

P A U L S T R A N D



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PAUL STRAND

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PAUL STRAND

CIRCA 1916

MARIA MORRIS HAMBOURG

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK

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Frontispiece: Paul Strand, *Pear and Bowls*, 1916. Silver and platinum print.
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FOREWORD

We usually think of Paul Strand in terms of his mature work, his career as a great photographic humanist, the sensitive limner of small towns, natural beauty, and rural life all over the world, as seen in his books, among them *Time in New England*, *Un Paese*, *Le France de Profil*. Thanks to a large traveling retrospective exhibition of his work organized by Michael Hoffman and the Philadelphia Museum of Art in the early 1970s, the general public became familiar with sixty years of Strand's photographs only a few years before his death, in 1976. That exhibition came to the Metropolitan Museum, where its appearance inspired Calvin Tomkins to publish a profile of Strand the artist in *The New Yorker*. The generation that followed became familiar with Strand from another traveling show, this one organized in 1990 by the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. That exhibition gathered together superb examples of Strand's work, a marvelous and intricate tapestry of timeless patterns of existence.

The photographs that Strand made in the years circa 1916, however, are very different from the work for which he is widely known. They are tough and vigorous and innovative in a way that the later work is not. We can appreciate the same sedulous, framing eye, but there is something unsettling, curious, and demanding about these pictures, something that is exciting and moving without being in the least sentimental. It is as if Strand has combined various aspects of modernity with an overlay of timelessness, like a digest of Cézanne, Picasso, and Rembrandt all at once. Thanks to a gift and bequest of six early Strand photographs to the Metropolitan in 1933 and 1949 by Alfred Stieglitz, the great photographer and collector who helped

introduce modern European art to the United States, and to the acquisition of two more photographs from John Waddell in 1987, the Metropolitan Museum owns the outstanding collection of these early works, here augmented by additional pieces generously loaned by other institutions and individuals.

The immediate stimulus for this exhibition and book was a picture acquired by the Museum in 1997, a 1916 portrait of Strand's friend Harold Greengard (plate 32), which did not fit the accepted story of Strand's career before World War I. Was it an anomaly or was there more to be discovered about that moment in Strand's life? How had he managed to make such a modern picture, predating Alexander Rodchenko by a decade? How, indeed, had this whole dynamic era in Strand's career been subsumed by his subsequent fame, which necessarily built upon the early oeuvre but then camouflaged it?

Part of the reason these pictures have never been gathered together before now is that we have never been able to judge exactly what it was that Strand did during that time, what books he read, what works of art he admired, what mentors he chose to learn from or emulate. Although the social and artistic climate of the period is known, no one had penetrated the specific nature of his accomplishment in the context of his own personal and intellectual development. Even Strand himself, we now know, never saw an exhibition like this of his early work. Maria Morris Hambourg, the Metropolitan's Curator of Photographs, was caught by this moment in his career from her earliest involvement in the history of photography; she interviewed Strand shortly before his death, when he was eighty-five and she was twenty-six, but he himself by that time had re-formed his own early memories to fit his mature career and reputation. This

has been a complicated story to unravel, a patchwork of many currents and influences. By attempting to resolve many of the questions about how these great photographs, which have influenced so much of twentieth-century photography, came to be, she has also provided us with an insight into the very nature of creativity itself.

We extend our thanks to all of the individuals and institutions who have lent their photographs, and to The Andrew W.

Mellon Foundation, without whose generous support this exhibition would not have been possible. We are also especially grateful for the cooperation of Michael Hoffman and the Paul Strand Archive of Aperture Foundation, and for Kaspar Fleischmann's support of the printing of this book.

Philippe de Montebello, *Director*

INTRODUCTION

By 1917 Paul Strand (1890–1976) had made photographs more advanced than anything his colleagues with cameras had achieved at that time. His pictures had impact not just because they were trumpeted by art impresario Alfred Stieglitz but also because they were tough, surprising, and had intrinsic weight. Curiously mixing suavity and grit, the photographs were an unexpected knockout by a homegrown twenty-seven-year-old no one had known as a contender. In an undeniable demonstration of cumulative mastery, Strand first captured the movement of life in the city, a central interest of contemporary artists. Then he produced a group of nearly abstract still lifes, daring experiments as rigorous and recondite as the problematic paintings of the French Cubists. Finally he made close-up portraits of the poor—frank and poignant psychological studies that seemed without precedent. This brilliant streak of accomplishments, which promised much more, came to an end during World War I.

Although Strand was very productive for more than fifty years thereafter, his creativity never again burned with such intensity. This has never been adequately explained, perhaps because his early career cannot be understood in terms of his later photographs, which in quantity so vastly overshadowed the early work as to dim its distinction.¹ By contrast, this attempt at an explanation deals only with the special conditions that attended Strand's coming-of-age.

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Strand graduated from a New York high school in 1909, having distinguished himself in nothing except photography, which he had elected as an extracurricular activity in 1907. In later years

he remained grateful to his teacher, Lewis Hine, for taking the school's photography club on an excursion to see photographs at Stieglitz's Little Galleries of the Photo-Secession, at 291 Fifth Avenue. Strand's memory distilled the event into an epiphany in which the seventeen-year-old was converted upon seeing the works of the Photo-Secessionists and their nineteenth-century predecessors. From that day on, Strand planned to be an artist in photography.²

The photographs that Hine, Strand, and the other youths saw on the walls of 291 were beautiful, softly focused platinum prints by Alfred Stieglitz, Clarence White, Edward Steichen, Alvin Langdon Coburn, and other members of the Photo-Secession. Coalescing around Stieglitz in 1902, the Photo-Secession group emulated turn-of-the-century art movements in European capitals, such as the Munich and Vienna Secessions, which repudiated the fusty academies. The name suggested the group's desire to distance itself from the salons and the traditional trappings of amateur photography groups, the clubs that enshrined conventions and smothered creativity in gentility. Yet, with only a few exceptions, the men and women who gathered around the dynamic Stieglitz and his aesthetic pointman Steichen were almost as retardataire in their art, as conservative and clubby, as the dowdy *salonistes*. Their subjects were Victorian ideals overlaid with Symbolism; at best these were cast as delicate scenes in wan Whistlerian tones, but the meaning became confused with Art when brushy, painterly effects or maidens with crystal balls took over. If the group show on the burlap walls of the gallery could be taken as evidence of a real world, Strand might easily have thought that to be a Secessionist was to be an aesthete in an idyllic land graced



Figure 1. Clarence H. White, *Morning*, 1898. Platinum print. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 1933 (33.43.315)



Figure 2. Edward Steichen, *The Flatiron*, 1904, printed 1909. Gum bichromate over platinum print. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 1933 (33.43.39)

by sylphs in white. Excepting Stieglitz and a couple of others, the photographers ignored the factories, trolleys, and other evidence of modern life, and when they cast their cameras on the city, it was as a scaffolding for scrims of atmosphere—tone poems that celebrated fin-de-siècle sensitivities.

When Strand visited the gallery in the fall of 1907, the tide of pictorialism was just beginning to ebb. For over a decade Stieglitz had been campaigning to win acceptance for photography as a fine art, and his cause had been well served by the vaguely Impressionist photographs of his colleagues. Privately,

however, he had recently begun to recognize that pictorialism had not lived up to its promise. Before the turn of the century the refined aesthetics and the subjective and mystical components of the style seemed salutary antidotes to the stuffy rationalism of the age, but as the new century quickly advanced with automobiles and telephones, and the pictorialists did not keep pace, Stieglitz began to look askance at their sentiments. In order to find expressions more vital and more relevant to contemporary experience he turned to his friend Steichen, a young painter and photographer of great talent who had moved to

Paris and could serve as a guide to the new painting evolving there.

A few months before Strand's visit to 291, Steichen had taken Stieglitz to see a major exhibition of Cézanne's watercolors at the Bernheim-Jeune gallery in Paris. Cézanne had died the year before, just as he was achieving belated public recognition as the *chef d'école*, the great pioneer who broke the hegemony of objectivity. Stieglitz remembered being "flabbergasted" by the nearly blank sheets with "scattered blotches of color on them," and Steichen recalled that they laughed in their embarrassment, "like country yokels."³ Although this was the state of Stieglitz's education in modern art in 1907, in the immediately ensuing years he would learn to see what had made him laugh. In 1911 he would hang the very same watercolors at 291, proudly introducing "the greatest painter of the last hundred years" to America. As Stieglitz would carry out his education in the new art in public at 291, his small gallery became the principal window for modern art to enter America between 1908 and 1913. Via its provocative exhibitions of Cézanne, Matisse, Picasso, Brancusi, and others, and their dissemination through Stieglitz's magazine *Camera Work* and the New York newspapers, important recent developments in European art first gained currency on this side of the Atlantic.

Strand claimed that he "grew up" with the avant-garde art introduced at 291,⁴ and though we quibble with aspects of his account,⁵ there is absolutely no doubt that his study of modern art was essential to the photographs he made circa 1916. Unlike Steichen, who balked at the abstraction of Picasso and Picabia,⁶ Strand would welcome Cubism not just because he was younger than Steichen and not yet invested in his own signature style, but also because style did not concern him, except in so far as it could help transmit essential human meanings. Strand approached anything new as an opportunity to learn more about human nature and as a challenge to generate personal growth. If the new contradicted his current stance, in his early career Strand proceeded as if guided by the words of the German poet Rainer Maria Rilke: "Stretch your practiced powers til they reach between two contradictions."⁷

The hard work of observation in Rilke's poetry, as well as its lyrical transcendence and exquisite phrasing, expressed the experience of a cultural threshold at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. It was an extended moment of change when the grounded realism of the nineteenth century gave way to a flood of romantic feeling that in turn called out for structure, eliciting the various and rigorous formal experiments of modernism. The formative influences in young Paul Strand's life were likewise charged with consciousness of the threshold experience. All around him people were working to dissolve the vestiges of an older regime, with its

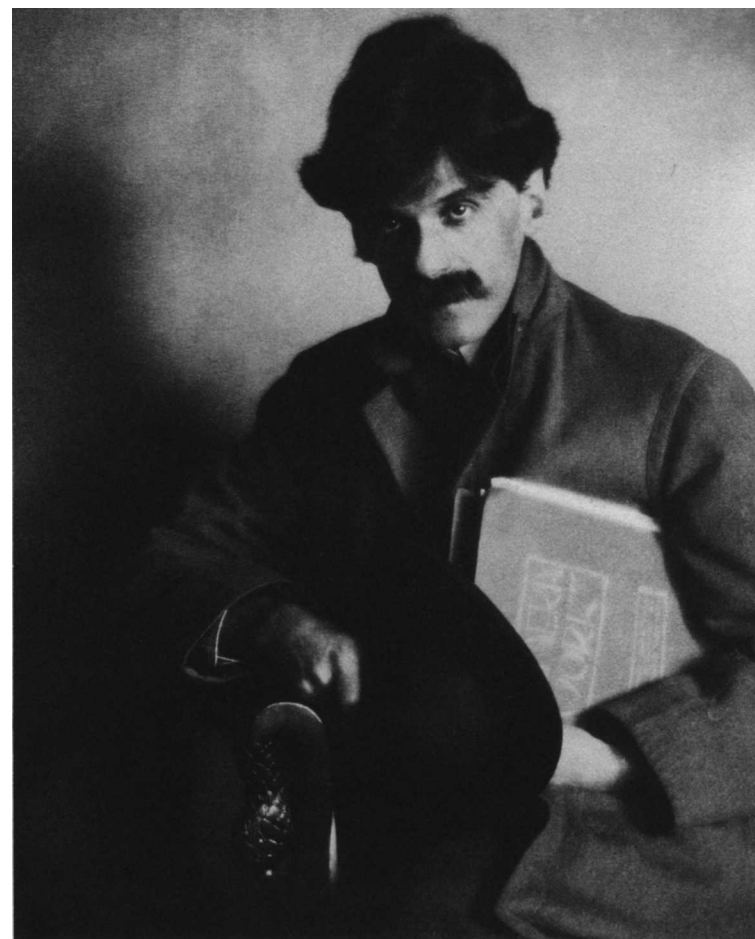


Figure 3. Alvin Langdon Coburn, *Alfred Stieglitz*, 1903. Platinum print. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 1933 (33.43.194)

binding traditions of reason and class, to create a modern open society for the greater good of mankind. For Strand the two thresholds were one and the same; the changes that brought about modern art and progressive society were but two sides of the same coin. Thus, his principal teachers were social reformers or revolutionary artists or both. They were Friedrich Froebel, Felix Adler, Lewis Hine, Alfred Stieglitz, Paul Cézanne and Pablo Picasso, and Friedrich Nietzsche.

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Friedrich Froebel (1782–1852) was the German educator who invented kindergarten. His initial influence on Strand came through Frances Arnstein, Strand's aunt, one of the earliest kindergarten teachers in New York. Paul Strand's parents were first-generation Americans, Matilda Arnstein and Jacob Stransky, born of German and Bohemian Jewish stock. Stransky changed his name to Strand when his son was born in 1890 and about the same time moved his family into a new brownstone house at 314 West 83rd Street, in Manhattan, along with Paul's grandmother, his aunt Frances Arnstein, and a female cousin. The house was the gift of Nathaniel Myers, a successful New York lawyer and husband of the third Arnstein daughter, Josie. Uncle Nat and Aunt Josie also lived on Manhattan's Upper West Side and were closely knit with the family at 83rd Street. As the Myers had no children, and neither did Aunt Frances, who never married, Paul became the center of attention for four Arnstein women. His grandmother, the head of the household, was deaf, and his mother was nearly deaf, rarely well, and rather dour. But Frances was always remembered fondly and with respect by Strand, who invariably cited her early involvement with the kindergarten movement. The salary she brought home augmented Jacob's, as he struggled to sell imported clocks, cookware, and pencil sharpeners, an effort that frequently took him on the road. Because Paul's father was often absent and his grandmother and mother were more or less absent in their afflictions, it is likely that the key figure in the young boy's life was his aunt, "a darling woman" so "passionately attached to children."⁸ Although she was appointed to teach in 1893, Frances evidently did not accept

the offer until Paul was eight and attending school. That she stayed home to tend and teach her nephew is possible; that Paul absorbed the principles she taught is certain—but whether only at her knee or also in one of the new public kindergartens is not known.⁹

The principles that she taught and that young Paul learned were necessarily derived from the teaching of Froebel, whose educational system spread around the world in the second half of the nineteenth century and formed the basis for American kindergartens well into the twentieth century. Froebel systematized and promulgated the ideas of his teacher, the Swiss reformer Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746–1827). Pestalozzi, drawing on Rousseau, realized that to be meaningful all human activity must be self-generated and that perception is the fundamental source of all learning. Emphasizing natural equality and personal freedom, Pestalozzi introduced object study, instead of books, and involved the child in physical movement and nature study. Froebel added to this a belief in the unity or inner connection of all things, so that children would learn the logic of creation by handling and manipulating models of the basic forms—spheres, cones, and cubes. Education was through "self-activity," which involved play, the handling of objects, and the observation of life. Many of the tasks devised by Froebel were carried out with wooden blocks and papers cut in geometric forms that the child would use to construct symbolic worlds and to craft equivalents of real objects. The same materials could be used repeatedly to deconstruct and reconstruct anything the child wished to create, conveying, Froebel hoped, an inalienable sense of the harmony of the universe and all that was in it.¹⁰

Froebel's intuitive understanding that the child's present and evolving needs must be the organizational principle—and not, as had been the case, some preordained logic—had as its correlative that education at any stage is a phase of life, not a preparation for it. The individual rights of the child are thus accorded an important place, but not in isolation, for each child is a member of the group and learns to cooperate with classmates. Froebel coined the word *Gliedganzen* to convey the concept that

the individual is potentially commensurate with the whole and, conversely, that humanity as a whole is implicit in each individual. This basic doctrine aimed to educate children to recognize themselves as members of the living whole that mirrors them as they mirror the universe.¹¹

Strand need not have absorbed all of these ideas from his Aunt Frances, for he got a second and stronger dose of the philosophy at the Ethical Culture School, which he attended from age fourteen to nineteen. Originally called the Workingman's School, ECS began as a model school for disadvantaged children, having grown out of the first free kindergarten in New York, a pioneering outreach program of the Ethical Culture Society. The society, composed mostly of assimilated and successful German Jews, was committed to the improvement of a society altered by the industrial revolution. For many of its associates and members, including the Arnstein-Strands, the group was a comfortable extended family.¹² Uncle Nat Myers was a member as early as 1893, and Aunt Frances had ties to its kindergarten. Thus, when the society opened an impressive new school building on Central Park West and 63rd Street in early 1904, Frances naturally recommended her charge, the family's only child, for enrollment.¹³

The Ethical Culture Society had been founded in 1876 by Felix Adler, the German-born son of the rabbi at New York's Temple Emmanu-El. From his father's reform Judaism Adler created a humanist religion that jettisoned ancient Jewish rituals in favor of what he considered more practical beliefs: the sacred unity of man and nature and the necessity to elevate mankind through moral instruction and social activism. Adler's belief in human betterment naturally led to his efforts to educate through the free kindergarten and the Workingman's School. In 1895, when Adler changed the name to the Ethical Culture School and agreed to admit the children of society members, together with the children of more recent immigrants and laborers, he began to stress social reform. Preaching a middle way between the alienating and the liberating influences of industry and technology, Adler sought to integrate classicism, moralism, and modernism. "Latin and the Old Testament vied with the examination



Figure 4. Lewis Hine, *Young Russian Jew, Ellis Island*, 1905. Gelatin silver print. Photography Collection, Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints, and Photographs, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations

of Labor problems. The new and the old, the abstract and the plastic, were woven together by a coordinating moral idea."¹⁴

The basis of his system was the same as that of his kindergarten, of *learning by doing*, educating the brain through the hands, as Froebel had taught. To this end the school pioneered in progressive manual training through all the grades, not as in vocational schools to acquire a trade, but to stimulate observation

and imagination—to induce constructive physical activity and social engagement. ECS accordingly offered a curriculum rich in techniques to sharpen perception and hands-on creation: mechanical drawing, modeling, sculpting, shop, sewing, crafts, music, art appreciation, and, from 1905, photography. Among the many events organized to bring students into contact with various aspects of the real world were visits to The Metropolitan Museum of Art, natural-history field trips followed by laboratory analysis of collected samples, and various photographic excursions.

The teacher of art appreciation at ECS was Charles Caffin, an English art critic who became an admirer of Stieglitz and a frequent contributor to *Camera Work*. A graduate of Magdalen College, Oxford, Caffin was a gentleman of the old school who revered the grand tradition of realistic representation displayed in the great museums. He taught his students with the aid of plaster casts and photographic reproductions and guided them through the galleries of the Metropolitan Museum, pointing out the psychological veracity and the brio or restraint of portraits by Rembrandt and Hals.¹⁵ Caffin's frequent admonition to "study the art of the museums" was important to Strand, who found inspiration in the paintings of the Old Masters (El Greco, Piero, Brueghel, and Cranach were later favorites) throughout his life.¹⁶ When traveling in Europe in 1911, the twenty-one year old Strand followed Caffin's advice and visited "the famous Uffizi Gallery. It is tremendous . . . Our [Metropolitan] Museum of Art is nothing at all compared with this gallery," he exclaimed in a letter to his parents.¹⁷ Strand also observed in his professor a remarkably open-minded attitude toward the new. Embracing photography as a form of democratic art, Caffin had in 1900 written a sensitive book, the first on photography as a fine art, which incorporated many of Stieglitz's views.¹⁸ Continuing his education on Stieglitz's coattails, Caffin also displayed a tolerance and sympathy for modern European painting, which he considered an extension of, rather than a rupture with, the great tradition.

The other high-school teacher who made an impression on Strand was Lewis Hine, a sociologist who became the school

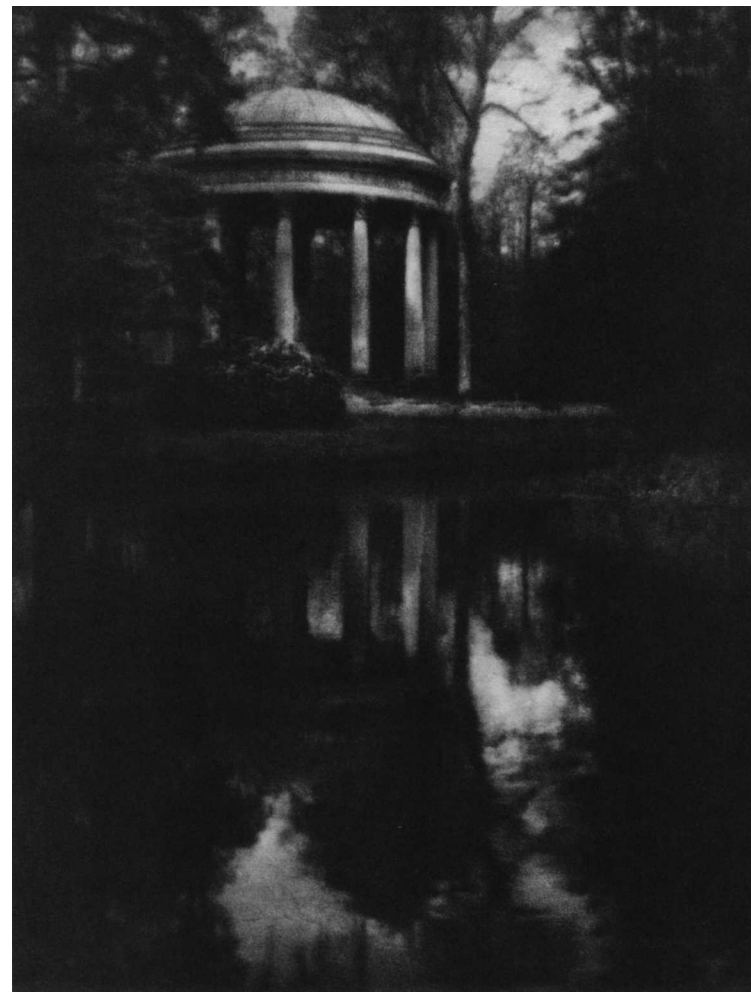


Figure 5. Paul Strand, *Garden of Dreams/Temple of Love*, 1911. Gum bichromate print. The Stockeregg Collection, Zurich

photographer and photography teacher at the urging of the principal, Frank Manny. Wanting ECS pupils to "have the same regard for contemporary immigrants as they have for the Pilgrims who landed at Plymouth Rock," Manny urged Hine to photograph foreign families arriving at Ellis Island, a five-year project Hine began in 1904.¹⁹ Two years later Hine also started photographing the dire conditions of working children as visual aids to promote child labor reform for the National Child Labor Committee, a coalition of social workers, labor leaders, politicians, and educators led by Felix Adler. The interest of these assignments caused Hine to give up the schoolroom, but

not before he had taught Paul Strand, who signed up for his extracurricular camera club in 1907 and followed it in the spring semester of 1908 with the more serious work of the accredited photography class. In contrast to Strand's lackluster performance in every other subject, he "took refuge" in photography class, earning an A minus.²⁰

Hine's teaching was the skill-honing, practical sequel to Caffin's art appreciation, for Hine believed that "in the last analysis, good photography is a question of art." The one hundred hours Strand spent in the darkroom and in the field under Hine's supervision enabled him to understand that a good photograph is the result of "intelligent, patient effort," of criticism freely given and taken, and of the study of exemplary paintings and photographs, among which were Hine's own images (figure 4) as well as those of the Photo-Secession. To learn how to recognize the salient features in a picture, Hine had the students make sketches from masterpieces, such as Raphael's *Madonna of the Chair*, and follow through on those ideas in photographs of their own making. He took the students to visit art and photography exhibitions, such as the 1907 group show at 291, and he encouraged them to read current photography literature and to accompany him to historical and industrial points of interest around the city. Once the students had achieved technical excellence in the darkroom, they developed and printed photographs for the school and for outside clients at market prices and to commercial standards. Through such "productive labor," Hine encouraged students to consider photography as a potentially useful art that intersected life in a considered, constructive way.²¹

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After graduation from ECS in 1909, Strand went to work for his father, but life as an office boy only made him want to live the more fully on weekends, when he devoted himself to photography. As he no longer had access to the school darkroom, he became a full (\$50-a-year) member of the New York Camera Club, located at 121 West 68th Street. From club members older and more experienced than he, and from the large and current library of books, journals, and technical manuals, Strand

learned the complicated techniques for making multiple-gum prints, enlarged platinum prints with hand coloring, and other tricky permutations that allowed the pictorialist to edit the content of his negatives and enhance the rendering of his prints. In addition to making and exhibiting his photographs at the club, Strand used the place as a fraternity house where he found a network of "brothers" who shared his concerns.

