the Museum's Board of Trustees a major commitment to preserve key works in the collection.

In 1936 Mr. Van Dyke entered motion pictures as a cameraman on Pare Lorentz's documentary The River. The documentary film remained his favored genre. According to William Sloan, librarian of the Museum's Circulating Film Library, "Willard was a teacher and advocate of new documentary films. He produced a number of important documentaries himself, including two in the Circulating Film Library: the classic film on city planning, The City (1939), codirected with Ralph Steiner, and the experimental labor film Valley Town (1940). The documentary film community grieves his passing."

After attending the University of California at Berkeley, Mr. Van Dyke worked as a photographer. In 1932 he formed Group f.64 with his friends Edward Weston and Ansel Adams, among others. During World War II, he was a producer for the OWI Overseas Motion Picture Bureau, acting as liaison officer between the OWI and a group of Hollywood writers who provided scripts for the Bureau's production unit. From 1946 to 1965 he was a producer-director of films for television and in the field of adult education. He directed many films for the CBS programs The Twentieth Century and The Twenty-First Century. His films have won awards at many major film festivals.

