

# The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release

## PETER GALASSI APPOINTED DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART JOHN SZARKOWSKI NAMED DIRECTOR EMERITUS

October 11, 1991. . . Richard E. Oldenburg, Director of The Museum of Modern Art, announced today the appointment of Peter Galassi as Director of the Department of Photography, effective immediately. He succeeds John Szarkowski, who headed the Department from 1962 until his retirement on July 1, 1991. Mr. Szarkowski has been named Director Emeritus, Department of Photography.

Agnes Gund, President of the Museum, stated, "On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I welcome the appointment of Peter Galassi as Director of the Department of Photography. Peter has been on the curatorial staff of the Museum for ten years and has organized several major exhibitions and written catalogues of great distinction. He is a highly respected scholar and museum professional with a strong interest in contemporary work, not only in photography but in all the arts."

Mr. Oldenburg added, "We are very pleased that Peter Galassi will head the Department of Photography in a new era of its distinguished history. As Director, Peter will oversee the photography collection, its installation and acquisitions, and the Department's exhibition and loan programs, in addition to assuming administrative responsibilities for the Department."

Peter Galassi, who has been Curator in the Department of Photography since 1986, was a Curatorial Intern in 1974-75 and joined the staff as Associate Curator in 1981. He has organized ten exhibitions at the Museum, beginning with PICTURE PUZZLES: PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROBERT CUMMING, CLARENCE JOHN

LAUGHLIN, MAN RAY, AND FREDERICK SOMMER, in 1975. He is the author of catalogues accompanying the exhibitions PLEASURES AND TERRORS OF DOMESTIC COMFORT, which opened on September 26; BEFORE PHOTOGRAPHY: PAINTING AND THE INVENTION OF PHOTOGRAPHY (1981); HENRI CARTIER-BRESSON: THE EARLY WORK (1987); and NICHOLAS NIXON: PICTURES OF PEOPLE (1988). In 1988 the Cartier-Bresson catalogue won the International Center of Photography award for excellence in writing on photography.

Mr. Galassi, born in 1951 in Washington, D.C., holds a B.A. degree from Harvard College (1972) and a Ph.D in art history from Columbia University (1986). While at Columbia he was twice a fellow in the Department of European Paintings at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. His book *Corot in Italy: Open-Air Painting and the Classical-Landscape Tradition*, based on his doctoral dissertation, was published in May 1991 by Yale University Press. Since 1981, together with John Szarkowski, Mr. Galassi has taught a graduate seminar in the history of photography at Columbia University.

Mr. Galassi succeeds John Szarkowski, whose new title of Director Emeritus recognizes three decades of accomplishments as Director of the Department of Photography. Mr. Oldenburg stated, "I am happy that we are also honoring at this time John Szarkowski's extraordinary record of achievement. His work at the Museum is internationally known for its creativity and high standards. During his years at the Museum, the photography collection was immensely enriched, and the Department's publications and exhibitions were potent forces in expanding interest in photography as a major modern art."

Under John Szarkowski's direction, the Department of Photography presented more than 100 exhibitions at the Museum, as well as many traveling shows. He was also responsible for the continued development of the Museum's

collection of more than 20,000 photographic prints dating from about 1840 to the present. Dozens of young photographers first came to public notice in exhibitions organized by Mr. Szarkowski. Other exhibitions, including GARRY WINOGRAND (1988), IRVING PENN (1984), and the four-part THE WORK OF ATGET (1981-85), reviewed the work of many of photography's outstanding figures. Beginning with THE PHOTOGRAPHER AND THE AMERICAN LANDSCAPE (1963) and most recently with PHOTOGRAPHY UNTIL NOW (1990), Mr. Szarkowski presented a series of surveys and group shows that addressed a wide range of historical, thematic, and theoretical issues in photography.

Mr. Szarkowski has written a number of influential books on the medium, including those published in conjunction with the above-mentioned exhibitions, as well as *Looking at Photographs: 100 Pictures from the Collection of The Museum of Modern Art* (1973). He is also coauthor with Maria Morris Hambourg of the four-volume *The Work of Atget* (1981-85).

Born in 1925 in Ashland, Wisconsin, John Szarkowski received his bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin in 1948. He has taught at New York University and served as Andrew D. White Professor at Large at Cornell University. He is currently Adjunct Professor in the Department of Art History and Archaeology, Columbia University. Mr. Szarkowski will maintain a consulting role with the Museum. He will also devote a large portion of his time to his own work as a photographer and will continue teaching and writing.

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