The Camera Club was part of an informal circuit of amateur photography clubs—there was one in every major American city as well as in the European capitals—that had grown up in the 1880s and 1890s as offshoots of the Arts and Crafts Movement and as hobbyists' enclaves. This loose confraternity traded news, subscribed to each other's journals, and submitted pictures to each other's salons, thus inducing a certain homogeneity in style, one that implicitly confirmed the importance of art, hand-craft, and traditional, preindustrial subjects in the face of an increasingly urban and mechanized world.²²

When his father's business was sold in 1911, Strand found himself out of a job. At the urging of a friend, and against his parents' better judgment, he cashed in his savings, bought passage on the R.M.S. Franconia, and reached Gibraltar on March 11, 1911. His money lasted long enough for him to touch down in Spain and Algeria, and to travel through Monaco, Italy, Switzerland, France, Germany, Holland, and England with "boundless energy" and authentic appetite.²³

In 1912 Strand's *Temple of Love*, which won a prize in the New York Camera Club's annual members' exhibition, won an honorable mention in the prestigious London Salon under the title *Garden of Dreams* (figure 5). The picture demonstrated Strand's ability: with five coats of gum bichromate he had painstakingly transformed his view of a little garden pavilion at Versailles into a poetic, watery landscape, a rather indistinct, romantic celebration of something, although whether it was love or dreams or his own longing for artistic excellence mattered little. The picture filled all the unstated requirements for a prizewinner on this circuit: it was handsome and related to great art (Corot, Versailles) and quite empty (while seeming not to be), which invited viewers to color it with their own imaginations. Despite



Figure 6. George H. Seeley, *Winter Landscape*, 1909. Gum bichromate and platinum print. Gilman Paper Company Collection

the broadly formulaic qualities, two salient and interrelated aspects of this picture are characteristic of Strand's early vision—repeated geometric patterns with rectangular intervals and the pairing of solids with their shadowy echoes. Already an inner metronome was setting the regular rhythm of Strand's art, which even in his earliest efforts reveals an affinity for the architectonic and the grounded, relieved by the transient and the incidental.

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"I like the word search. I like the word research. I think the artist and the scientist are related in that they both do research, and that if there's no research job there's not much of a scientist or an artist," Strand remarked late in life to Calvin Tomkins.²⁴ This deep-seated belief born of experience was a fundamental constituent of Strand's character, and while it underlay his entire career, it was particularly assertive when the photographer was in his twenties. His research "job" had two initial stages, from 1911 to 1914 and from 1915 to 1919. The goal of the first stage was

to become a better pictorialist photographer, that of the second was to create great art.

From 1911 through 1914 Strand pursued a self-conducted course of study in the fine art of photography. Doubtless he visited exhibitions of pictorial photography, such as the one mounted at the Montross Gallery in 1912,²⁵ and when he was not at the Camera Club, making prints or poring over the latest issues of photography magazines, he might be found in the "photography district." Sometimes he climbed into the little elevator at 291 Fifth Avenue (between 30th and 31st Streets) to see the exhibitions, which might be of photographs or of paintings. He called on Gertrude Käsebier, a former member of the Photo Secession who had a thriving portrait studio at 12 East 30th Street, and he also visited Clarence White, another ex-Secessionist whose studio at 5 West 31st Street had become a congenial gathering place for pictorialists. Strand could remember nothing of his visit to Käsebier, but White, a teacher who had founded a summer school of photography, gathered his colleagues and students into a loose group that attracted Strand. Max Weber, the volcanic Russian-born painter who had spent three years studying in Paris and understood the art of Cézanne and Matisse, was a progressive teacher who advocated flatness, Japonism, and abstract design; his conservative counterpart with a pince-nez was Paul Anderson, who favored an academic Impressionism. Coburn, the most daring and talented of the British photographers, was an overseas ally in close contact with the group, while Karl Struss was the most promising local student. White himself was a kindly, fading star who had made exquisite photographs of family life and small-town America before moving to New York in 1906.

From time to time Strand gathered up a portfolio of his prints and took it to Käsebier or White for a critique. Käsebier's reaction had no lasting impact, and as to White's, Strand only remembered that his comments were nice but not useful, a common response to this gentle man's uninsightful manner. "He was too innocent and kind to be a teacher," Strand's colleague the photographer Ralph Steiner recalled. "[White] was a lovely man. He was related to Saint Francis. Saint Francis could teach

you how to be a good monk and how to love God, but not how to be a good photographer. . . . A teacher is a corrector.”²⁶

If Strand did not learn much from White, he was surely pleased to be accepted into a circle of world-famous pictorial photographers who were actively championing their art. By 1913 the White group was publishing a magazine, *Platinum Print*, and meeting regularly for critiques, incisive or not, in the Little Book-shop around the Corner, at 2 East 29th Street, where the rooms were decorated with photographs by White, Coburn, and Steichen. Something in the name, the location, and the group embrace of pictorialism resonated positively for Strand, perhaps because it was a repetition *in diminuendo* of events at the Little Galleries of the Photo-Secession, just around the corner, almost a decade earlier.

In January 1914 White organized an international exhibition of pictorialist photographs at the Ehrich Galleries, on Fifth Avenue. This, like the Montross exhibition two years earlier, was a faint echo of Stieglitz’s triumphant exhibitions at New York’s National Arts Club in 1909 and at Buffalo’s Albright Gallery (now the Albright-Knox Art Gallery) in 1910. Much of what was shown at the Ehrich was familiar, as it was produced by former members and associates of the Photo-Secession and foreign photographers championed by Stieglitz. Frederick Evans, Craig Annan, George Davison, and Coburn represented Great Britain; France was represented by Robert Demachy in prints lent by Gertrude Käsebier; also displayed were works by Baron de Meyer and the Hofmeister brothers. White included some of his own early works, as well as some of Käsebier’s, and rounded out the show with photographs by Anderson and Struss (both introduced at the Albright), several White school students, and some other young talents, among them George Seeley, Imogen Cunningham, and Paul Strand.²⁷ The deep shadows and dramatic simplifications afforded by multiple-gum printing were still in evidence (figure 6), but many of the photographs demonstrated an unmanipulated or “straight” approach, which was coming to be seen as the more advanced style. Yet the progress was slight; the photographs were so soft in focus and sweet in sentiment that, as one admiring reviewer put it, the show “affects

us like a caress. It touches our kindest feelings [and presents] no disturbing problems.”²⁸

White’s selection from Strand’s prints was *Across the Lake*, very likely a photograph made in 1913 at Twin Lakes, Connecticut



Figure 7. Paul Strand, *Landscape, Twin Lakes, Connecticut*, 1913. Gelatin silver print. The Stockeregg Collection, Zurich

(figure 7), where his family rented a cottage every summer. This, like the fourth plate in the present volume, was a good example “of soft-focus lens work of the sort practiced for a long time by Clarence White,” Strand commented. Here, used wide open, the soft-focus lens produced an impressionistic, Whistlerian effect, pulling together, flattening, and “mushifying” the things in the frame. Of other ethereal prints (for example, plate 8), several inscribed with his stylized monogram, Strand concluded, “This was my Japanese period.”²⁹ The refined aestheticism of these images, rendered through the tactile, velvety nap of platinum paper, emits a distinctly fin-de-siècle mood, not unlike White’s best work. Compared with the contemporary photographs of Karl Struss (figure 8), or Coburn, whose *House of a Thousand Windows* was in the Ehrich show (figure 9), Strand’s offering, like White’s (figure 1), seems like a relic from an earlier age. The business and clarity of Struss’s picture, the angularity of Coburn’s (called “Cubist” at the time), and the urban setting of both strike a sharply modern key, one that Stieglitz had lyrically introduced in his 1910 photographs of New York (figure 10).



Figure 8. Karl Struss, *[New York]*, ca. 1912. Platinum print. Private collection

It was gradually becoming clear that there was more than one brand of pictorialism: the lovely Symbolist type exemplified by White, and a tougher, urban version taking shape in the work of Stieglitz, Coburn, and Struss. The former, which developed earlier, was settling into a system of techniques and suitable subjects that could be codified in a handbook and dependably deployed.³⁰ By 1913 Strand had learned what was required to make a photograph that satisfied the first camp, although his relatively down-to-earth approach (plates 2, 3) could not accommodate maidens with crystal balls. Having accomplished this much, Strand had to turn elsewhere for his next lessons. Alfred Stieglitz was once the man to watch, but now he refused to perform. He did not participate in the Montross (1912) or the Ehrich Galleries (1914) shows, and he scarcely showed photography at 291 anymore. *Camera Work*, a quarterly bulletin of the best pictorialist photographs, was no longer a reliable touchstone. Beginning in 1911 it appeared irregularly, with a steadily diminishing cargo of photographs and an ever-expanding emphasis on modern painting and sculpture. When Stieglitz published a large portfolio of Steichen’s photographs and paintings in *Camera Work* in 1913, pictorialists may have been relieved, but Stieglitz himself was slightly uncomfortable. He virtually excused the publication of Steichen’s images as a necessary honor to an important collaborator, together with a veiled apology for them as art.³¹

Strand and his best friend from the Camera Club, Kurt Baasch, tried to puzzle out what was happening. In late 1913 Baasch wrote Strand about the Steichen issue of *Camera Work*, revealing the tone of their discussions. “One thing I am quite sure about, I admire *Camera Work* No. 42/43. I think we agree in that, and perhaps in something else, that is that Stieglitz after all can not be reached by those who pretend to reach him. Who has that understanding, that ability of selecting and careful combining the best?” Baasch went on to give his opinion of Steichen’s works: his photographic portraits were admirable, although a couple of them were “striving after effects,” as White had put it. The paintings were sentimental.³² Baasch also asked after a photograph of which Strand had sent him proofs,



Figure 9. Alvin Langdon Coburn, *House of a Thousand Windows*, 1912. Platinum print. George Eastman House, Rochester, New York

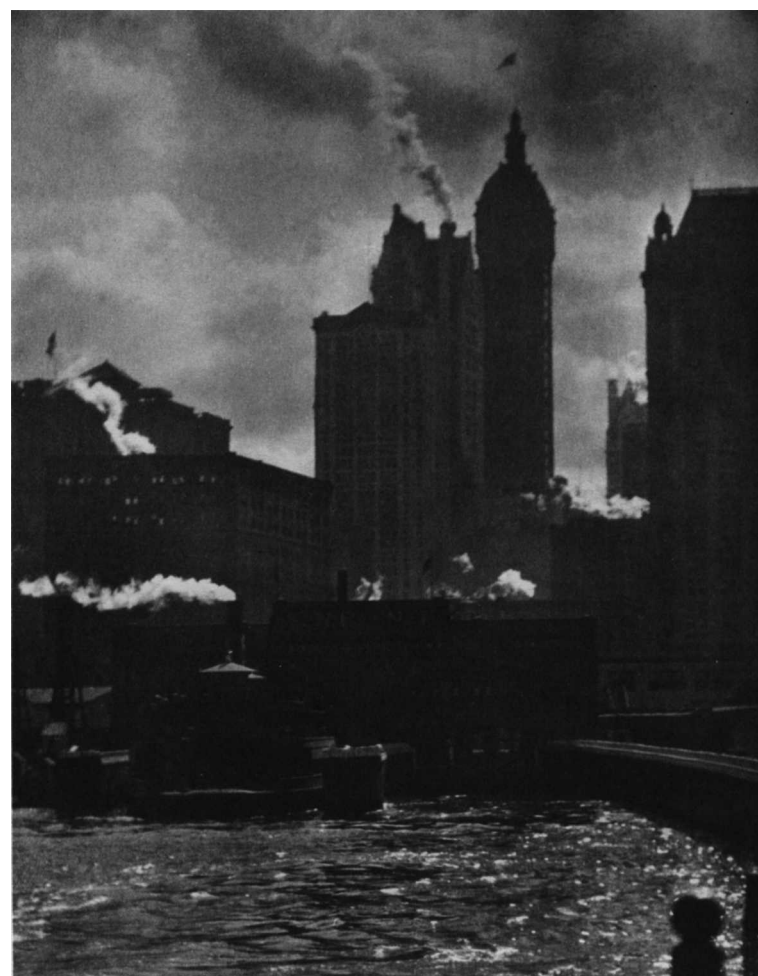


Figure 10. Alfred Stieglitz, *The City of Ambition*, 1910. Photogravure. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 1949 (49.55.15)

very likely Strand's recent portrait of him (figure 11). Close up and dynamically posed and lit, the picture shows Strand working at large-scale studio portraiture of the sort practiced by Steichen and de Meyer, but without the glamour that later would beguile the public in the pages of Condé Nast's magazines. Strand acknowledged that he was "much influenced at that time by some of the things Steichen had done. That great force, that kind of flamboyance . . . the Morgan portrait (figure 32) is one of the great portraits of all in time in any medium."³³

Strand and Baasch were familiar with White but fascinated by the famous Mr. Stieglitz, about whom they had heard a lot—

much of it spiteful—at the Camera Club. Although Stieglitz had given the club a good name through his exhibitions and the high-profile magazine *Camera Notes*, published under its insignia at the turn of the century, the club regarded his Photo-Secession as a rival institution that refused to show its members' photographs, competed with its shows, and generally stole the limelight. When Strand first joined the Camera Club in 1908, the "doctors, lawyers, and businessmen" he met there were so frustrated by Stieglitz that they tried to expel him.³⁴ This made headline news. Since then Stieglitz had gone on to anger those within the Secession as well, with his stringent demands for high



Figure 11. Paul Strand, *Kurt Baasch*, 1913. Platinum print. The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles

aesthetic standards, his idealistic insistence on group solidarity without commercial attachments, and his egotistical assumption of others' personal interests.³⁵ As a result of his consuming campaign to collect six hundred photographs for the Albright show in 1910, photography as a fine art finally clinched a coveted place in a museum, but Stieglitz's own interest in the group enterprise had expired and the loyalty of the group had crumbled. When White withdrew at the close of the Albright show, there was hardly a living Secession to secede from. In its wake

White gathered the discontents: Käsebier, who had distanced herself from the Secession in 1909; Coburn and Seeley; the painter Max Weber; and many younger aspirants born too late to win Stieglitz's attention.

Strand was almost one of them, but he was viscerally drawn to Stieglitz, as to a father. Like him, Stieglitz was of assimilated German-Jewish descent. This encouraged a natural bond that Strand enhanced by recounting that the Obermeyers lived next door to his family before their move to 83rd Street; just as the Obermeyers' daughter had married Stieglitz, so they hired away the Strands' cook, who just "went over the fence between properties."³⁶ A natural magnet for Strand, Stieglitz too had grown up in a merchant's family but had elected photography as his calling; he too had used the Camera Club as his first but later inadequate launching pad, and his appetite for personal and intellectual growth also left him restless and hungry.

In his old age Strand thought he recalled Stieglitz's pioneering exhibitions, and he listed the pertinent names readily, but what he said had been gradually tailored to fit his mature shape, a story always worn in the same manner and shiny on the high points from repeated use. Strand's memory eliminated details, compressed time, and appropriated essentials as needed. After carefully collating his recollections, comparing his with Stieglitz's, and then measuring both against historical facts, we cannot find evidence that Strand had any significant contact with Stieglitz before 1914. If he met with Stieglitz before that, it was only once, and if he saw the exhibitions Stieglitz mounted between 1908 and 1911, he did not take in the magnitude of the revolution they represented.³⁷ Stieglitz's spadework in modern art may have prepared the ground for Strand's later appreciation, but the stand he took for European modernism surely meant less to the youthful Strand than his prominent position as standard bearer for artistic photography.

But if Strand was not yet abreast of the avant-garde currents at 291, he did manage to see the International Exhibition of Modern Art held at the Sixty-ninth Regiment Armory in February 1913. As Mabel Dodge had predicted to Gertrude Stein, the exhibition would be "the most important public event

that has ever come off since the signing of the Declaration of Independence, and it is of the same nature. . . . there will be a riot and a revolution and things will never be quite the same afterwards.”³⁸ The thirteen hundred works on view were gathered to jolt America out of its aesthetic somnolence and awaken it with a panoply of modern visual expression from Post-Impressionism to Cubism and abstraction. The effect was sensational, and whether from curiosity or a need to laugh at the apparent incompetence, willful distortion, and chaotic abstraction, the public came in waves, more than one hundred thousand people in a month. The naïveté of most visitors was matched by that of the commentators, with the exception of a small handful of critics. Notable among them were Charles Caffin and Alfred Stieglitz, who defended this “battle cry of freedom” for its revitalizing stimulation to instinctive perception and liberal thought in the American wilderness of sentimentality and inhibition.³⁹

Strand’s reaction to the “tremendous” event was puzzlement, a fair response to his “very distinct impression of having seen something I had never seen before.”⁴⁰ That, in itself, was a revelation. Strand knew contemporary photography and he knew the art of museums—the Uffizi, probably the Louvre, and the Metropolitan Museum in New York, none of which housed the moderns. He had not visited any exhibitions of contemporary art in Paris or London in 1911,⁴¹ and perhaps few or none in New York before 1913. The Armory Show not only introduced him to new European painting, but it also established a continuity between the art of the museums—El Greco, Goya, Ingres, Delacroix, Daumier, Courbet, Whistler, and the Impressionists—with Cézanne, Van Gogh, and Gauguin, whose significance was stressed through mini-retrospectives. These stars were in turn linked to the wild men of the moment—Matisse, Picasso, Duchamp, and all the others. Therefore, just by walking his puzzlement through the show, Strand saw that the great tradition had joined up with the present and had left the door open for newcomers. As another young American artist wrote, “There can be no doubt that the exhibition had a broadening influence and accomplished in a few weeks what in the ordinary course would have taken many years. It was like setting off a blast of

dynamite in a cramped space—it blew everything wide open. I feel that art can really be free here now.”⁴²

That Strand saw the Armory Show is not surprising, for any New Yorker interested in the arts could not have missed the excitement; the newspapers were full of it. In the *New York Globe* Hutchins Hapgood summed up the tendencies that the Armory Show brought into focus. “We are living at a most interesting moment in the art development of America. It is not mere accident that we are also living at a most interesting moment in the political, industrial, and social development of America. What we call our “unrest” is the condition of a vital growth.”⁴³ Hapgood went on to describe the new importance of art for the people, the Armory Show, and the three exhibitions he had just seen, “which are in line with what is vaguely called Post-Impressionism. It does not matter what it is called, but the important thing is that it means agitation. It means education, in the disturbing, doubting sense. Post-Impressionism is as disturbing in one field as the I.W.W. is in another. It turns up the soil, shakes the old foundations, and leads to new life.”

If Strand remembered individual paintings in the Armory Show they would likely have been by Paul Cézanne, the painter most discussed by serious critics and the one whom Strand would most revere.⁴⁴ Probably he was struck by Cézanne’s *Old Woman with a Rosary* (figure 12), the large oil that dominated his section of the exhibit. Clearly Cézanne’s most authoritative painting on view, *Old Woman with a Rosary* was also one of the few images with a familiar human resonance and one that a visitor could take home in the form of a postcard. Strand had been interested in portraiture from the time of Hine’s class; his early portrait of his mother was singled out for praise in one of the Camera Club’s exhibitions,⁴⁵ and in 1913 he was using the club as a studio to make portraits, such as the one of Kurt Baasch (figure 11). At the end of his life, after Strand had made scores of riveting portraits, he mused on the shape of a career without portraiture, concluding that if “you think of Cézanne without the portraits it would be a big hole.”⁴⁶

Although Strand may have noticed the portraits by Cézanne and perhaps also by Van Gogh during the month they were on



Figure 12. Paul Cézanne, *Old Woman with a Rosary*, 1895–96. Oil on canvas. Reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees, The National Gallery, London

view at the Armory, closer to his photographic needs and much more regularly at hand were the portraits of David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson. The academic painter Hill and the chemist Adamson, working together as a team, had portrayed the men and women of Edinburgh in their everyday garb in simple compositions out of doors in the 1840s. The marked chiaroscuro and severe but edgeless drawing of the early paper negatives they used gave their photographs a Rembrandtesque air, which, together with Hill's august standing, caused their efforts to be regarded as the first examples of fine-art photography. Strand recalled seeing "Hill's" photographs, as Hill and Adamson's photographs were known at the time, the day he first



Figure 13. David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson, *Mrs. Rigby*. Photogravure from *Camera Work* (October 1909, no. 28). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 1953 (53.701.448.5)

visited 291 with Hine and the ECS class, and although the photographs were not on view at that time, Strand had several opportunities to see them in the ensuing years. In 1909 and again in 1912 Stieglitz published large portfolios of Hill's photographs in *Camera Work* (figure 13), and he planned to mount an exhibition featuring Hill's work in the fall of 1914.⁴⁷ In fact, "Old Masters of Photography," with twenty photographs newly reprinted by Coburn from Hill and Adamson's original negatives, was mounted not at 291 but at the Ehrich Galleries, where Strand surely saw it, given his closeness to Clarence White's group at the time.⁴⁸ Strand's reverence for D. O. Hill, the original patriarch of artistic photographers, was not only for the tra-

dition he established, but for “ the honesty, dignity and serenity” of his portraits. “Hill was able to see and to photograph the gentleness and determination, the sensitiveness coupled with strength which were in these people, their remarkable wholeness of personality.”⁴⁹

While the study of Hill and Adamson, Steichen, and the new art at the Armory were beneficial influences in 1913–14, Strand was also coming to be convinced of Stieglitz’s preeminence. He asked Stieglitz to critique his photographs in late 1914 or early 1915.⁵⁰ The latter, having seen the serious young man perhaps once before, sensed his readiness and selected for discussion a landscape Strand had recently made near his uncle’s house on Long Island (figure 14). Strand recounted how Stieglitz led him to a fork in his path.

The soft-focus lens . . . had certain lovely qualities; if you used it at a large aperture it sort of pulled everything together in a kind of agreeable blur, and it looked artistic but it really wasn’t very. And I was one of those who became involved with this piece of apparatus . . . and when I took the things in to Clarence White, for instance, his comment was only that what a pity that this line here in the fore-

ground of the grasses was not repeated across the river. That’s of no help at all, really, to a struggling photographer or painter or whatever. So when Stieglitz said, “you see what this lens does, as you’re using it, it makes everything look as though its made of the same stuff. Grass looks like water; water looks like it has the same quality as the bark of the tree; and you’ve lost all the elements that distinguish one form of matter, or nature—whether stone or whatever it may be—from another. And this is a very questionable advantage; in fact, you have achieved a kind of simplification that looks good for a moment but is full of things which will be detrimental to the final expression of whatever you are trying to do.” And that made a great deal of sense, and it could easily be obviated by stopping the lens down.⁵¹

The practical lesson and the personal attention of such a powerful figure encouraged Strand and switched on a surge of creative energy. He had worked hard at the Camera Club criteria and had become a superior craftsman, whose elegant prints were accepted by the White group, yet Stieglitz, whose opinion carried more weight, did not approve. “A great believer in the desirability of people stretching themselves or being stretched by doing what they’ve never done before,”⁵² Strand rose to



Figure 14. Paul Strand, *Bay Shore, Long Island, New York*, 1914. Platinum print with gouache. The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles



Figure 15. Paul Strand, *Riverside Drive and 83rd Street, New York*, 1914. Platinum print. The Cleveland Museum of Art, Leonard C. Hanna Jr., Fund

Stieglitz's challenge—he cleared the fog from his photographs and looked more attentively at the visible world. Stopping down his lens to $f/22$ did not produce a razor-edged image, however, but a moderately sharp one with just a hint of veiling or atmosphere. This slightly downy quality—characteristic of all Strand's photographs from 1915 to 1917—lowered the specificity of the subject, making room for a remarkable, universal dimension in the images. Having dispensed with soft focus, from this point on Strand also naturally lost interest in palpable atmosphere, and instead of investing in delicate tonal draftsmanship and curvilinear forms reminiscent of White and Art Nouveau, he began to carve out geometric schemes and bolder blocks of space (compare, for example, figure 15 with figures 16 and 17).

"Beginning around maybe 1914 . . . I began to have a much firmer grip on what I was doing with a camera," Strand later recalled. "Suddenly there is a radical change when [creative people, composers, artists] do something much more their own. . . . Some of the very early things are sometimes extremely conventional and not very interesting and then all of a sudden what became the later painter is already beginning to blossom in some

small canvas."⁵³ "In 1915 I really became a photographer. I had been photographing seriously for eight years and suddenly there came that strange leap into greater knowledge and sureness."⁵⁴

• • •

In the spring of 1915 Strand traveled across the United States to advance his business of selling hand-tinted photographs of universities to students and alumni. After his trip to Europe in 1911, he had worked for a time in an insurance office but had loathed it and quit, the travel having "spoiled" him for any job that limited his freedom. Harking back to his lessons in "productive labor" at ECS, Strand then improvised an occupation that



Figure 16. Paul Strand, *Woman Carrying Child*, 1915. Platinum print. Hallmark Photographic Collection, Hallmark Cards, Inc., Kansas City, Missouri

ensured his travel and paid his expenses, enabling him to make his own photographs. His university photographs, hand-colored by hired girls at the 83rd Street house, look vaguely Arts and Craftsy, but instead of suspending the campus in a delicate web of pastel colors like Wallace Nutting's chromolithographs, the views are typically dull and clogged with daubs of crude color. As with Strand's similar attempt to sell tinted views to expatriates and tourists after his European trip, the university business was in earnest, but it could hardly be called a job; the real purpose of this sputtering vehicle was to explore America.

Because there is so little direct evidence of Strand's thoughts in 1915 and 1916, the letters he wrote his parents on his cross-country trip are especially valuable.⁵⁵ He found the "narrow streets and tumbled down houses" of the French Quarter in New Orleans have "a distinct atmosphere, as in European cities" (figures 16, 17). The people in Austin, Texas, "are not particularly cultured [but] Texas is interesting. The country is perfectly flat and mostly used for cotton. But the way this monotonous plain is broken by shacks and little white houses is quite fascinating (plate 11). Things become interesting as soon as the human element enters in." He made no comment about the Grand Canyon. On the other hand, "Los Angeles is a very large busy city but like all other cities, it is provincial next to New York." Although he liked the climate, the architecture seemed "ugly and commonplace . . . everything is very new and luxurious, intensely American, having little distinction and culture . . . If someone said 'see America first,' I would say 'yes,' and take the steamer for Europe." Reveling in his own critical eye and decrying the weakness inherent in imitation (had he heard this before?), he judged the San Diego Exposition "boring" and its ornate Spanish-American architecture "mongrel." By contrast, he thought the Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco "quite wonderful" (figure 18), and he took particular pleasure in demonstrating to "the Art Commissioner of the Imperial Japanese Commission, a very intelligent man who knows something," that *he* too knew something about Japanese prints. Strand relished his first views of the mountains in Washington, compared the color of the water in Lake Louise to the Blue Grotto



Figure 17. Paul Strand, *New Orleans*, 1915. Platinum print. Private collection

at Capri, and, when visiting Midwestern colleges, made a special pilgrimage to Newark, Ohio, where Clarence White had lived and photographed.

Strand completed the *Wanderjahre* he had begun in Europe in 1911 with his trip across America in 1915. Now he was able to assess his own country in relation to Europe and see the relatively thin tradition and culture—the telegraph poles, the street kids, the instant Athens of exposition architecture (figure 18)—as the new, poor relations of the great civilizations he had absorbed abroad. While such a negative comparison might have dispirited another young man, it reassured Strand, for it confirmed his prejudices—which were those of New York's intelligentsia—against mindless, tasteless, complacent America. As Strand put it in a pithy postcard to "Mr. Stieglitz" from southern California, "Everything is extremely American out here—you know what that means."⁵⁶

Just as the trip allowed him to fix what he more or less already knew, his photographs incorporated some of others' perceptions. While he appreciated the blankness of Texas because it let him see how men mark the land, the smart picture (plate 11) he made of that understanding has an uncanny echo



Figure 18. Paul Strand, *Palace of Fine Arts, San Francisco*, 1915. Platinum print. National Gallery of Art, Washington, Patrons' Permanent Fund

of one of Clarence White's views of Newark, Ohio.⁵⁷ In Strand's photograph of street children against a downtown facade in New Orleans (figure 17) he worked toward expressing abstractly the social meanings familiar in the work of Lewis Hine. At the Grand Canyon he made a close facsimile of a famous photograph by Coburn,⁵⁸ while at Niagara Falls, he recapitulated a sentiment familiar from the pictorialist salons in his view of the doughty little ferry "Maid of the Mist" steaming heroically toward a misty wall of water (plate 7). Full of the sap of new experience and potent with excitement, Strand was incorporating what he admired by remaking it himself, in the process taking ownership of his opinions. If his pictures were all over the map and sometimes unoriginal, his vigorous efforts described a necessary circuit that leads one home.

Upon returning to New York Strand went to visit Stieglitz again, and from that point on his learning accelerated and became more fully conscious.⁵⁹ Strand recalled, "By 1915, working weekends, I finally was able to walk into Photo-Secession with a portfolio under my arm—I'd been there before . . . when I opened this up to him, he was very surprised, and he said 'I'd

like to show these. And I'll put them in *Camera Work*.' It was like having the world handed to you on a platter. Anyway it was a very great day, matching in a sense the day that Hine took us to Photo Secession and I saw the work of those other people for the first time. I'd said I wanted to be a photographer, and here I was."⁶⁰ Stieglitz also "called Steichen from the back room somewhere and said 'come here I want you to see these photographs,' and introduced me to him."⁶¹ "This place is your place, too, come whenever you want, meet with the other people," Stieglitz added.⁶² "And I did. It was a place where one felt very alive and very much at home, and you felt you were getting something every time you went there."⁶³

Which photographs so excited Stieglitz that he invited Strand into his circle? In the exhibition he mounted of Strand's platinum prints in March 1916, "Photographs of New York and Other Places," Stieglitz included *River Neckar* of 1911 (plate 1), a snow scene in Central Park and another of a street with figures, both circa 1913, *Maid of the Mist* (plate 7), *Overlooking Harbor* (plate 9), *Railroad Sidings* (plate 10), *Telegraph Poles, Texas* (plate 11), *City Hall Park* (plate 14), *Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street* (plate 15), and *Wall Street* (plate 18).⁶⁴ Although the last four photographs appeared in *Camera Work*, it is surprising to note that Stieglitz included so many early and pictorial works alongside such modernist masterpieces as *Wall Street*.

Charles Caffin, faithful critic in the Stieglitz circle, reviewed his former student's exhibition, dilating on the importance of the "straight" approach. "There has been no tampering with the negative, nor have any alterations been made at any part of the process between the snapping of the shutter and the mounting of the picture. Thus the views are in the strictest sense records of actual objectivity."⁶⁵ Caffin was speaking to Stieglitz's campaign for objectivity as the right path for the medium: it claimed the whole world for potential subject matter, invalidated pictorialism, and did not compete with the subjective abstractions of painting. Stieglitz had mounted an exhibition of his own straight photographs concurrent with the Armory Show in a first attempt to make the objective=photography versus subjective=painting dichotomy clear, and he mounted Strand's

exhibition as a foil to the Forum show of contemporary American painting in 1916, to demonstrate again this (useful if dubious) polarity. Caffin selected *City Hall Park* (plate 14), ironically a photograph Strand had in fact altered, for comment: "It is a fragment of the kaleidoscopic variety of appearances and movements that make up our city life and are so familiar that we are apt to overlook their wonderfulness. And the fragment has been caught in the directness of actual movement. It is wonderfully alive."⁶⁶

The aliveness of the city was a very current preoccupation of artists and cultural commentators. At the Armory Show and later at 291 Strand saw John Marin's views of downtown New York in which the movement of the people and of the traffic roils up from the street and invades the structures of the skyscrapers (figure 19). To accompany an exhibition of these watercolors at 291 in 1913 Marin had written

We have been told somewhere that a work of art is a thing alive. You cannot create a work of art unless the things you behold respond to something within you. Therefore if these buildings move me they too must have life. Thus the whole city is alive; buildings, people, all are alive; and the more they move me the more I feel them to be alive. I see great forces at work; great movements; the large buildings and the small buildings; the warring of the great and the small; influences of one mass on another greater or smaller mass. . . . And so I try to express graphically what a great city is doing."⁶⁷

Marin's New York watercolors struck a chord. The critics gave the exhibition extensive coverage, reprinting the artist's poetic words with their gentle echoes of the Futurist manifestos and adding their own: "Did you ever brood over this great hastening metropolis, with all its peoples blown every day on a hurricane of money-making impulse?" asked J. Edgar Chamberlin. "One gains a powerful impression of . . . gigantic structures towering above puny ones, and of the rush and go that constitutes the tumultuous pulsebeat of New York," wrote J. N. Laurvik.⁶⁸ In addition to Marin and Abraham Walkowitz, a painter in Stieglitz's circle whose work was important to Strand, Stieglitz, Coburn, Struss (figure 8), and a few amateur camera artists⁶⁹



Figure 19. John Marin, *Movement, Fifth Avenue*, 1912. Watercolor. The Art Institute of Chicago, The Alfred Stieglitz Collection

were also bent on capturing the activity of the city, for New York was pulsing with life: it was the inevitable, prepossessing symbol of flux, change, and modernity.

Strand was an inveterate walker. "I used to wander around New York City, all over it; Bowery, Wall Street, uptown, the viaduct that leads from Grant's tomb. I could see everything."⁷⁰ Finding on one of his walks a setting to serve as his picture's stage, he watched until someone unknowingly moved into his waiting trap (figure 15). This technique, reinvented later by Henri Cartier-Bresson and other savvy street photographers, was a practical and relatively easy strategy that Strand fully mastered on the corner of his own street (plate 19). To snare more

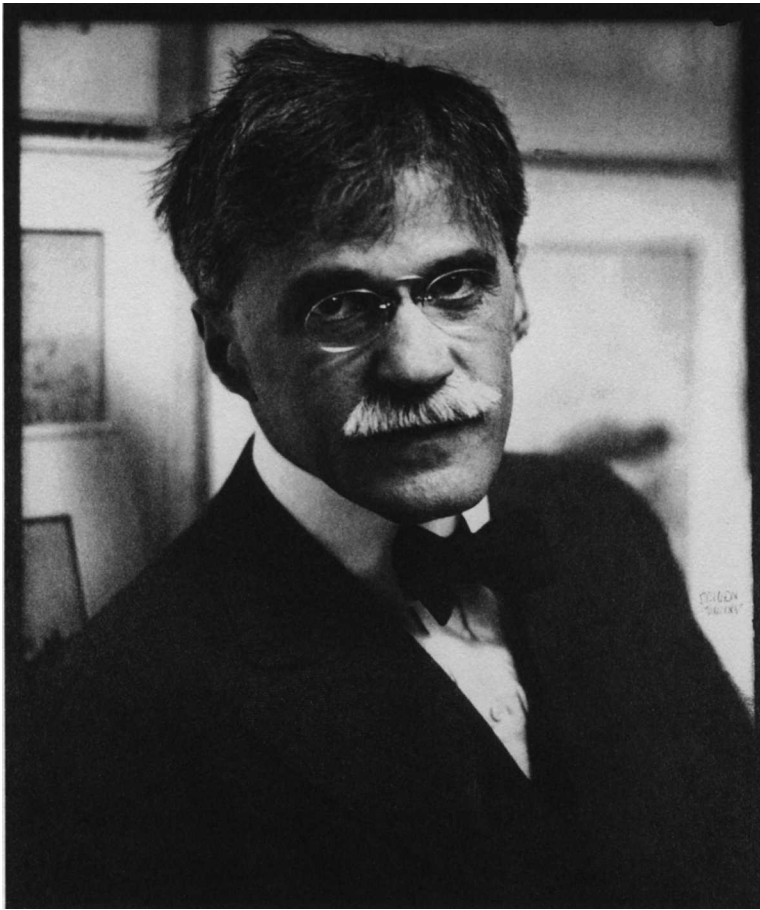


Figure 20. Edward Steichen, *Alfred Stieglitz at 291*, 1915. Gum bichromate over platinum or gelatin silver print. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 1933 (33.43.29)

than one pedestrian or a quickened tempo upped the ante. Having scouted some serviceable overpasses in Central Park, Strand captured the slow stream of meandering Sunday strollers (plate 6), and a swiftly galloping equestrienne.⁷¹ When called to jury duty, he saw that the courtroom had a comfortable vantage on an esplanade full of men with canes, pipes, and briefcases and women with rakish hats; when the judge excused himself, Strand had his picture (plate 14). He was clearly in his element now, at one with himself and his subject. On Fifth Avenue he immersed himself in the crowd and played a riff on the flag and the hats of the women who turned to look at him (plate 16); a few blocks farther south he climbed to a friend's second-floor

gallery, where he had a perfect roost to watch the “hot flux of the immediate life”⁷² surge by, and from which he could fix its various modes and gaits in all their ragged, crosscutting urgency (plate 15). Strand made his jazzy, jumpy picture of 42nd Street just when *The New Republic* called for it: “As you walk up and down the streets of an American city you feel in its jerk and rattle a personality different from that of any European capital. This is American. It is in our lives and it helps to form our characters and condition our mode of action. It should have expression in art.”⁷³

With its stunning progression of massive tonal chords over a running social commentary, *Wall Street* (plate 18 and page 159) shifts to a more serious note. In other photographs of 1915 Strand seems to have worked up “sketches” for this masterpiece: he investigated the social theme using street kids and a dilapidated building (figure 17), and he studied the rhythms of colossal architecture (figure 18) and of shadowy planar geometry with people moving underneath (plate 17). If these photographs preceded *Wall Street*, as seems plausible, they helped Strand build to the power and complexity of this consummate embodiment of the urban movement.

From the steps of New York's Federal Hall, the Greek-revival Parthenon on the site where George Washington took his oath of office, Strand had a good view of the recently completed building across the street belonging to J. P. Morgan and Company.⁷⁴ As Morgan epitomized Wall Street, so this building was the symbolic center of the power of Big Business. Strand noticed it when walking around the area,⁷⁵ and he went back one morning at rush hour when the sun was pouring down the street like a river from the east

to see if one could organize a picture of that kind of movement in a way that was abstract and controlled. I [was] aware for instance of those big, black windows of the Morgan building, these enormous black shapes. I also had a friend who worked in that building, with whom I went to school; for me it seemed too bad, I thought he could have done something much more useful. Well, I also was fascinated by all these little people walking by these great big sinister,

almost threatening shapes . . . these black, repetitive, rectangular shapes—sort of blind shapes, because you can't see in, with people going by. I tried to pull that together.⁷⁶

Alfred Kreyborg, a poet who frequented 291 at this time and who recalled seeing the “stocky mercurial Strand” in the Stieglitz circle’s daily luncheons at the Holland House or Prince George Hotel, wrote of the group’s feeling about the nation’s economic expansion. “That business enterprise should have permeated and directed material America was natural and wholesome, no doubt; but that it should have stolen into spiritual America and contaminated nearly everyone concerned with creative expression—this was loathsome.”⁷⁷ Many liberal, creative people ardently argued that money should serve life and not the other way around. Stieglitz was one of them: he sustained his gallery on a noncommercial basis, rarely selling works of art, yet managing to provide stipends for many of his artists. Strand was instinctively in accord with Stieglitz’s romantic stance for the individual and against what seemed to them the perversion of profit and power by corporate enterprise. Hence Strand’s regret that a schoolmate, perhaps his good friend Harold Greengard (plate 32), should succumb to such a fate.⁷⁸

Strand later recalled that an anarchist ignited a wagonload of explosives on the flank of the building, killing thirty-three people in 1920.⁷⁹ Although this sensational surcharge was not in the picture at the time of its making, the post-facto association confirms a latent political content, all the more powerful for being inexplicit and diffused. In a 1951 letter from Paris, where he had settled to escape the restrictive political climate in the United States, Strand protested his friend Walter Rosenblum’s overly pointed reading of *Wall Street*, and in his self-defense Strand underscores the overlapping meanings of the picture: “Actually at that time I knew nothing about cartels etc. I was trying to photograph the ‘rushing to work’ and no doubt the black shapes of the windows have perhaps the quality of a great maw into which the people rush.”⁸⁰ Whether the shapes represent the consolidated power of Wall Street, the mad dash after money, the weekday routine, the inhuman quality of metropolitan life, the inexorable march of time, or some combination of

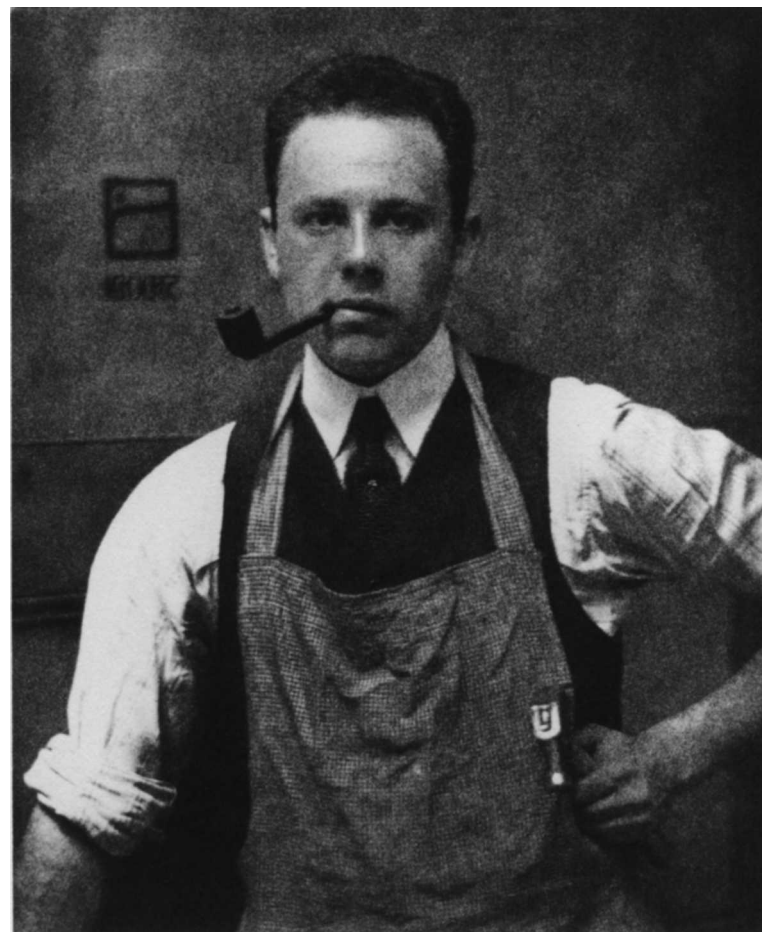


Figure 21. Alfred Stieglitz, *Paul Strand*, 1917. Silver and platinum print. Collection of the Center for Creative Photography, The University of Arizona

these ideas, their oppressive regularity and crushing size, in contrast to the small individual human silhouettes below, constitute an abstract expression of an emotional response—the central tenet of the artistic credo espoused by the Stieglitz circle. If this photograph was indeed in the portfolio that so excited Stieglitz, little wonder that he opened his door wide to the young artist.⁸¹

Strand recalled that this period, during which he joined the Stieglitz group

was very alive in terms of fight, one for the right of others to experiment, to do something that maybe other people didn't understand right away; and secondly, for the value of what they were doing, that it was not just willful but meaningful.

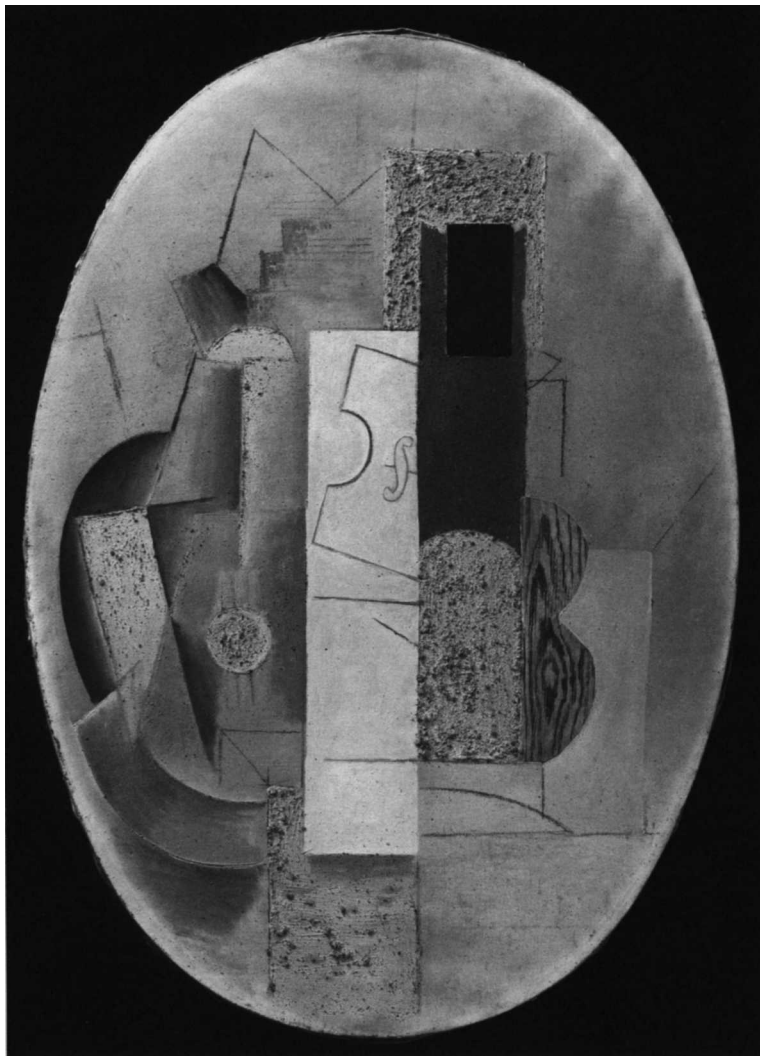


Figure 22. Pablo Picasso, *Violin and Guitar*, 1913. Oil, cloth, charcoal, and gesso on canvas. The Philadelphia Museum of Art: Louise and Walter Arensberg

In that, Stieglitz was great; he was a marvelous polemicist, and when people came into this little gallery of 291 and began to jeer at something, they really caught it, in a way that was not insulting but very forceful and not easy to answer. So there was a good deal of feeling of a struggle and a fight for something important happening in the world. . . .⁸²

The feeling of being involved in the birth of something important was shared by many members of Strand's generation in America. They saw old Europe dying in the grip of war, and

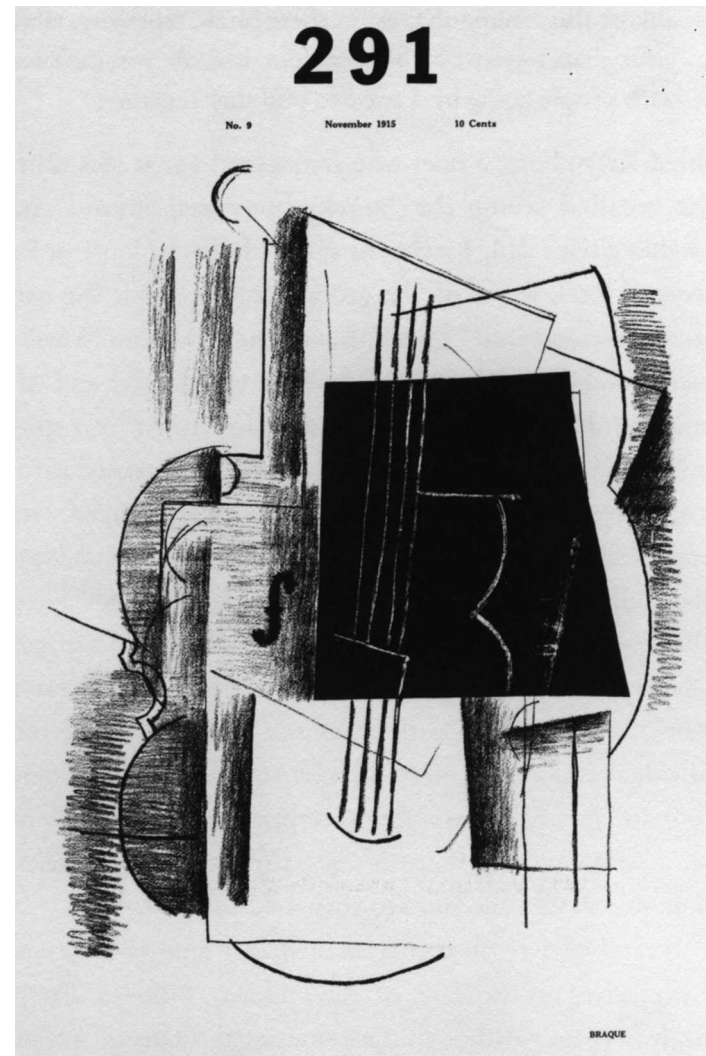


Figure 23. Georges Braque, *Still Life*, 1913. Cover of 291 (November 1915, no. 9). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 1949 (49.55.330.5)

they believed that the torch of civilization and freedom had been passed to their young country, now in the adolescence of a new age. "For which of us did not believe that we were on the verge of the 'wonderful era,'" asked Van Wyck Brooks.⁸³ When writing *America's Coming of Age* (1915) in England, Brooks was certain "that we were to have a renaissance, that extraordinary forces at home were at work in the silence and that what we required was a critical movement to release these forces, to harrow the ground for the seed beneath the snow."⁸⁴

Perhaps the most important early center of this movement was 291, and though it remained a central laboratory for new ideas until it closed in 1917, its focused energy dropped significantly after the Armory Show. The decline of the Photo-Secession and the lack of growth among American photographers were major reasons for the loss of momentum; an equally important condition was that other art galleries had begun to usurp and sell the moderns that Stieglitz so prided himself on introducing to America.

One of Stieglitz's closest associates, the talented Mexican caricaturist Marius de Zayas, decided to take the commercial opportunity Stieglitz refused, and with Stieglitz's blessing and the backing of Agnes and Eugene Meyer, he opened the Modern Gallery in the fall of 1915. Like Steichen, de Zayas had earned Stieglitz's gratitude by being an effective scout for avant-garde art in Europe; it was he who had assembled the 1911 Picasso show at 291 and who had helped Stieglitz appreciate it.⁸⁵ Strand's entrée into the Stieglitz circle naturally extended to de Zayas, who became "a very good friend" of his at this time,⁸⁶ and whose gallery—a philosophical and commercial extension of 291—became his secondary outpost. It was from the gallery's big windows that Strand made *Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street* (plate 15).

De Zayas recalled that "1915 was the golden year for modern art" in New York: the Carroll Galleries held the first exhibit of Picasso's early paintings, the Montross Gallery mounted a major Matisse exhibition, works by Picasso, Braque, and Picabia were shown at 291, and the Washington Square Gallery displayed more paintings by Picasso. At the Modern Gallery de Zayas showed Picasso's latest paintings, portraits by Van Gogh, and recent works by Picabia.⁸⁷ There was so much good European avant-garde art on exhibit in New York in 1915 that Stieglitz wryly remarked that "he might have to devote his gallery to exhibitions of academic work in order to escape being obvious."⁸⁸

These exhibitions fanned the burning issue of the moment—abstraction. "At Stieglitz's one evening we had a heated discussion about Picasso's abstract drawings, for one of which Stieglitz had paid Picabia, the previous owner, a down payment of \$250.00," the painter Oscar Bluemner recorded in

his diary in the fall of 1915.⁸⁹ Displayed in the Picasso and Braque show at 291 in January of that year, the drawing was still in Stieglitz's possession⁹⁰ and served as the pivot around which Stieglitz, Picabia, de Zayas, Bluemner, and Walkowitz turned their arguments on the nature of abstraction and its relation to reality, to the viewer, and to artistic conventions. Three points from the discussion were clear: Picasso was central, abstraction was sovereign—and even realism was seen as "reverse abstraction." Regarding the last, Walkowitz explained, a Dürer or a Cranach was not a depiction of the world so much as an objectification of intangible feelings, like Picasso's abstractions. Virtually all the artists in the Stieglitz circle, including Marin, Marsden Hartley, and Arthur Dove, were experimenting with these notions.

The flavor of the discussions Strand heard over lunch and in the back room at 291 was enriched by the leading theorist of modern art, Willard Huntington Wright, whose new book, *Modern Painting, Its Tendency and Meaning*, was the first significant treatment of the subject in America. Wright believed that the movements and schools that followed so rapidly in modern art were animated by the desire to master the problem of aesthetic organization. The search for composition was therefore the motivating factor for all artists, and in ancient as well as modern art the human figure and recognizable objects were mere auxiliaries to aid in obtaining abstract emotional force. Cézanne was accordingly the first artist of the new era, an empirical researcher who sought to learn how to reproduce nature's solidity and its dynamic interconnections. In his paintings "there is a complete ordonnance between every group of parts. Nothing can be added or taken away without changing the entire structure in all its finest details."⁹¹

The Cézanne mystique, launched in America by Stieglitz's exhibition of watercolors at 291 in 1911, was rooted in the brilliant opinions of the British critic Roger Fry, who decided that Cézanne was the cornerstone of all modern art and whose conviction became infectious.⁹² Fry's high esteem had been disseminated by Stieglitz and by Caffin, whom Stieglitz enlisted to write two seminal articles in *Camera Work* in 1910 and 1911. In them Caffin had traced the line of artistic evolution from

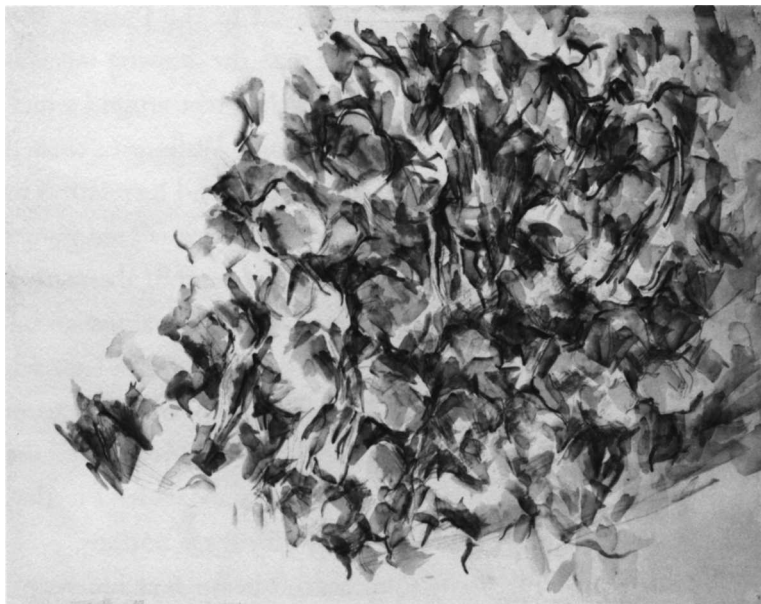


Figure 24. Paul Cézanne, *Foliage*, 1895–1900. Watercolor and pencil on paper. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Lillie P. Bliss Collection. Bliss acquired this work directly from the Montross Gallery.

Whistler directly to Cézanne, whose logical, “scientific” mind had re-created out of the real world a natural pictorial geometry of design in depth. As with El Greco, Caffin argued, the parallel movement of Cézanne’s pictures and of his intellect solved the modern problem by making peace between materialism and idealism.⁹³

When pulling from the pool of memory the seminal influences he experienced in the period circa 1916, the older Strand repeatedly cited Cézanne’s watercolors and Picasso, sometimes with the addition of Braque.⁹⁴ In this Strand was shadowing Stieglitz; just as important early chapters in Stieglitz’s education in modern art were keyed to Cézanne’s watercolors and to Picasso, so they were for Strand, who soaked up Stieglitz’s example as fast as he could. Initially Strand was more likely swayed by the discussion of Cézanne than by his art, for Stieglitz had neither kept nor reproduced any of the watercolors he had shown at 291,⁹⁵ and no watercolors were included in the Armory Show. When the Montross Gallery mounted a major Cézanne exhibition in January 1916, Strand could finally

study the by now mythic sheets (figure 24), several of which were the very ones Stieglitz had shown four years before. Their signal importance was underscored by Max Weber, who ignored the seven oils in the exhibit and wrote in the catalogue only about the watercolors. The show was accompanied by reviews making extravagant claims of the artist’s preeminence, and at its close Wright wrote particularly of the watercolors, analyzing the balance and sway of the “volumnear forces,” the pictorial movement that translates into feeling. The exhibition, he thought, was “worth more to the serious artist in search of information than a year in the art schools.”⁹⁶

The call to study Cézanne and the desire to understand how Picasso and Braque had taken reality to pieces to construct the new space of their Cubist pictures fired Strand’s imagination, and upon arriving at the Twin Lakes cottage in the summer of 1916, he set about learning “how you build a picture, what a picture consists of, how shapes are related to each other, how spaces are filled, how the whole thing must have a kind of unity.”⁹⁷ Borrowing some crockery and fruit from the kitchen, he made arrangements of the simple subject matter—or, as Strand said, “maybe *object matter* would be a better term”⁹⁸—on a small table in the sun (plate 21), or on the cottage porch (plate 20). Strand tried photographing them with orthochromatic film (useful in the darkroom because it is insensitive to red light), which rendered as black anything colored with red, such as the apples, oranges, bananas, brown ceramic jugs, and teapots he had scavenged.⁹⁹ This characteristic of the film kept the photographs from describing too literally the objects in front of the lens, and, thus divested of some of their worldly associations, the casual things could be moved about freely in compositions, recalling Froebel’s object lessons and serving Strand as an “ABC of abstract form”¹⁰⁰ (figures 25–27). Arranging the spheres of fruit and the concave forms of bowls and cups, tilting and packing them tightly against one another and photographing them in the sunlight while standing above them on a bench, Strand learned how to create movement and depth in a compact universe full of countering and interconnecting lights and shadows that became the picture.

The variations were seemingly infinite, not only because Strand could make and remake this universe of hollows and volumes, but also because the weights and proportions of each composition and its internal movement shifted as the sun moved across the sky. Angling its light across the porch through the railing (figures 28, 29), the sun set up a regular rhythm that Strand could increase or decrease by choosing his hour and point of view and which he could play upon as a central theme or weave into a counterpoint with more intricate figures provided by such things as the spindles and curves of a Victorian rocking chair (plate 22). Tilting the chair and table to receive the play of light, as he had done with the cups and bowls, Strand shifted the scale of his experimental space from an intimate domain, in which the eye moves comfortably around teapots and oranges, to a less domestic scape that is largely incomprehensible, a pattern of tones and striations that describe nothing quite namable, yet have extraordinary authority in their dynamic formal coherence (plates 27, 28).

These abstractions, often hailed as the first intentionally made with a camera, were in fact no more abstract than some of the compositions made by students of Max Weber and Clarence White at about the same time.¹⁰¹ Carrying out exercises to learn how to “fill space,” the students created designs that updated the soft, flat forms of Art Nouveau and Japonism with more angular elements, and in this sense their trajectory was similar to Strand’s. However, the difference in motivation shows in the results: the Weber/White students produced expedient designs that are at best decorative, while Strand’s pictures are organic,

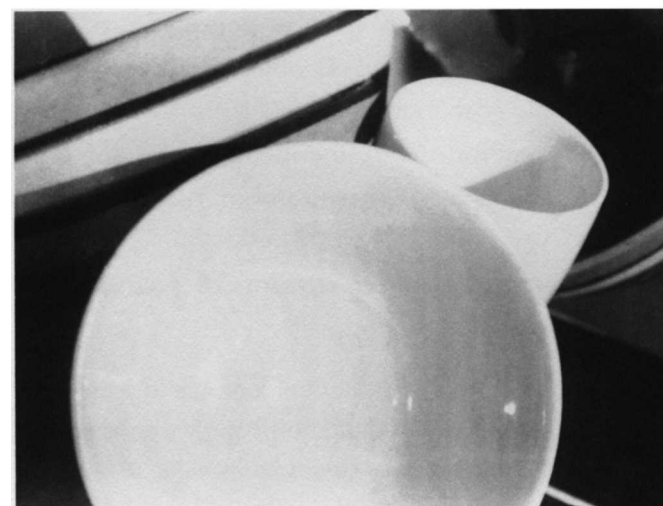
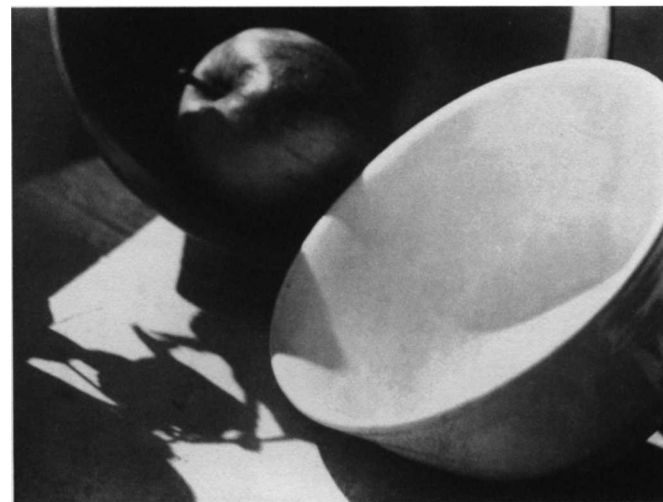


Figure 25. Paul Strand, *[Untitled No. 229A]*, 1916. Modern gelatin silver print from original glass negative. Aperture Foundation, Inc., Paul Strand Archive

Figure 26. Paul Strand, *[Untitled No. 231A]*, 1916. Modern gelatin silver print from original glass negative. Aperture Foundation, Inc., Paul Strand Archive

Figure 27. Paul Strand, *[Untitled No. 235A]*, 1916. Modern gelatin silver print from original glass negative. Aperture Foundation, Inc., Paul Strand Archive

driven by a powerful desire to know something that has nothing to do with an assignment. Strand was rebuilding his art from within, and his photographs of the process have in their acuity and bold scale, an edge of appetite and the naked confidence to plumb creativity to the core.

As Strand worked on the porch of the cottage at Twin Lakes, he discovered that just as there was no advantage to preserving the material qualities or ordinary uses of the objects in his pictures, so there were no limits or directives to the framing of the possibilities. From the tilted bowl to the tilted table (figures 28, 29), it was just a step to the rotation of the resulting picture, which removed its contents further from the world (plates 27, 28). This radical liberation of the picture space from its normal orientation based on human verticality granted Strand further license to angle his lens in any direction he chose (plates 29, 30). Step by step, he pulled farther away from the rules and was soon swiveling his camera with unprecedented freedom down, on a slant, and even up to the sky. The heady spontaneity of these pictures—Greengard's glint and smile as he leans back in a rocker, the roof improbably lifting the porch into the sky, and a cloud and gable happily seesawing on a wooded ridge in a world drunk with movement—is indicative of the joy Strand had in making them (plates 31, 32, 33). Preceding the freewheeling visions of Alexander Rodchenko by a decade, these pictures nonetheless share with them the exultation of a utopian belief that the present is an ever-new state in a perpetual, salutary condition of revolution. In these unprecedented photographs there is no trace of Froebel's object study but instead a sense of its ultimate goal: moving beyond the material, Strand was making plastic equivalents of the intangible, of the transcendent forces that shape experience, and of the vitality that links all things.¹⁰²

Strand had taught himself the elements of pictorial construction as an inquiry into

what the meaning of this new development was in painting. Not with the idea of imitating or competing with the painting, but trying to find out what might be its value to someone who wanted to photograph the real world. . . . I did, I

think, understand through that work what the principle was behind Picasso and all the others in their organization of the picture space, of the unity of what that organization contained, and the problem of making a two-dimensional area have a three-dimensional character so that the eye of the person beholding the picture remained in that space and went *into* this picture and didn't go off to the side. Everything in that picture had [to be] really related to everything else.¹⁰³

As if to prove that the lesson was complete, he made a few more still lifes, this time replacing the porch shadows with fancy striped cigarette boxes (figure 30); the images possess a stylish aplomb beyond an air of genuine inquiry. Unlike Cézanne, who never tired of his ordinary materials because his sensitivity to the problems they posed was limitless, Strand, who needed to make photographs that would connect with the essence of things, found boxes and bowls ultimately too empty to sustain his attention. By arranging them, he had learned how to put a picture together, and he had savored the textures and patterns that the world offers when seen up close. But what was lacking in the "experiments," as Strand called them, was the connection that he sought in his candid close-up of Harold Greengard (plate 32). The same urge led him to photograph a neighbor's son in front of his barn (plate 34) and to invite an old cropper with a white beard to take the place of Greengard on his porch (figure 31). If, as Froebel and Adler had taught, man was continuous with the natural world, then something of Strand's soulful humanity, not just his visual intelligence, needed mirroring in his art.

Upon returning to New York from Connecticut in the fall of 1916, Strand was ready for a challenge that had been "germinating" in him: to photograph people in the streets without their being conscious of his activity.¹⁰⁴ The idea of making portraits of people unaware had been in the air since the invention of hand-held cameras in the 1880s and had produced various "detective" models, such as the Deceptive Angle Graphic, introduced in 1901.¹⁰⁵ Rather than purchase such expensive, specialized equipment, Strand characteristically devised his own system: he took a shiny barrel with a simple lens from a camera

he inherited from his uncle and screwed it on to the side of his camera.¹⁰⁶ He recalled that he wanted to make “some portraits of people such as you see in the New York parks and places, sitting around, without their being conscious of being photographed. . . . I felt that one could get a *quality of being* through the fact that the person did not know he was being photographed.”¹⁰⁷ “I wanted to also solve the problem of photographing these people within an environment which they themselves had chosen to be in, or were in anyway.”¹⁰⁸

There were several ideas reverberating in Strand’s words, among them the teaching and practice of Lewis Hine and the theories of Hine’s mentor, John Dewey, the philosopher and progressive educator at Columbia University. To Dewey and his followers it seemed essential that in a democratic, industrial, changing society the distinction between cultured people and workers be dissolved. The proper object of study was, therefore, the whole individual functioning in his environment, or, as Dewey put it at just this moment, “the social medium in which an individual lives, moves, and has his being.”¹⁰⁹ While this idea was already familiar to Strand from Hine and ECS, Dewey had in the meantime become an acknowledged leader of progressive thought, and his ideas were published, actively discussed¹¹⁰ and in particular disseminated by another of his former students, an exuberant young rebel and acquaintance of Strand’s who wrote in *The New Republic*, Randolph Bourne.

Bourne’s hotly debated “unpatriotic” article, “Trans-National America,” almost certainly rang a bell for Strand in the summer of 1916.¹¹¹ Recognizing the sterility of Anglo-Saxon culture,



Figure 28. Paul Strand, [Untitled No. 240A], 1916. Modern gelatin silver print from original glass negative. Aperture Foundation, Inc., Paul Strand Archive

Figure 29. Paul Strand, [Untitled No. 240B], 1916. Modern gelatin silver print from original glass negative. Aperture Foundation, Inc., Paul Strand Archive

Figure 30. Paul Strand, *Still Life with Contessas Boxes, Twin Lakes, Connecticut*, 1916. Platinum print. Mr. and Mrs. Marshall Cogan

Bourne called for a country in which immigrant cultures and communities would retain their integrity and dignity, thus providing the cultural variety that would give rise to the cosmopolitan civilization of the future. *Seven Arts*, a little magazine that gathered many cultural insurgents, including Bourne and Strand, provided additional impetus for Strand's portrait project in the fall. "It is our faith and the faith of many, that we are living in the first days of a renascent period, a time which means for America the coming of that national self-consciousness which is the beginning of greatness," announced editor James Oppenheim in the first issue.¹¹² The foremost figure of liberal thought in France, Romain Rolland, answered Oppenheim's call for articles with a moving exhortation from war-torn Europe to American artists. "Dare to see yourselves; to penetrate within yourselves," Rolland wrote.

[This] means, for the artist, the plunging of roots within the spirit of his people . . . flushing the darkness of all these potent murmurous masses. For they have been called to recreate the world. They—the people—whose indifference to art oppresses you, are the Dumb. And since they cannot express themselves, they cannot know themselves. You must be their Voice . . . Give voice to your own soul, and you will find that you have given birth to the soul of your people . . . You must make of your culture a symphony that shall in a true way express your brotherhood of individuals, of races, of cultures banded together, . . . the dream of an integrated and entire humanity.¹¹³

The young intellectuals who wrote in *Seven Arts* turned the hierarchy of society upside down. Anglo-Saxons, repressed, bigoted, and bourgeois, were at the bottom; at the top were the Italians, Slavs, and Eastern European Jews of the Lower East Side.¹¹⁴ The fierce contempt of the young men for their own middle-class origins was balanced by their respect for the urban poor, especially recent immigrants, who came from a "more vivid, instinctive, and vital civilization."¹¹⁵ Van Wyck Brooks recalled, I "relish[ed] the slums, their colour and variety, the stir in the streets, the craftsmen plying their trades in little shops, and often I spent the whole of a Sunday at a cafe in East

Houston Street, reading and writing at one of the marble topped tables. I was surrounded there by the real mysteries of the ghetto and by Yiddish actors and newspapermen playing chess and drinking tea like figures from the Russian novels I was greedily absorbing."¹¹⁶

The population of New York at this time was almost five million people, over three quarters of whom were cited by the census as being of "alien" stock, meaning those born abroad and their children. Even though Strand probably considered his parents Americans, by this standard they were technically aliens and he himself was only one step removed from the immigrants in the streets. No matter how Strand looked at it, New York was teeming with people who did not share one another's heritage and culture. By 1910 the waves of newcomers had made New York the largest Italian city and the largest Jewish city in the world.¹¹⁷ The immigrants were accordingly a major topic, especially against the background of Europe at war.

The picturesqueness of the "foreign settlements" increasing "almost daily by hordes of immigrants from every part of the world," was the subject of an article in *Photo-Era* magazine. The author, Allen Churchill, recommended the 3¼ × 4¼-inch camera (Strand's instrument), because a larger camera "is too conspicuous and catches the eye of the subject you wish to photograph, whereupon he will straighten up and pose, thus spoiling the charm of an unconscious attitude." Churchill particularly recommended the Lower East Side, concluding, "I know of no place so rich in subjects for [the amateur's] camera, so full of interest and food for contemplation, as this caldron of humanity. Its humor, its pathos, its stoicism in the face of poverty, is truly remarkable."¹¹⁸

Strand began making his portraits at Five Points, the famous congested slum Jacob Riis had photographed in the 1880s. An Italian man lounging against a building first caught his eye, but a couple of bystanders understood what Strand was doing, so he repaired to the square across the street, where he photographed "an old man with strange eyes," a tragic figure so absorbed in his thoughts that he did not notice the photographer's maneuvers (plates 45, 46).¹¹⁹ Strand stood in front of the

man but rotated a quarter of a turn away, and he held his camera so that the false lens pointed in the direction Strand was facing. The real lens, on an extended bellows, stuck out under his arm toward the man, whom Strand could see by looking both over his shoulder and into his lens hood sideways. The clumsiness of the operation made it exceedingly difficult, but Strand stayed with his challenging project long enough to capture a dozen souls before retreating. Calvin Tomkins reported: "One day, walking with the camera, he saw a woman with a cage of parakeets; she was selling fortunes that the birds would peck out. Strand walked by without opening his camera, then came back. 'She attacked me. She said, You're not going to make my picture. I said what makes you think I'm going to? But it was almost like mental telepathy. Maybe somebody had tried to make her picture. Anyway that finished me, at least for the time being.'" ¹²⁰

Strand had to be "invisible" so as not to disturb his subjects in their unselfconscious expressions, for he wished to capture whatever mood or mind was most symptomatic of their nature off-guard. To fix this essence involved his projection of empathic interest to establish—for a suspended moment—a connection with a stranger wholly unaware that he had become a partner in a tightrope act performed on a busy street by a spell-bound photographer juggling a cumbersome machine. The process was, Strand said repeatedly, "nerve-racking," for the rapt quality of his intensity naturally attracted the attention of his subjects, yet if they gave it, the photograph was ruined. No wonder the photographer delighted in Cézanne's supposed instructions to a portrait subject to "look like an apple."¹²¹ In *Blind*, arguably Strand's greatest early photograph, the subject manifests just that uninflected state (plate 47).

The commonness of Strand's subjects in fact recalls Cézanne, who portrayed mostly simple people—a peasant, his gardener, the postman. *Old Woman with a Rosary*, which crowned Cézanne's display at the Armory Show (figure 12), was such an image, and the gripping intensity of its psychological portrayal has suggested to many commentators the profound compassion of Rembrandt's late paintings, as well as Dostoyevsky's fascination with the marginal characters of modern life. Brooks's

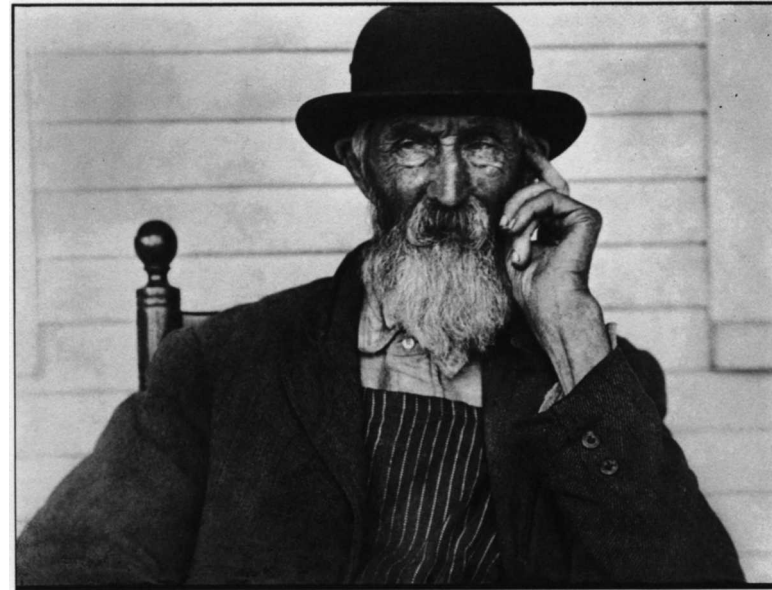


Figure 31. Paul Strand, *Early Portrait*, Twin Lakes, Connecticut, 1916. Private collection, Geneva

remark about the Russian novelists was apposite, for "Young America" was stirred by a *nostalgie de la boue* and avidly read the European writers who suggested the bankruptcy of the old dispensation by frankly treating the abnormal as normal, the simple and poor as heroic. Although he was a slow reader, Strand shared the proclivities of his colleagues for the authors currently in vogue; he found in Dostoyevsky and especially in Nietzsche sentiments that stirred him deeply and emerged in his portraits.¹²²

To William Innes Homer's question, "When you were photographing these poor people, did you have any social feeling about them, or feeling of reform?" Strand, then eighty-five years old, answered: "I think I must have had some. I had read by that time some Nietzsche and I photographed these people because I felt that they were all people whom life had battered into some sort of extraordinary interest and, in a way, nobility. I think the face of the blind woman is an absolutely unforgettable face . . . she was selling newspapers and here [around her neck] is her license to work . . . she was blind, not half-blind. [Still] she was working, she was not a beggar."¹²³ Like all the other people in his extraordinary gallery of portraits, the blind woman was an

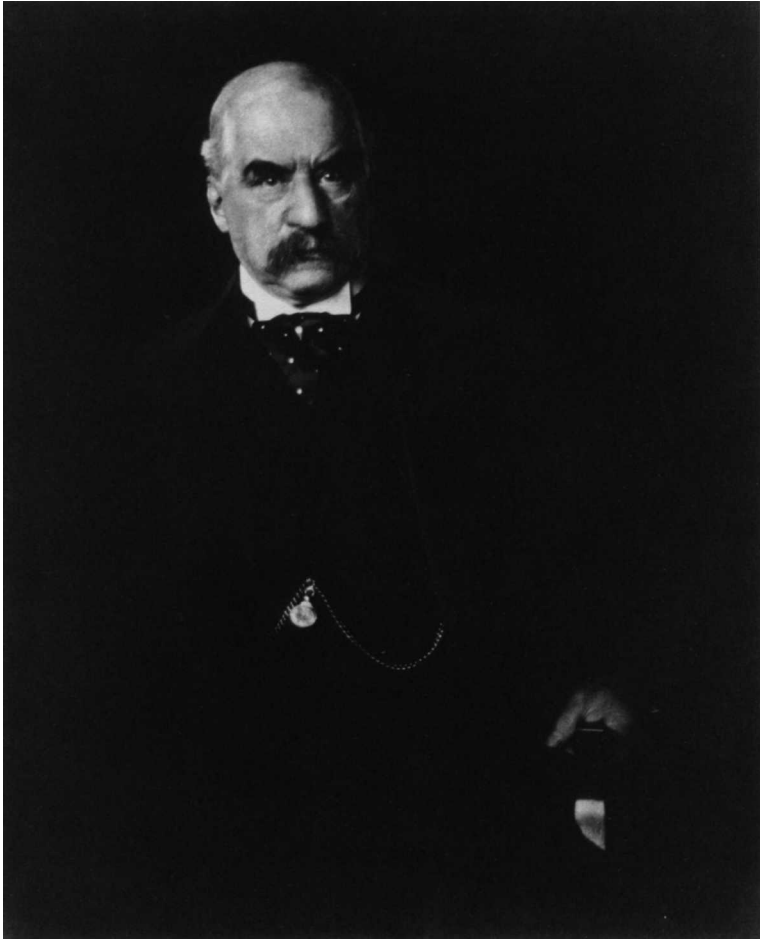


Figure 32. Edward Steichen, *J. Pierpont Morgan, Esq.*, 1903. Gum bichromate over platinum print. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 1949 (49.55.167)

undervalued member of a complacent society that Strand judged harshly. Like the artist, whose sympathies cast him outside the system, this woman is a bystander, and although she is licensed to earn, her position in the grand capitalist scheme is liminal. Yet in Strand's portrait her deficiency is her grandeur, the source of her serenity and her incomparable personal authority.¹²⁴

Strand gathered in his group of subjects some classic New York "types"—the red-nosed Irish washerwoman, Jewish patriarchs in black hats, a grizzled sailor carrying a sandwich board, aging immigrants from various European countries, an unshaven tough, and other marginal, uprooted, or lost souls. Like Hine,

Strand was collecting the hard evidence of poverty among diverse cultures that crowded together in America's metropolis. His commoners take the stage wordlessly, calling into question just by virtue of their being the whole, invisible society. The intriguing details in the pictures—the cherries on the hat, the missing buttons, the peddler's license—pin the types to individual persons, yet Strand's shallow depth of field and the soft, overall definition quiets the specifics and repositions them as aspects of everyman's condition in the larger eloquence of the role. We lose our indifference and distance before the immediacy of these pictures, and a mood of floating sadness and emptiness spreads out over them like atmosphere. Less a portrait gallery, finally, than a social terrain, these pictures of the human condition in the urban context are, in the words of Sanford Schwartz, "cityscapes that have faces for subjects."¹²⁵

Although Strand recalled that his reading of Nietzsche had influenced this series, he could not remember what it was about Nietzsche that had affected him; all we know is that his interest went deep and extended to reading a two-volume biography of the German philosopher.¹²⁶ Certainly Strand agreed with Nietzsche's dislike of contemporary civilization, which he saw as the wreckage of an ancient system, and with his scathing attacks on cultural philistinism and romantic decadence. Nietzsche's ability to instill a passion for greatness in a world without gods and his belief that the creation of a new society required a new breed of individual with greater capacity to tolerate and use suffering may also be implied in Strand's ambitious humanitarian project. Furthermore, Nietzsche's understanding that the role of art is to portray the tragedy of life as well as the state of the artist's soul surely struck home for Strand, because he, like Stieglitz and the others of his circle, believed that art is the redemption of the sensitive man.

From his ECS education Strand understood that to collect the truths of existence in the outside world was to reflect his own interior. The conceptual constitution of the portraits—old-world souls shipwrecked in modern midday America—and their emotional charge of awesome dignity, strength, and suffering speak clearly with Strand's own voice, conviction, and

character. The portraits are, as Bourne wrote of Dostoyevsky's psychological portrayals, "introspection turned inside out." They are immanently Strand in their fierce intensity and their reverence for all living experience.¹²⁷ Inasmuch as the photographer agreed with Dostoyevsky's true democracy of spirit, and also with Nietzsche's belief that "power makes dumb," he proposed his dispossessed heroes as a democratic alternative to the conventional image of power exemplified by Steichen's portrait of J. P. Morgan¹²⁸ (figure 32).

Before and after the portrait series, during 1916 and 1917, Strand continued to apply to the larger world the lessons he had learned making abstractions on the porch at Twin Lakes. On a trip to the Lake Champlain area, a white picket fence caught his eye and set up the familiar rhythms of the railing on the porch, but instead of working in close, with everything within his reach and control, Strand now had distance, dark, and a house and barn to try to pull together into a coherent picture (plate 35). *White Fence* is a tour de force of unity from diversity. The irregular pickets cut the foreground into light/dark or positive/negative shapes, the barn is a shadowy double of the house, itself overlain by a ghostly fence, and the whole is spiked with lozenges and cubes that chime across the dark. To a lesser artist the graphic impact of the white fence would have been sufficient to hold the picture together, but Strand let it trot across the ground on a slight cant, its obliquity and irregularity simultaneously opening and squeezing the space, energizing instead of closing it. Strand always considered this picture one of his best, perhaps not only because of its inherent quality, but also because it was so clear a statement of his new vision. *White Fence* disgusted an anonymous reviewer, no doubt to Strand's delight: "It reminds us of the grand finale of a burlesque show, where the full strength of the company is displayed at once. We hardly see how more contrast, emphasis, eccentricity, and ugliness could be combined within the four sides of a print."¹²⁹ On the same trip to Port Kent, Strand spied a district of frame boarding houses, perhaps even uglier to such eyes, which he composed into a tight, three-dimensional patchwork patterned with stripes, angles, and drying laundry (figure 33).

From the 125th Street viaduct in Manhattan he made a more daring picture of some similar materials (plate 51). Launched by "Julia" and "Charles"¹³⁰ on a poster for a musical comedy at the bottom, a stack of rectangles and angles climbs up the right side of the picture; at the top our eye drops to the pavement and runs down to a man and woman in white standing by the fence of a little house with a pair of white-curtained windows. The discontinuous pictorial space, with its passages of light and repetitions of form, is of course, highly Cubist, but it is not the simple application of a half-digested idea, as were many approximations of the style. The barriers that break up the space are false facades and billboards; these closely hem in the old house, neatly suggesting the way modernity overlays and reshapes the world, which, as Strand's brilliant picture shows us, is nonetheless a world of the real experience of ordinary people who make their homes in the city. The abundance and plasticity of Strand's invention at this moment are conveyed by another picture taken from the same viaduct (plate 50), which is not smart, bold, and dark but elegant, soft, and glowing—a flat Japanism brought neatly up to date with a tracery of structural steel.

Skyscrapers and machines, the quintessential symbols of modern life in the early twentieth century, were Strand's next subjects as he advanced in breathtaking leaps across the landscape of artistic possibilities. Duchamp and Picabia had introduced machines into American art when they arrived in New York in 1915,¹³¹ and automobiles capable of fifty-mile-an-hour speeds were everywhere. "Just at the present the sole ambition seems to be to roll about, day in and day out, every moment in [these] machines," Stieglitz noted, "Literally a rolling around in the present symbol of wealth."¹³² Machines had fascinated Strand since childhood, in part because his grandfather once worked in the lathe business; even in the year before his death Strand could recall the makes and models, the horsepower and mechanical details, of the early automobiles. The father of his friend Harold Greengard had the first car in the neighborhood, every screw and gear of which Paul knew by heart.¹³³ The wheel organization of the Lozier, its fancier replacement in the Greengard's garage, was the subject of a picture (plate 55) that

won Strand an award and critical praise and which Stieglitz sold to Mrs. Charles Liebman to hang in her husband's office.¹³⁴ In the more complex *Wire Wheel* (plate 49) Strand lavished the fenders with lingering attention as if running his hand appreciatively over the curves. A snippet of license plate recalls the fragmented lettering in Cubist paintings and similarly pulls the image up to the picture plane, while the headlight warps the space as it distortedly reflects the city's canyons. A third photograph of an automobile and a photograph of a motor, both apparently lost, won Strand additional prizes. Such work inspired Stieglitz's hopes for the future of the medium, "Will there be an awakening—a new vision, not from schools nor from dead or dying photographic centres, but springing from

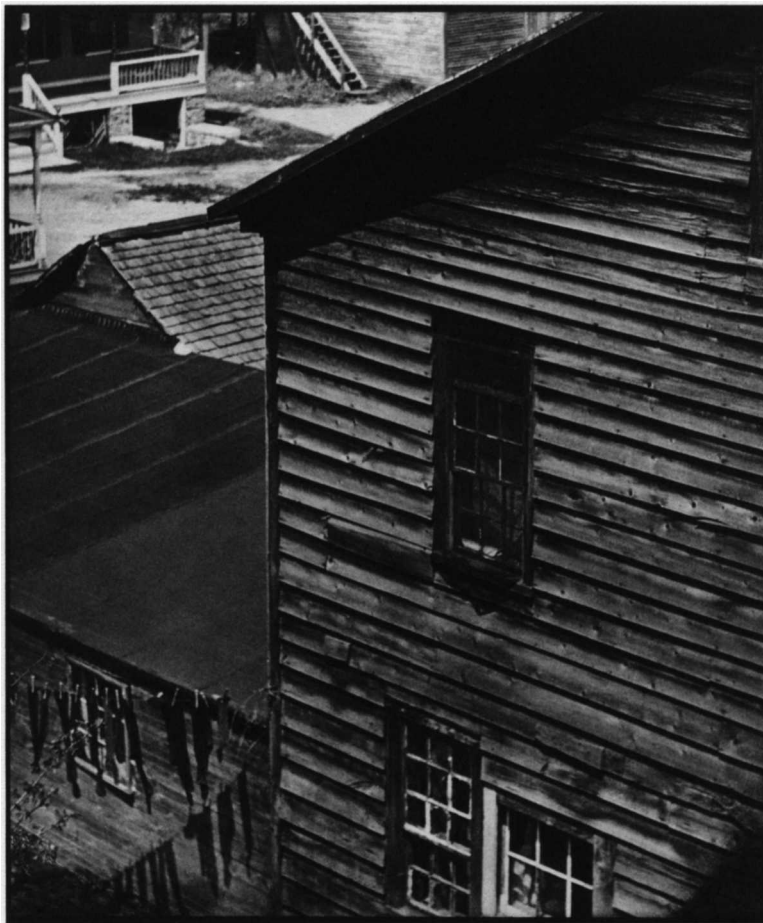


Figure 33. Paul Strand, *Frame Buildings*, 1916. Platinum print. The Art Institute of Chicago, The Alfred Stieglitz Collection

actual life and a new and enthusiastic faith in photography? Perhaps, in the quiet somewhere, there is already a beginning. I believe there is."¹³⁵

The distance Strand had come in just four years is astonishing. In 1913 he viewed the backyard of his house on 83rd Street as a pretty, sun-filled corner with blooming shrubs and a trellised arbor, a neat mannerly garden that he rendered in soft focus, enhancing its lush growth and dancing light (plate 5). In 1917 he viewed the scene out his back window with new eyes (plates 52–54). Without needing to ground his view or depict his plot as properly oriented and rationally ordained, and without waiting for spring to melt the snow or clothe the trees, Strand pursued the visual excitement he detected in the surprising design that sheets, fences, paths, and shadows made in the bare yards under the winter sun. No longer concerned with beauty, he worked the terrain for a subtler reward, one hidden from casual view. Visible only from above to an eye practiced at detecting pattern and transcribing it in black and white is the artist's garden of contingency, a place where ideas and perceptions grow. It is fitted out minimally and oriented flexibly; its boundaries are there to be transgressed, its constitution will always fluctuate. In its rawness there is courage—the effort to purify art—and also a tinge of iconoclasm, the residue of cleaning the old slate. Here, indeed, were the "extraordinary forces" Van Wyck Brooks detected in the silence, "harrowing the ground for the seed beneath the snow."¹³⁶

In the spring of 1917, about the time Strand photographed the roofs emerging from snow (plate 54), he began to receive real recognition for his accomplishments. In March he won first prize for *Wall Street* at the Twelfth Annual Wanamaker Exhibition in Philadelphia,¹³⁷ and de Zayas opened an exhibition of his photographs, together with those of Charles Sheeler and Morton Schamberg, at the Modern Gallery.¹³⁸ The following month the United States entered World War I, and for related and financial reasons Stieglitz decided to terminate *Camera Work*. However, he extended its life to publish the photographs Strand had made after the October 1916 issue, in which he had featured *Wall Street* and other images from 1915.

The last number of *Camera Work* (no. 49–50, June 1917) contained an article reprinted from *Seven Arts* that Strand had written in defense of “straight” photography, which resonates with Stieglitz’s intonations: “Photography is only a new road from a different direction but moving toward the common goal, which is Life.”¹³⁹ There were eleven extraordinary photogravures: eight street portraits, two views from the viaduct, two Twin Lakes abstractions, and *White Fence*.¹⁴⁰ Stieglitz reminded his readers that he had introduced Strand in the previous issue, after a long absence from the magazine of new photography, there being none, he thought, of any worth. At that time he had praised Strand’s work as being “rooted in the best traditions of photography,” and as a “pure,” “direct” application of intelligence. The present number, he continued, “represents the real Strand. The man who has actually done something from within. The photographer who has added something to what has gone before. The work is brutally direct. Devoid of all flim-flam; devoid of trickery and of any ‘ism,’ devoid of any attempt to mystify an ignorant public, including the photographers themselves. These photographs are the direct expression of today.”¹⁴¹ It gave Stieglitz great satisfaction to complete fourteen years of *Camera Work* with the forceful presentation of his new protégé, a major and original photographer whose art incorporated the lessons of the European avant-garde that Stieglitz himself had introduced to New York. To the extent that Stieglitz published the magazine to enlighten America and her photographers, Strand’s work finally proved the rationale.

Stieglitz had planned to exhibit Strand’s recent photographs under the title “The New Work,” but after he took down Georgia O’Keeffe’s watercolors at the end of the season, he decided to dismantle the gallery permanently. While Strand was helping take the place apart, Stieglitz photographed him with hammer in hand (figure 21). They had torn down the fabric, uncovering Steichen’s signature design on the wall, a reminder of the days when Steichen turned over these rooms, which had been his studio, to Stieglitz to become the Little Galleries for the Photo-Secession in 1905.¹⁴² Just two years later Strand had visited the gallery as a seventeen-year-old with Hine’s camera class.



Figure 34. Alfred Stieglitz, *Paul Strand*, 1919. Palladium print. National Gallery of Art, Washington, Alfred Stieglitz Collection

In the intervening years photography had developed from a highly crafted, beautiful, and rather sentimental art of picture-making into a flexible modern medium, a growth paralleled and exemplified by Strand’s own artistic maturation.

• • •

The intensely creative era in which Strand came of age closed down abruptly when President Wilson declared war on Germany in April 1917. For young intellectuals like Strand, who had been conscious of their responsibility to safeguard the arts and keep freedom alive since the beginning of the war in Europe, the shock of being dragged into the atrocities was dismaying. The war represented a devastating failure of liberalism,

progress, and idealism and signaled the dissipation of energies that had begun to create a true renaissance of culture and society in America. “It seems impossible to get away from the war—it touches everybody now and everyone finds the same resentment and lack of enthusiasm,” Strand wrote to Stieglitz in the summer of 1917.¹⁴³ With the communal experience of 291 shattered by war fever and the circle scattered by the closing of the gallery, Strand virtually stopped photographing. “The mere idea of trying to create anything nowadays seems so mad.”¹⁴⁴ As he wrote a few months later in an elegy on the closing of 291, “with that rupture, one of the most vital and significant experiments, not only in American life, but in the world life of today, came to an end.”¹⁴⁵

In his letters to Georgia O’Keeffe, whom he met as 291 closed, Strand struggled with his conscience over the war.¹⁴⁶ As a pacifist, he found himself “in the strange position of alienation to all the sentiments and feelings upon which the mind of the country is centered.”¹⁴⁷ Randolph Bourne uncannily managed to give voice to feelings very like Strand’s own:

With the outbreak of the Great War, most of his socialist and pacifist theories were knocked flat. The world turned out to be an entirely different place from what he had thought it. Progress and uplift seemed to be indefinitely suspended, though it was a long time before he realized how much he had been corroded by the impact of the news and the endless discussions he heard. . . . All that he valued seemed frozen until the horrible mess came to a close. . . . He knows that theoretically he is united with a hundred million in purpose, sentiment and deed for an idealistic war to defend democracy and civilization against predatory autocracy. . . . The irony is that the demand which his country now makes on him is one to which not one single cell or nerve of idealism responds. . . . He still feels himself inextricably a part of his blundering, wistful, crass civilization we call America. All he asks is not to be identified with it for warlike ends.¹⁴⁸

Strand was inducted into the Army in the summer of 1918. He did not see action and was released in the summer of 1919, when he began to photograph again, but he came back a changed man to a changed world (figure 34). The optimism and the cooperative group spirit were gone. There was no way to regain the intensity of the passion or to equal the magic of the moment when he had married photography to modernism to create a new expressive language for a new world.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

Strand had a long and productive career. If the post-war period offered him less community and commitment than the years around 1916, he nevertheless got back to work with a vision cleansed of painterly adulterations. The coolly seductive, celebratory air of his machine photographs of the twenties, like the contemporaneous work of Stieglitz and Edward Weston, helped define the canon of early American modernism and set its premium on the elegant print and the perfectly calibrated image. Schamberg and Sheeler, who had shown with Strand at de Zayas’s Modern Gallery in 1917, had been evolving in a parallel direction. Schamberg died of influenza in 1918, but Sheeler continued to carve the world into pictures of crystalline perfection and together with Strand described the movement of the city in their film *Manhatta* (1920). Strand became seriously involved with documentary film in the thirties, and from the forties until the end of his life he was committed to making photographic books of the highest quality. Landscape, architecture, and portraiture, the traditional humanist genres, continued to inspire him to embody the spirit of his subjects in the very materials of the photographic print. The high public regard for his mature work suggests not only that he succeeded in his goals, but also that his standards of excellence and his constancy of subject answered very human needs in a century of radical change.

NOTES

Abbreviations used in notes:

- Beinecke—Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Collection of American Literature, Yale University, New Haven
- Homer, first interview—William Innes Homer, interview with Paul Strand, December 28, 1971, typescript. William Innes Homer, Department of Art History, University of Delaware
- Homer, second interview—William Innes Homer, interview with Paul Strand, June 25, 1974, typescript. William Innes Homer, Department of Art History, University of Delaware
- Menschel Library—Joyce F. Menschel Photography Library, The Metropolitan Museum of Art
- Rosenblum, manuscript notes [1975]—Naomi Rosenblum, notes of Strand's remarks on the making of his early photographs, undated manuscript [March 1975]. Menschel Library
- Rosenblum, typescript, May 6, 1975—Notes taken by Naomi Rosenblum as Strand reviewed prints found in a storage vault in the Sofia Warehouse in Manhattan, May 6, 1975, some of which she transcribed into a typescript. Menschel Library
- Strand Collection—Paul Strand Collection, Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, Tucson
- Tomkins, first interview—Calvin Tomkins, interview with Paul Strand, June 30, 1973, typescript. Menschel Library
- Tomkins, second interview—Calvin Tomkins, interview with Paul Strand, July 7, 1973, typescript. Menschel Library

1. Milton Brown wrote that, despite their frequent conversations, he could not get behind the facade of the photographer's memories. Strand always explained his involvement with modernism as an experiment before returning to his central concern, humanity. Brown felt this to be a gloss to explain the inconsistency of his early work in the context of his monolithic vision of his artistic career. Milton W. Brown, "The Three Roads," in *Paul Strand, Essays on his Life and Work*, edited by Maren Stange (New York: Aperture, 1990), pp. 18–19.
2. There were no nineteenth-century photographs in the show. Strand's memory conflated many years of seeing photographs at 291, together with photographs reproduced in *Camera Work*, as well as photographs exhibited and reproduced elsewhere into one momentous "exhibition" that changed his life forever. Rosenblum cites three instances when Strand remarked the importance of the visit to 291 (McCausland in 1940, Newhall in 1945, and Tomkins in 1973); see Naomi Rosenblum, "Paul Strand: The Early Years, 1910–1932" (Ph.D. dissertation, City University of New York, 1978), p. 28, n. 19. When interviewed by William Innes Homer in 1971, Strand admitted, "I don't know if I saw it all in one exhibition but perhaps two or three exhibitions" (Homer, first interview, p. 1).
3. Recounted in Dorothy Norman, *Alfred Stieglitz: An American Seer* (New York: Random House and Aperture, 1973), p. 104, and Edward Steichen,

A Life in Photography (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1963), n.p. Also described and analyzed in John Rewald, *Cézanne and America: Dealers, Collectors, Artists, and Critics, 1891–1921* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 111, 146.

4. Strand spoke of the work of Picasso and Braque: "those paintings which I grew up with and which meant so much to me . . ." (Tomkins, first interview, p. 3).
5. See below, page 20 and note 37.
6. Edward Steichen to Alfred Stieglitz, undated letter [late 1911]; and letters received by Stieglitz on March 17, 1913, and December 19, 1913 (Beinecke).
7. From the poem "Just as the Winged Energy of Delight," 1924.
8. Rosenblum, manuscript notes [1975].
9. The first kindergarten in New York City was established in 1877–78 by the Ethical Culture Society. The city's public schools did not establish kindergartens until 1893, when there were seven. If Frances Arnstein taught one of those seven classes, she was indeed one of the earliest kindergartners. By 1895 there were ten classes, and fifteen by 1896. See Lilla D. Hafer, "The Growth of the Kindergarten in New York City," in *History of the Kindergarten Movement in the Mid-Western States and in New York* (Cincinnati: Cincinnati Convention Association for Childhood Education, 1938), p. 70. Frances Arnstein was appointed on April 7, 1893, to work in the city's public schools as a "kindergartner." However it is not known whether she taught during that year or not. She is not listed as a teacher in 1894–96, and there is no complete directory for 1897. In 1898 she taught kindergarten at P.S. 104, at 413 East 16th Street. From 1899 to 1906 she taught at P.S. 165, on West 108th Street; and from 1907 to 1914 she taught at P.S. 93, on West 93rd Street. She continued her teaching until her retirement in 1922. These records were kindly located by David Ment, Head of Special Collections, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York.
10. For Froebel's understanding of visual aids and teaching methods in kindergarten, see Norman Brosterman, *Inventing Kindergarten* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1997).
11. For the doctrine of *Gliedganze*, see *The Kindergarten; Reports of the Committee of Nineteen on the Theory and Practice of the Kindergarten* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1913), pp. 8–14.
12. From the letters of Strand's family, primarily written by his mother and Aunt Frances while he was in the service, we can reconstruct something of the social fabric of the Arnstein/Strand household. Several families who lived on the Upper West Side not far from the Strand's 83rd Street house were members of the society and had children in the school. They were the Blums (son Alex), the Greengards (son Harold), the Hirschbachs (son Fred), the Phillippses (daughter Edna), and the Scheuers (son James). Mrs. Strand's doctor was Dr. Danziger, a member of the society, and Mrs. Danziger was her friend. Aunt Frances had very close ties with the ECS community and likely received her kindergarten

- training at the associated Normal School. Her good friend Blanche Loeb was trained there. Frances was also friendly with Sallie Woolf, probably related to the several Woolf children enrolled at ECS. Thus, although the records of the Ethical Culture Society and School are incomplete, and the letters referencing these people dated from a decade after Paul's graduation from the school, it is clear that ECS was the central focus of Strand's family life. The letters from the family are in the Strand Collection.
13. On Strand's entry card at Ethical Culture School, there is a notation "See F. A. ms letter," and beside "Parent: Jacob Strand (Merchant)" is written "Frances Arnstein." Ethical Culture Fieldston Schools card file.
 14. See Mabel R. Goodlander, "The First Sixty Years: An Historical Sketch of the Ethical Culture School, 1878–79 to 1938–39" (typescript, 1939 [Ethical Culture Fieldston Schools Archive], and Howard B. Radest, *Toward Common Ground: The Story of the Ethical Societies in the United States* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1969).
 15. Caffin wrote of his favorites in "Pictures at the Metropolitan Museum," *Harper's Monthly Magazine* 104, no. 620 (January 1902), pp. 270–78.
 16. In his second interview with William Innes Homer, Strand recalled Caffin's art appreciation course, acknowledged its influence on him and his deep interest in the history of painting (Homer, second interview, p. 6).
 17. Paul Strand to his parents, Florence, March 4, 1911 (Strand Collection).
 18. Charles Caffin, *Photography as a Fine Art* (reprint ed., Hastings-on-Hudson, New York: Morgan and Morgan, 1971).
 19. Quote from Naomi Rosenblum, "Biographical Notes," in *America and Lewis Hine: Photographs, 1904–1940* (Millerton, New York: Aperture, 1977), p. 17.
 20. Jon Goal, interview with Paul Strand, January 1973. Strand's report card for January 30–March 12, 1908, records: Composition and Rhetoric: B. German: B+. Latin: B. Mathematics: C. Physics: C+. Physical Training: B+. Photography: A- (Ethical Culture Fieldston Schools card file).
 21. Quotations and information taken from Lewis W. Hine, "The School Camera," *Elementary School Teacher* 6 (March 1906), pp. 343–47, and especially Lewis W. Hine, "Photography in the School," *Photographic Times* 40, no. 8 (August 1908), pp. 227–32.
 22. Through the club Strand enlarged his contact with the world: in 1911, he was happy to receive an introduction to the Camera Club de Paris, where he used the darkroom, met "the boys," and picked up an idea for mounting photographs. Other club members helped make further contacts. See Rosenblum, "Paul Strand: The Early Years," pp. 33–35.
 23. Paul Strand to his family, March 25, 1911 (Strand Collection).
 24. Tomkins, second interview, p. 10.
 25. Clarence White organized the exhibition with help from Max Weber, who hung the show. The exhibition catalogue in the Menschel Library lists 148 photographs by students of Clarence White, as well as works by Coburn, Genthe, Käsebier, Mullins, Seeley, Struss, and White himself. See *An Exhibition Illustrating the Progress of the Art of Photography in America at the Montross Art Galleries [550 Fifth Avenue] New York, October Tenth to Thirty-First, 1912*.
 26. The complete remarks were: "I don't think Clarence White told me anything that stuck. Certainly he was too innocent of the whole idea of teaching. He was too innocent and kind to be a teacher. He was a lovely man. He was related to Saint Francis. Saint Francis could teach you how to be a good monk and how to love God, but not how to be a good photographer. Because sometimes you have to say, 'that is not the way to do it, you've got it all wrong. I'll show you now how to do it right and the rest of your life will be pleasant because you will be doing it the easy, the right way.' A teacher is a corrector." See "An Interview with Ralph Steiner," in *A Collective Vision: Clarence H. White and His Students* (Long Beach, California: University Art Museum, 1986), p. 28.
 27. My thanks to Bonnie Yochelson for freely sharing her research. She has treated this chapter of pictorialism in depth, most recently in "Clarence H. White, Peaceful Warrior," in *Pictorialism into Modernism: The Clarence H. White School of Photography* (New York: Rizzoli in association with George Eastman House and the Detroit Institute of Arts, 1996), pp. 42–50. The third issue of *Platinum Print, a Journal of Personal Expression* 1, no. 3 (March 1914), is primarily devoted to discussion of the Ehrich Galleries exhibition. There also appears an account of an "Informal Photo-Dinner" on January 24, 1914, in Chinatown to celebrate the exhibition. Strand attended, along with the Ehrichs, the Clarence Whites, Gertrude Käsebier, Clara Sipprell, Arnold Genthe, Karl Struss, Paul L. Anderson, and Max Weber, among others (*ibid.*, p. 12; Menschel Library).
 28. Temple Scott, "Photography at the Ehrich Galleries," *Platinum Print* 1, no. 3 (March 1914), p. 2.
 29. In May 1975 Strand's wife Hazel found a box of some fifty of his early prints in their storage vault in the Sofia Warehouse in Manhattan. Naomi Rosenblum took notes as Strand reviewed the prints with her on May 6, 1975, some of which she transcribed into a typescript.
 30. Paul Anderson's book, *Pictorial Landscape-Photography*, 1914, was a first effort at such codification, better realized in his *Pictorial Photography, Its Principles and Practice* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1917).
 31. Stieglitz wrote: "This Number of *Camera Work* has been in hand for several years. The latest phase of Steichen's evolution as a painter is not, for obvious reasons, incorporated in the present series. . . . We take this opportunity again to put on record, inasmuch as we believe that *Camera Work* is making history, our indebtedness to Steichen. The work of '29' could not have been achieved so completely without his active sympathy and constructive co-operation, rendered always in the most unselfish way." This praise, unusual for Stieglitz, continued for several more sentences, giving the indication that the publication was in some degree a payback for Steichen's help. See "Our Plates," *Camera Work*, no. 42–43 (April–July 1913), p. 68.
 32. Kurt Baasch to Paul Strand, from Puerto Cabello, Venezuela, December 27, 1913 (Strand Collection).
 33. Tomkins, first interview, p. 3.
 34. In October 1908 Strand became a "non-resident" member and in 1909 a full member. He recalled that the club tried to expel Stieglitz "because he didn't want to hang everybody's work just because they were a member of the Camera Club. In other words, the Camera Club was merely a group of people—doctors, lawyers, businessmen, and all sorts of people—who were interested in photography but not in a very profound way, anything but" (Homer, first interview, p. 19).

35. See, for example, his arguments with F. Holland Day and Clarence White recounted in Weston Naef, *The Collection of Alfred Stieglitz* (New York: Viking, 1978), pp. 191–200.
36. Tomkins, first interview, p. 6.
37. In a second interview with Homer, Strand said that he “began to see these things [that Steichen was instrumental in bringing to 291: ‘Cézanne watercolors, Rodin watercolors, Picasso, Brancusi, Matisse, Braque, and so forth’], probably as early as 1910–11 because it was certainly much before the Armory Show . . .” (Homer, second interview, p. 4). In fact, Strand probably did not see the Cézanne show, because he left for Europe in the middle of it, and he certainly did not see the Picasso show because he was in Europe throughout its run. Neither Rodin nor Matisse were important to Strand, and were most likely mentioned as names in the litany of credit to Steichen and 291. Those whose art truly meant something to Strand—Cézanne, Picasso, Braque, and perhaps Brancusi—had exhibitions in New York *after* the Armory Show, when Strand was more ready to take them in. In the above mentioned interview, Strand also confused the pictures that surprised and delighted Stieglitz on his momentous visit in 1915, with images he made subsequently and which Stieglitz published in 1917 (Homer, second interview, pp. 5–6). From the perspective of sixty years, such confusion is understandable, but it is also telling. In just such a fashion the list of artists who showed at 291 before the Armory Show could easily slip out of the category of “things I know happened” into “things I must have seen.” The same sort of slippage occurs when we think we attended an event, which perhaps took place before our birth, because we have incorporated a snapshot of it into our mental collection of important occasions.
38. Mabel Dodge to Gertrude Stein, January 24, 1913 (*The Flowers of Friendship: Letters Written to Gertrude Stein*, edited by Donald Gallup [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953], p. 71).
39. See Milton W. Brown, *The Story of the Armory Show*, 2d ed. (New York: Abbeville Press, 1988), pp. 179–81.
40. Homer, first interview, p. 3.
41. Homer, second interview, p. 6.
42. Kenneth Hayes Miller to Rockwell Kent, March 23, 1913 (cited in Rewald, *Cézanne and America*, p. 182, n. 11).
43. In an interview in 1974 Strand indicated the standard that Cézanne had set for him when he was young and which continued all his life. “I think it is very important for young photographers to find out about the whole development of the graphic arts not simply come along and show photographs that could not stand up to a Cézanne for a second. You cannot claim that photography is an art until your work can hang on the same wall.” Paul Hill and Thomas Cooper, “Paul Strand,” in *Dialogue with Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1979), pp. 4–5.
44. Hutchins Hapgood, “Art and Unrest,” *New York Globe*, reprinted in *Camera Work*, no. 42/43 (April–July, 1913), p. 43.
45. The Camera Club’s Annual Members’ Print Exhibition, April 12–May 31, 1910, *American Photography*, June 1910, p. 371.
46. Strand also mentioned Van Gogh’s portraits in the same breath (Homer, first interview, p. 23).
47. Stieglitz announced in “Exhibition of Photography for ‘291,’” that there would be three exhibitions of photographs in the gallery’s tenth season (1914–15). The first exhibition will be “British Photography as Represented by the Work of Hill, Mrs. Cameron, and Craig Annan,” *Camera Work*, no. 45 (January 1914), p. 44.
48. According to Bonnie Yochelson the exhibition was at the Ehrich Galleries in late 1914 (Yochelson, “Clarence H. White, Peaceful Warrior,” p. 50). When it traveled to the Albright Art Gallery where it was shown from January 30–February 28, 1915, a small brochure was printed (photocopy in Menschel Library).
49. Paul Strand, “Photography and the Other Arts,” a lecture given at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1944, typescript, pp. 3–4 (Strand Collection).
50. There was an exhibition of Strand’s photographs at the Camera Club, which opened on November 24, 1914. Strand probably took the pictures to Stieglitz when they came off the wall. “A Camera Club of New York Chronology,” in Tony Troncale, *Then and Now: The Camera Club of New York, 1888–1988* (New York: Camera Club of New York, 1988), p. 10.
51. Homer, first interview, pp. 4–5.
52. Tomkins, first interview, p. 8.
53. Homer, second interview, p. 16.
54. Calvin Tomkins, “Profiles: Paul Strand; Look to Things Around You,” *New Yorker*, September 16, 1974, p. 51.
55. Eight letters from Strand to his parents from March 25–April 25, 1911 (Strand Collection).
56. Strand to Stieglitz, May 6, 1915 (Beinecke).
57. Compare Clarence White’s *Telegraph Poles*, 1898, reproduced in *Camera Work*, no. 3 (July 1903), p. 9.
58. Strand had seen Coburn’s *From the Canyon Rim* at the “Exhibition Illustrating the Progress of the Art of Photography in America” at the Montross Gallery in 1912. For the Strand photograph, see Galerie zur Stockeregg, *Paul Strand* (vol. 1), Katalog no. 5 (Zurich, 1987), pl. 7. For the Coburn photograph, see Mike Weaver. *Alvin Langdon Coburn, Symbolist Photographer, 1882–1966: Beyond the Craft* (New York, Aperture Foundation, 1986), p. 20.
59. Homer, second interview, p. 8. Strand unhesitatingly put the date of the visit in June 1915. He returned from his travels in early June.
60. Tomkins, first interview, pp. 2–3.
61. Homer, second interview, p. 8.
62. Homer, first interview, p. 8.
63. Homer, second interview, p. 8.
64. The list is incomplete, as it was not taken from a checklist, which Strand believed existed but we never found, but rather from reviews of the show. See especially Charles Caffin, “Paul Strand in ‘Straight’ Photographs,” *New York American*, March 20, 1916, p. 7; and Royal Cortissoz, “Paul Strand,” *New York Tribune* (March 19, 1916), section 3, p. 3, both reprinted in *Camera Work*, no. 48 (October 1916), p. 58.
65. Caffin, “Paul Strand in ‘Straight’ Photographs.”
66. Ibid. Strand removed a figure who was growing out of the head of another pedestrian in the lower center of the frame. Although Stieglitz

- frowned on manipulating the content of “straight” photographs, Strand did what was needed to make the best picture and had no qualms about handwork. See “On the Prints,” page 157.
67. From the exhibition pamphlet, reprinted in *Camera Work*, no. 42–43 (April–July 1913), p. 18.
 68. J. Edgar Chamberlin in the *N. Y. Mail*, reprinted in *Camera Work*, no. 42–43 (April–July 1913), p. 23; and J. Nilsen Laurvik in the *Boston Transcript*, reprinted in *ibid.*, p. 41.
 69. One observer noted that most amateurs had not dared city subjects, despite the many picturesque possibilities offered by Central Park, the East River bridges, and downtown. However, “street views downtown are a difficult proposition, one being the lack of light . . . but the real difficulty from the artistic point is to find a desirable spot from which to work sufficiently out of the crowd.” The author suggests a “ $3\frac{1}{4} \times 4\frac{1}{4}$ in.” folding plate camera as the most convenient tool, which was what Strand used. See William S. Davis, “The Pictorial Possibilities of New York,” *Photographic Times* 41 (October 1914), pp. 395–400.
 70. Lou Stettner, “A Day to Remember: Paul Strand Interview,” *Camera* 35 (October 1972), pp. 55–59, 72–74.
 71. Galerie zur Stockeregg, *Paul Strand*, Katalog no. 5, pl. 4.
 72. From Paul Strand, “American Water Colors at The Brooklyn Museum,” *Arts* 2 (December 1921), p. 150.
 73. Hiram K. Moderwell, “Ragtime,” *The New Republic*, October 16, 1915, p. 286.
 74. Now the Morgan Guaranty Trust Company at 23 Wall Street, completed in 1913. The architects were Trowbridge and Livingston.
 75. Rosenblum, manuscript notes [1975], n.p.
 76. Tomkins, first interview, p. 4.
 77. Alfred Kreyborg, *Troubadour, an Autobiography* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1925), pp. 162–66.
 78. Greengard went to work for Kuhn and Loeb, the famous Wall Street investment firm, located around the corner at 45 William Street. Strand may have been referring to him or to some other schoolmate who actually worked at J. P. Morgan and Company.
 79. Rosenblum, manuscript notes [1975]. Strand recalled the bomb, but not the details of the incident, which were provided by Elliot Willensky and Norval White, *ALA Guide to New York City*, 3d ed. (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988), p. 19.
 80. Paul Strand to Walter Rosenblum, May 21, 1951. Collection of Naomi and Walter Rosenblum, New York.
 81. Nancy Newhall stated that *Wall Street*, in particular, moved Stieglitz, but she treated all of Strand’s work circa 1916 as if it had been available in 1915, which casts doubt on her remark (Nancy Newhall, *Paul Strand: Photographs, 1915–1945* [New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1945], p. 4).
 82. Homer, first interview, p. 13.
 83. Van Wyck Brooks, *Scenes and Portraits: Memories of Childhood and Youth* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1954), p. 155.
 84. *Ibid.*, p. 234.
 85. In the pamphlet he wrote to accompany the exhibition, de Zayas provided Stieglitz with one interpretation of Picasso’s abstraction: “Picasso tried to produce with his work an impression, not with the subject but the manner in which he expresses it. He receives a direct impression from external nature, he analyzes, develops, and translates it, and afterwards executes it in his own particular style, with the intention that *the pictures should be the pictorial equivalent of the emotion produced by nature*” ([my emphasis]; “Pablo Picasso,” reprinted in *Camera Work*, no. 34–35 [April–July 1911], pp. 65–67).
 86. Homer, second interview, p. 9, and Homer, first interview, p. 15: “I liked de Zayas very much: I think he was an extremely intelligent man and an excellent cartoonist. When he started the gallery, I used to go over there and see the things that he put up and see him.”
 87. Marius de Zayas, *How, When, and Why Modern Art Came to New York*, edited by Francis M. Naumann (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1996), p. 71. De Zayas wrote his book in the late 1940s from the clippings in his scrapbooks. For a more complete and accurate listing of exhibitions in New York, see Judith Katy Zilczer, “The Aesthetic Struggle in America, 1913–1918” (Ph.D., diss., University of Delaware, Newark, 1975), Appendix A.
 88. Peyton Boswell, in the *New York Herald*, quoted in de Zayas, *How, When, and Why*, p. 71.
 89. Oscar Bluemner, diary entry for November 10, 1915. The diary is in the Archives of American Art; the passage is translated from German in Zilczer, “Aesthetic Struggle in America,” pp. 276–78.
 90. Pierre Daix and Joan Rosselet, *Le cubisme de Picasso: Catalogue raisonné de l’oeuvre peint, 1907–16* (Neuchâtel: Ides et Calendes, 1979), p. 294, no. 548.
 91. Willard H. Wright, *Modern Painting, Its Tendency and Meaning* (New York: John Lane, 1915), p. 145. From solidarity with his brother the synchronist painter Stanton Macdonald-Wright, Wright saw the development of modern art as leading to pure painting with free color, culminating in Synchronism. Thus, Cézanne led to this new freedom, while Cubism, colorless and intellectual, was a cul-de-sac.
 92. Rewald, *Cézanne and America*, p. 135.
 93. Charles Caffin, “The New Thought Which Is Old,” *Camera Work*, no. 31 (July 1910), pp. 21–24; and “A Note on Paul Cézanne,” *Camera Work*, no. 34–35 (April–July 1911), pp. 47–51.
 94. Tomkins, first interview, p. 3; Tomkins, second interview, p. 5; Homer, first interview, p. 6; Homer, second interview, pp. 4–5. In his lecture at the Museum of Modern Art in 1944, Strand characterized the development of modern painting thus: “We come now to the year of the last war and just before. Painting has moved from Cézanne to Picasso, Braque, Cubism and pure abstraction” (“Photography and the Other Arts,” typescript, 1944, p. 6 [Strand Collection]).
 95. Norman, *Alfred Stieglitz*, p. 106.
 96. The unsigned review in the *New York Times Magazine* announced that the exhibit “is a loud call to the young. There could be no master more wholesome than Paul Cézanne.” On this, Wright’s article, and other critical reaction to the Montross show, see Rewald, *Cézanne and America*, pp. 288–301.
 97. Tomkins, “Profiles,” p. 48.
 98. Milton Brown and Walter Rosenblum, interview with Paul Strand, November 1971. (Archives of American Art)

99. My thanks to Richard Benson for the information on ortho film.
100. *A Roger Fry Reader*, edited by Christopher Reed (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 88.
101. See Yochelson, *Pictorialism into Modernism*, pp. 60, 66.
102. Strand might well have referred to these forces as “elan vital,” Henri Bergson’s vogueish term. Excerpts from Bergson appeared in *Camera Work*, no. 36 (October 1911), pp. 20–21, and no. 37 (January 1912), pp. 22–26. When the French philosopher spoke in New York at the time of the Armory Show, he was mobbed with admirers; his vague but optimistic and spiritual thought was quite popular in the Stieglitz circle.
103. Homer, second interview, p. 5.
104. *Ibid.*, p. 6. This is the only instance when Strand acknowledged that he had harbored the idea for some time, and that it was not, as he usually indicated, a sudden inspiration from an unknown source.
105. Eaton S. Lothrop, Jr., *A Century of Cameras from the Collection of the International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House* (Dobbs Ferry, New York: Morgan and Morgan, 1973), pp. 98–99.
106. Strand began with the barrel, but realized that people could see there was no glass in it, so he added a lens. In the thirties a “chap” at the Camera Club informed him that a prism attachment made for photo-engraving could be rebuilt by “Archinal” [Archival?] so that it looked like a continuation of the camera’s working lens. This would make the process much easier than working with a false lens attached to the camera at a right angle. Strand took the advice and made many of his later photographs of people with the right-angle prism. A related device, mounted on the top of the 35-mm Leica camera, gave Helen Levitt, Walker Evans, and others a similar freedom to work anonymously in the streets in the 1930s. Information on Strand’s technique from Rosenblum, manuscript notes [1975].
107. Tomkins, first interview, p. 6 (my emphasis).
108. Homer, second interview, p. 15.
109. John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1916), p. 33.
110. Dewey wrote in *The New Republic*, but when he and the other editors took a stand for the war, it turned Bourne against him. Most others were more tolerant, for example, Frank Manny, principal of the Ethical Culture School, who wrote “John Dewey,” *Seven Arts*, June 1917, pp. 214–28.
111. The article turned out to be too radical for the *The New Republic* and was published instead by a sympathetic editor at the *Atlantic Monthly* (118 [July 1916], p. 90). On Bourne see Edward Abrahams, *The Lyrical Left: Randolph Bourne, Alfred Stieglitz, and the Origins of Cultural Radicalism in America* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1986).
112. James Oppenheim, untitled opening statement, *Seven Arts*, November 1916, p. 52.
113. Romain Rolland, “American and the Arts,” *Seven Arts*, November 1916, pp. 48–50.
114. On this phenomenon and its background, see Henry F. May, *The End of American Innocence: A Study of the First Years of Our Own Time, 1912–1917* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959), pp. 280–90.
115. Van Wyck Brooks, *America’s Coming-of-Age* (New York: Huebsch, 1915), p. 162.
116. Brooks, *Scenes and Portraits*, p. 152.
117. Mark Sullivan, *Our Times: The United States, 1900–1925*, vol. 4, *The War Begins, 1909–1914* (New York: Scribner’s, 1932), p. 202.
118. Allen E. Churchill, “Photography among City Byways,” *Photo-Era* 31, no. 4 (October 1914), pp. 165–70. Sadakichi Hartmann had written of “the esthetic side of Jewtown,” much earlier, under his pen name, Sidney Allen. See his “Picturesque New York in Four Papers,” *Camera Notes* 6, no. 3 (February 1903), pp. 143–48.
119. Tomkins, first interview, p. 6. Strand rarely enlarged just a portion of his negative as he did with the head of the man in *Five Points Square*. According to Naomi Rosenblum, Strand believed that the whole figure “didn’t work with too much in between” the head and the hands (typescript, May 6, 1975).
120. Tomkins, first interview, p. 6. Tomkins’s version is slightly telegraphic, leaving out prepositions and pronouns, here reinstated.
121. Tomkins, second interview, “Addenda on Portraits,” inserted after p. 20.
122. We do not know what Strand read of Dostoyevsky, although it probably included *Poor Folk* and *The Idiot*. Strand gave a copy of the latter to Georgia O’Keeffe in 1917 (Georgia O’Keeffe to Paul Strand, December 29, 1917 [Strand Collection]). As to Nietzsche, we know only that he read Nietzsche’s sister’s account of her brother’s life, Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, *The Life of Nietzsche*, 2 vols., translated by Anthony M. Ludovici [New York: Sturgis and Walton, 1912–15], the first volume of which he also gave to O’Keeffe (Georgia O’Keeffe to Paul Strand, June 12, 1917 [Strand Collection]).
123. Homer, second interview, pp. 11–12. Strand was sensitive to remarks about the seedy cast of characters he had photographed, for it clashed with the reigning idea of his later work, which had to do with the inherent nobility of his subjects. Therefore he tried to refute those who spoke of their misery, viz his insistence on the fact that the blind woman was not a beggar, but a working woman.
124. In Nietzschean terms, her blindness was the cause of her heroic “self-overcoming.”
125. Sanford Schwartz, “The Strand Retrospective,” in his *The Art Presence* (New York: Horizon Press, 1982), p. 167.
126. When Tomkins asked Strand about his reading, Strand responded that Nietzsche had been very important during the early years (Tomkins, second interview, p. 26). See also note 122 above.
127. Randolph Bourne, “The Immanence of Dostoevsky,” *Dial* 62 (June 28, 1917), pp. 24–25.
128. “Of course a thing like the Morgan portrait is one of the great portraits of all time, in any medium” (Tomkins, first interview, p. 3).
129. On the Wanamaker shows, see note 137 below. “The 1918 Wanamaker Spring Exhibition,” *American Photography* 12 (April 1918), pp. 230–31. In another review, W. Grancel Fitz wrote, “This is a good example of ‘Stimmungsbilder’—a Mood Picture. The disadvantage of these lies in the fact that the maker must explain the emotion of it to those whose opinion he values, for otherwise they might misconstrue the mood and not give him credit for a fitting amount of soulfulness. If you will par-

- don a perfectly irrelevant remark, Mr. Strand works in rather close touch with Mr. Stieglitz." ("A Few Thoughts on the Wanamaker Exhibition," *Camera*, 1918, p. 206).
130. In his old age Strand still recalled the names "Charles Frohman and Julia Sanderson," whose names partially appear on the billboard in the picture (Rosenblum, manuscript notes, 1975). Frohman produced and Sanderson starred in *Sybil*, which opened at the Liberty Theater in New York on Jan. 10, 1916, and ran for 168 performances.
 131. Picabia's mechano-portraits in the July–August 1915 issue of the magazine 291 are a good example. For further treatment of the subject, see Francis M. Naumann with Beth Venn, *Making Mischief: Dada Invades New York* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1996).
 132. Alfred Stieglitz to R. Child Bayley, November 1, 1916, p. 2 (Beinecke).
 133. Maria Morris, interview with Paul Strand, April 25, 1975.
 134. "I told your aunt that I had sold your 'Wheel.' Mrs. Liebman bought it for her husband's birthday. He expressed the wish to have it. It is to hang over his office desk. He was tremendously impressed" (Alfred Stieglitz to Paul Strand, March 9, 1918 [Beinecke]). In Fitz's review cited in note 129 above, he wrote of this photograph, "It is the biggest and strongest print in the show. It almost fulfills our recipe for a great picture. In the first place the execution is good. It is a striking arrangement, with good values, and is a mighty good technical print, well mounted. In the second place, Mr. Strand has felt that this segment of wheel expressed not only the power of the thing itself, but also the cohesive strength of business, the spirit of the industry which produces it" (Fitz, "Thoughts on Wanamaker Exhibition," p. 205. See also note 137).
 135. See the introduction by Alfred Stieglitz, in *The Fourteenth Annual Exhibition of Photographs*, March 1–13, 1920 (Philadelphia: John Wanamaker, 1920 [photocopy in the Menschel Library]).
 136. See page 30 above.
 137. The Wanamaker Store in Philadelphia sponsored photographic competitions every spring, in which judges awarded cash prizes to the photographers whose works they judged the best. Stieglitz was a persuasive member of the jury in 1916, 1917, 1918, and 1920; there was no exhibition in 1919. Small catalogues were printed each year, listing the entries and the prize winners, and illustrating some of the winning photographs. In 1917 Strand won first prize (\$100) for *Wall Street*. In 1918 he won second prize (\$50) for *Wheel Organization* and fifth prize (\$10) for *White Fence*. In 1920 he won the first prize for four photographs grouped together: "Automobile, White Sheets, Motor, and Still Life." *Automobile* is reproduced in the catalogue for the show. *White Sheets* is likely either our plate 52 or 53; *Motor* and *Still Life* are unknown to us.
 138. Sheeler displayed photographs of "Negro Art," Schamberg showed "charming portraits and photographic views," and Strand "brought his camera to bear on some intensely realistic views of streets, back yards and such like, with marked success" ("Photographic Art at Modern Gallery," *American Art News*, March 13, 1917, p. 3).
 139. The article was published as "The Seven Arts Chronicle: Photography," *Seven Arts*, August 1917, pp. 524–26.
 140. *Camera Work*, no. 49–50 (June 1917), pls. 25, 28, 35, 37, 40, 41, 43, 46, 47, 50, 51.
 141. [Alfred Stieglitz], "Our Illustrations," *ibid.*, p. 36.
 142. This emblem is visible behind Strand in the portrait. It is laterally reversed, evidently because Stieglitz printed the negative backwards, making "STEICHEN" illegible.
 143. Paul Strand to Alfred Stieglitz, July 30 or 31, 1917 (Beinecke), as quoted by Rosenblum, "Paul Strand: The Early Years," p. 72.
 144. Paul Strand to Alfred Stieglitz, August 15, 1917, p. 2 (Beinecke). A month later, Strand wrote, "I am sorry you haven't been moved to photography this summer but strange to say neither have I. There is very little to show—perhaps three or four" (Paul Strand to Alfred Stieglitz, September 15, 1917, p. 3 [Beinecke]).
 145. Paul Strand, "What Was 291?" eight-page typescript dated October 1917, p. 1 (Strand Collection).
 146. O'Keeffe and Strand were initially attracted to one another and corresponded frequently between June 1917 and April 1918. O'Keeffe's letters to Strand survive (Strand Collection), but she apparently destroyed Strand's after she decided that Stieglitz, not Strand, was the man for her. Her responses to Strand make his struggle over the war clear. For further discussion, see Richard Whelan, *Alfred Stieglitz: A Biography* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1995), pp. 387–88, 397–98.
 147. Paul Strand to Alfred Stieglitz, September 15, 1917, p. 2 (Beinecke).
 148. Randolph Bourne, "Below the Battle," *Seven Arts*, July 1917, pp. 270–77. Evidently Strand wrote to Bourne twice about this article saying it had helped him define his own thoughts [about the war]. See Edward Abrahams, *The Lyrical Left: Randolph Bourne, Alfred Stieglitz, and the Origins of Cultural Radicalism in America* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1986), p. 88, and Randolph Bourne to Paul Strand, August 16, 1917 (Strand Collection).

THE PLATES













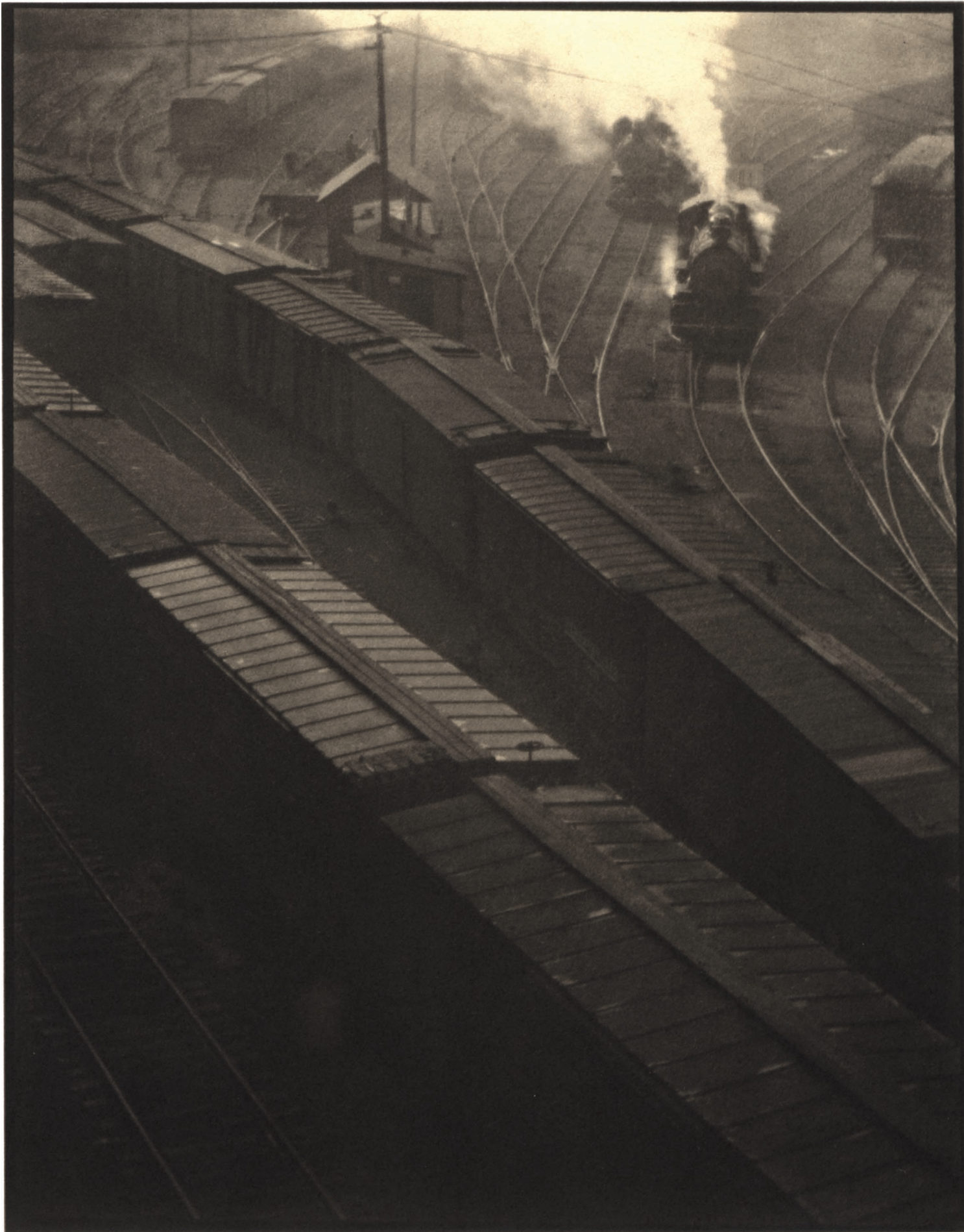


8.





10.





REET LANE

NO SMOKING





14.





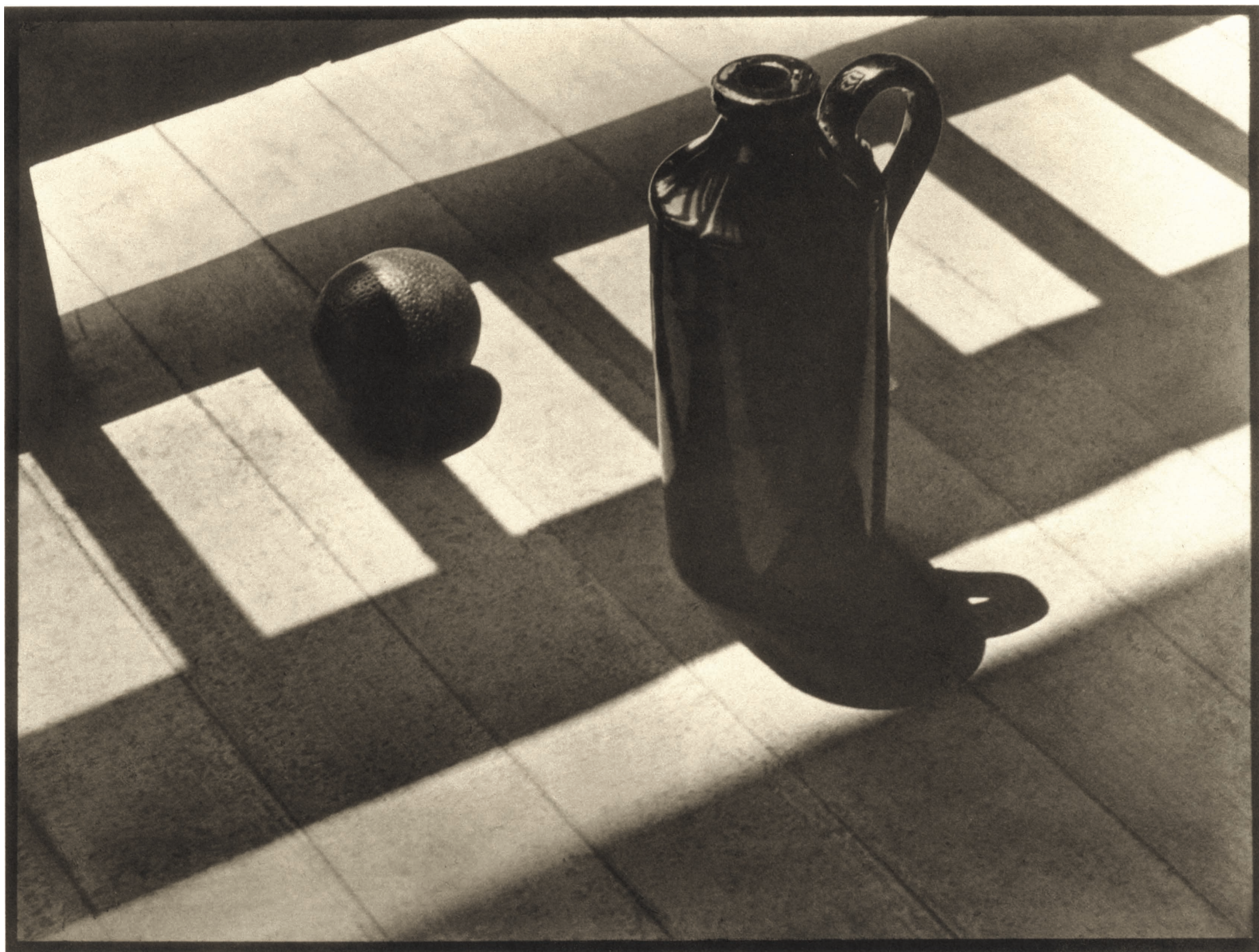




18.









22.

















30.

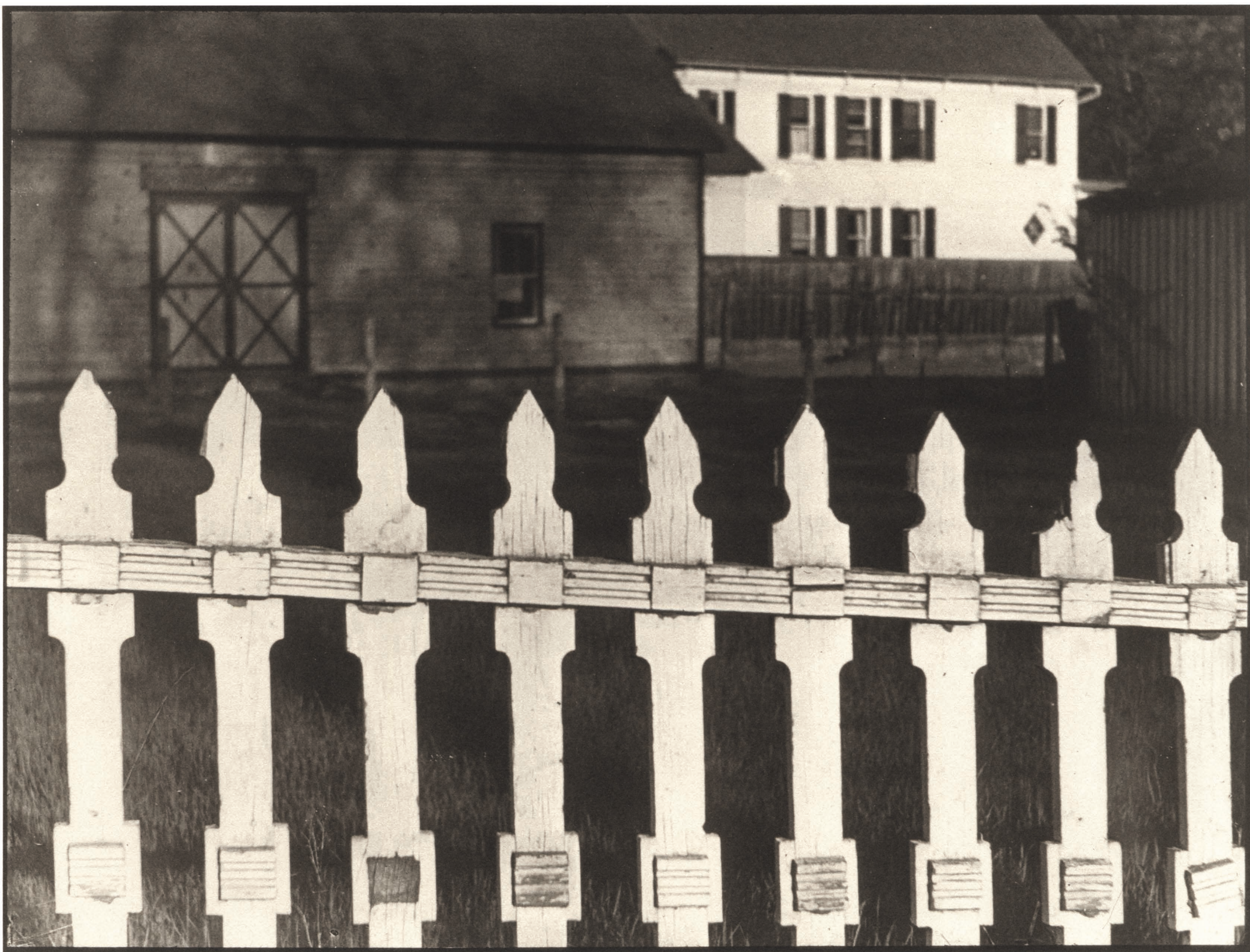




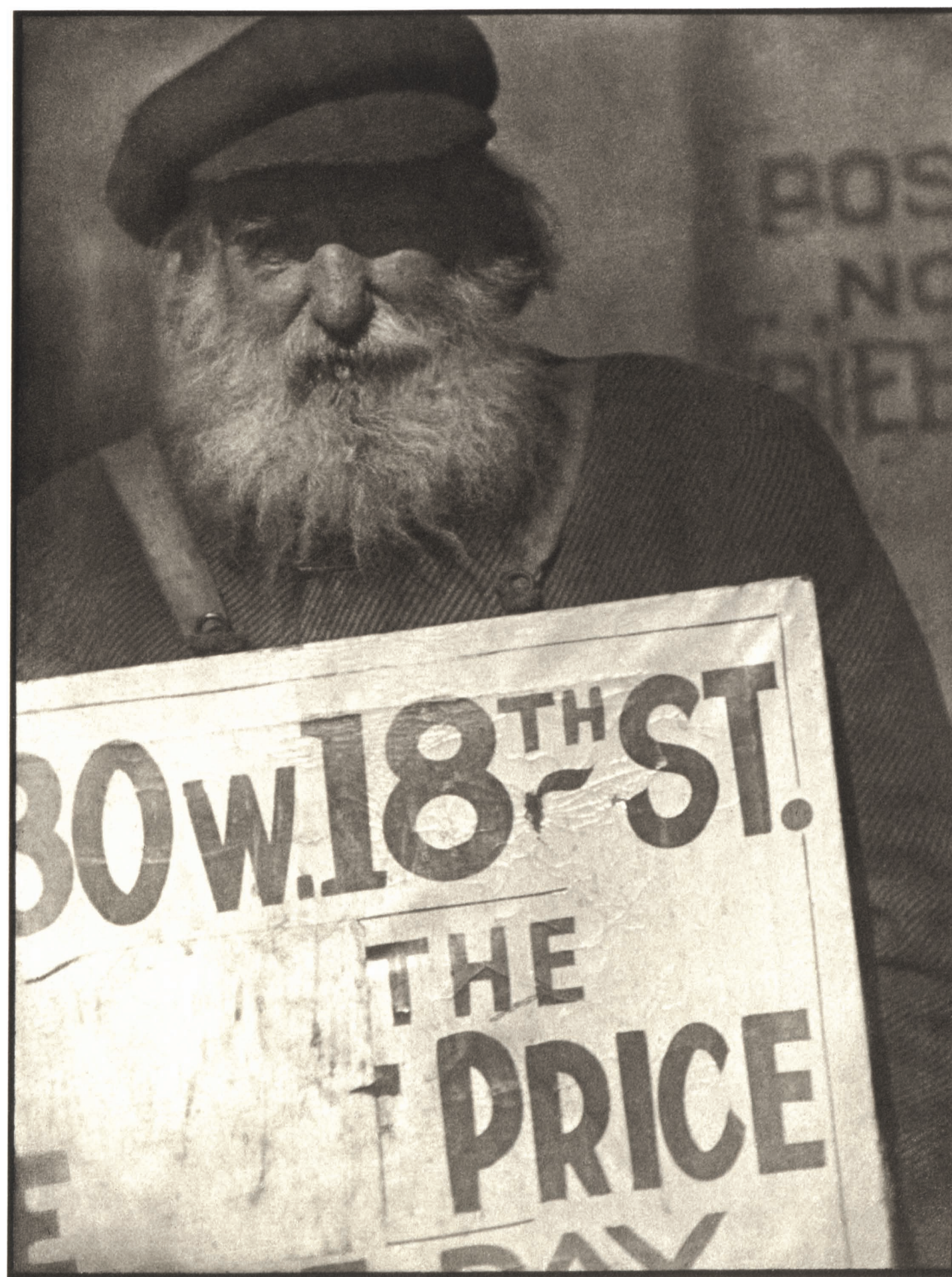




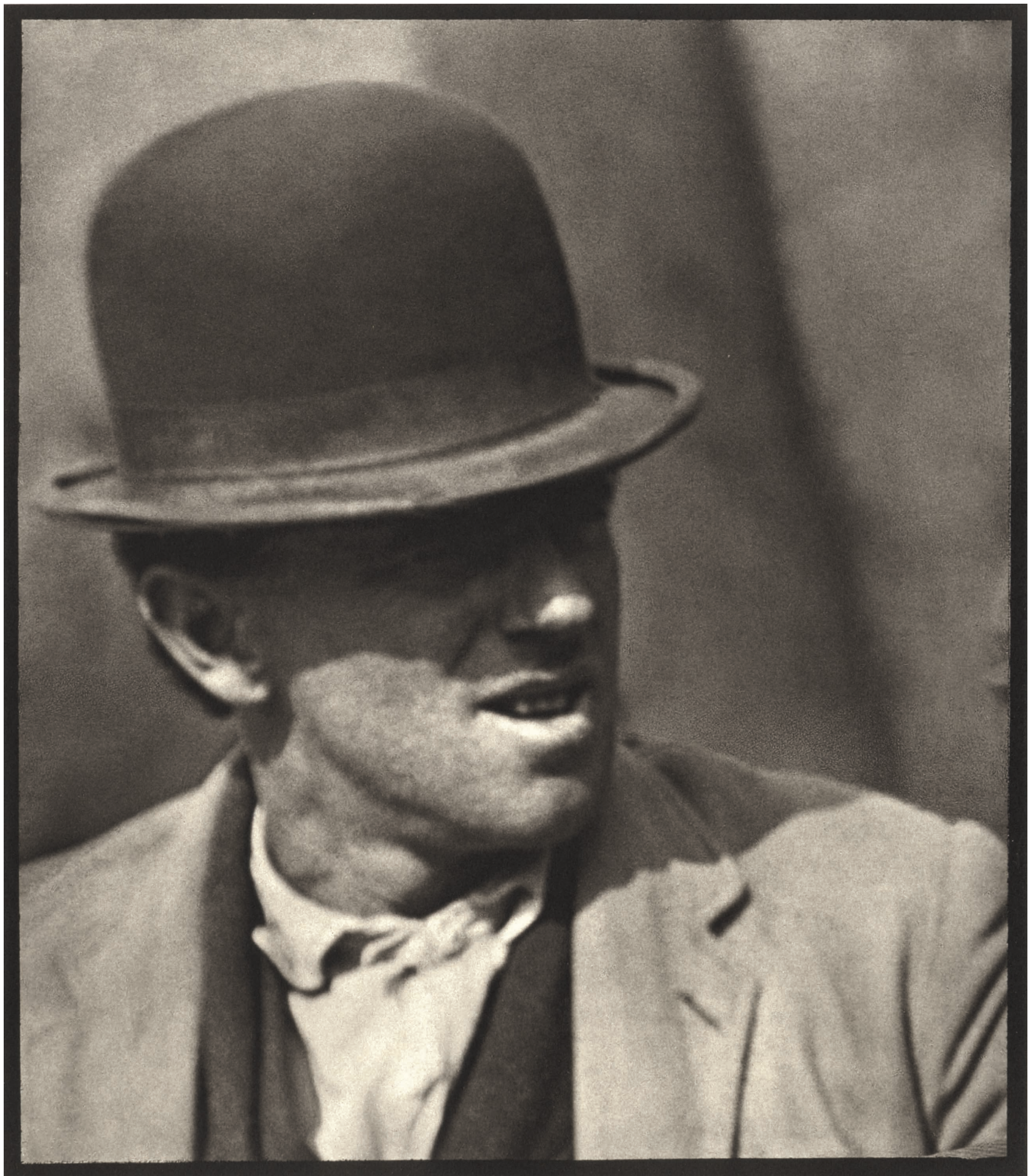






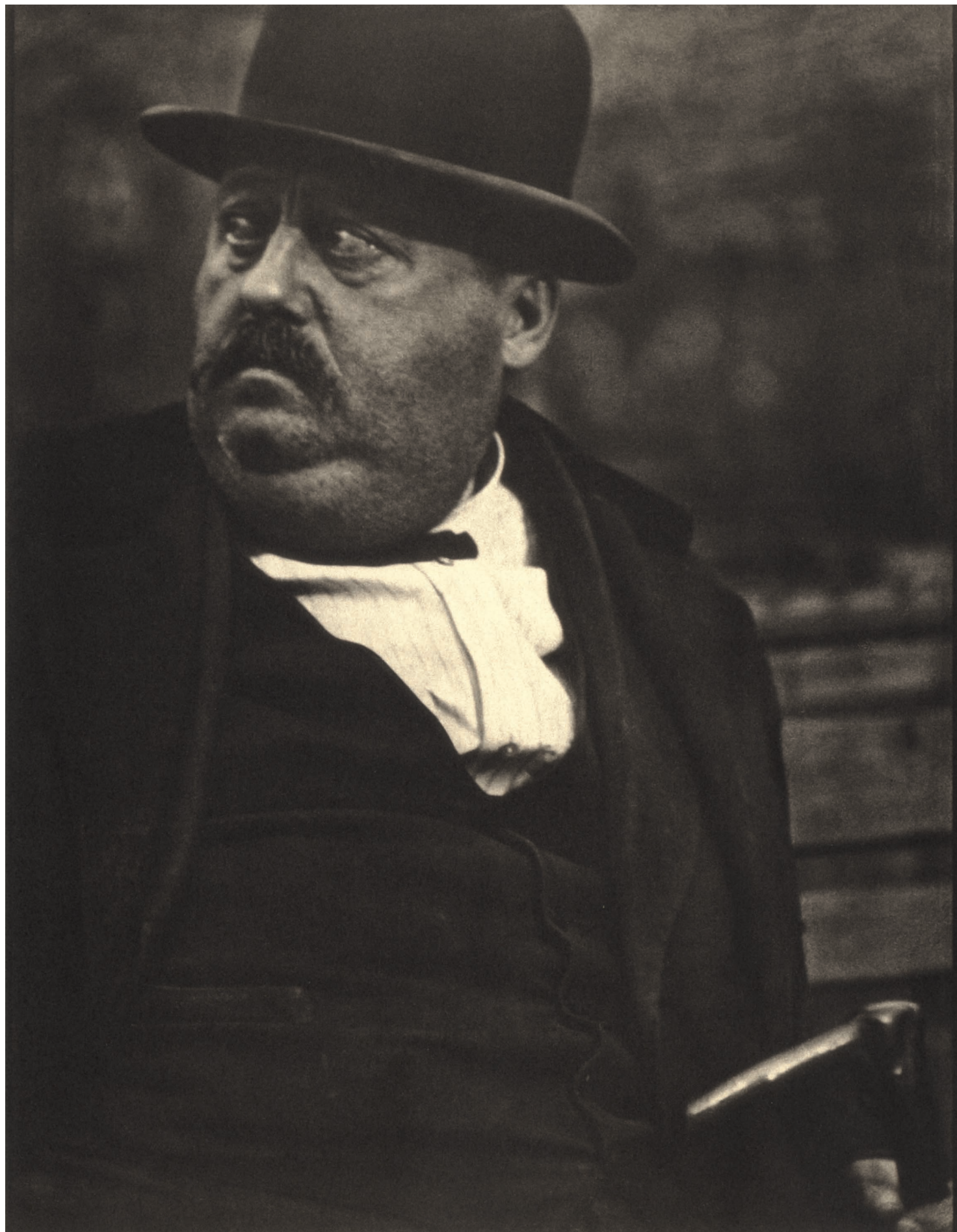


38.

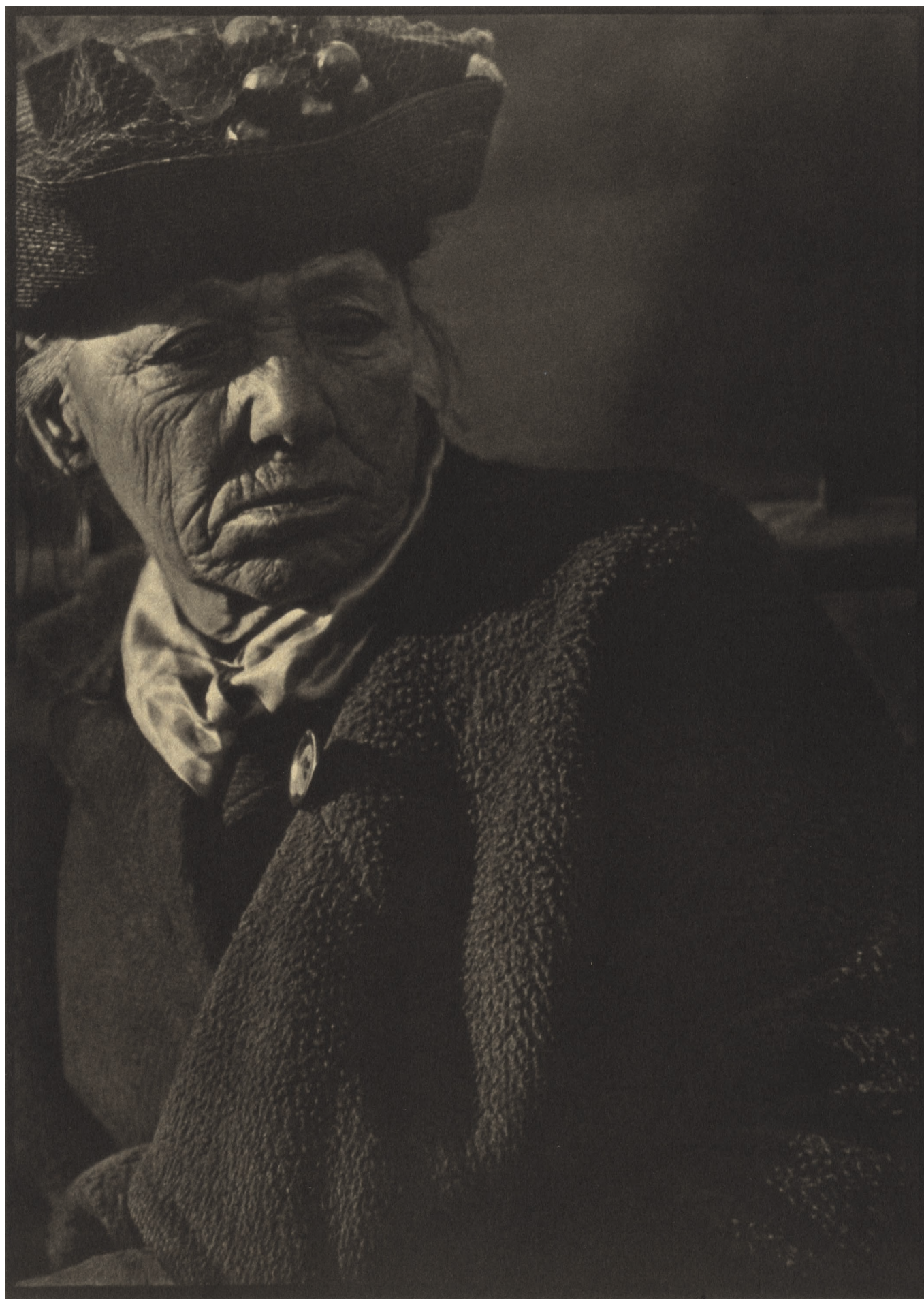




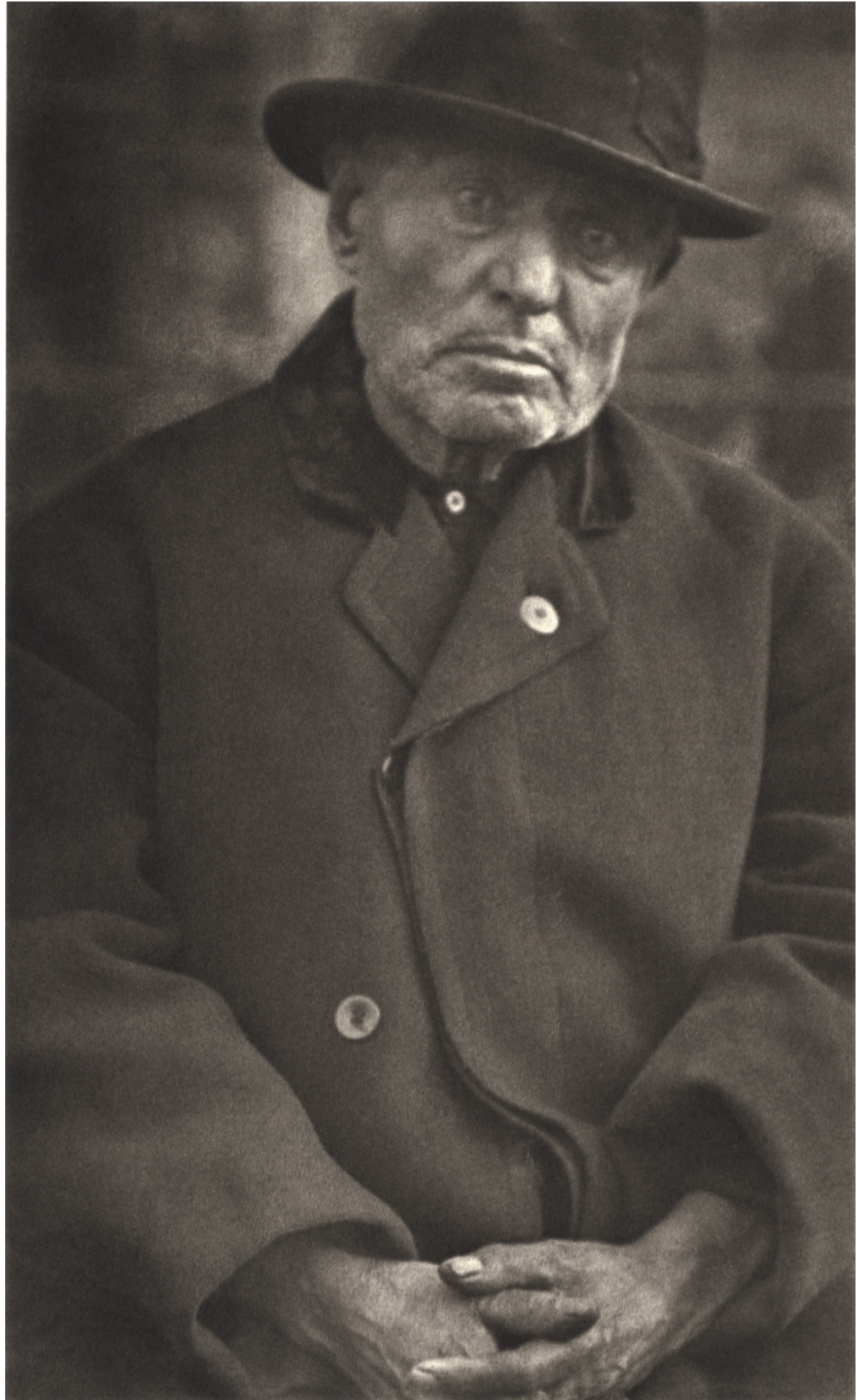


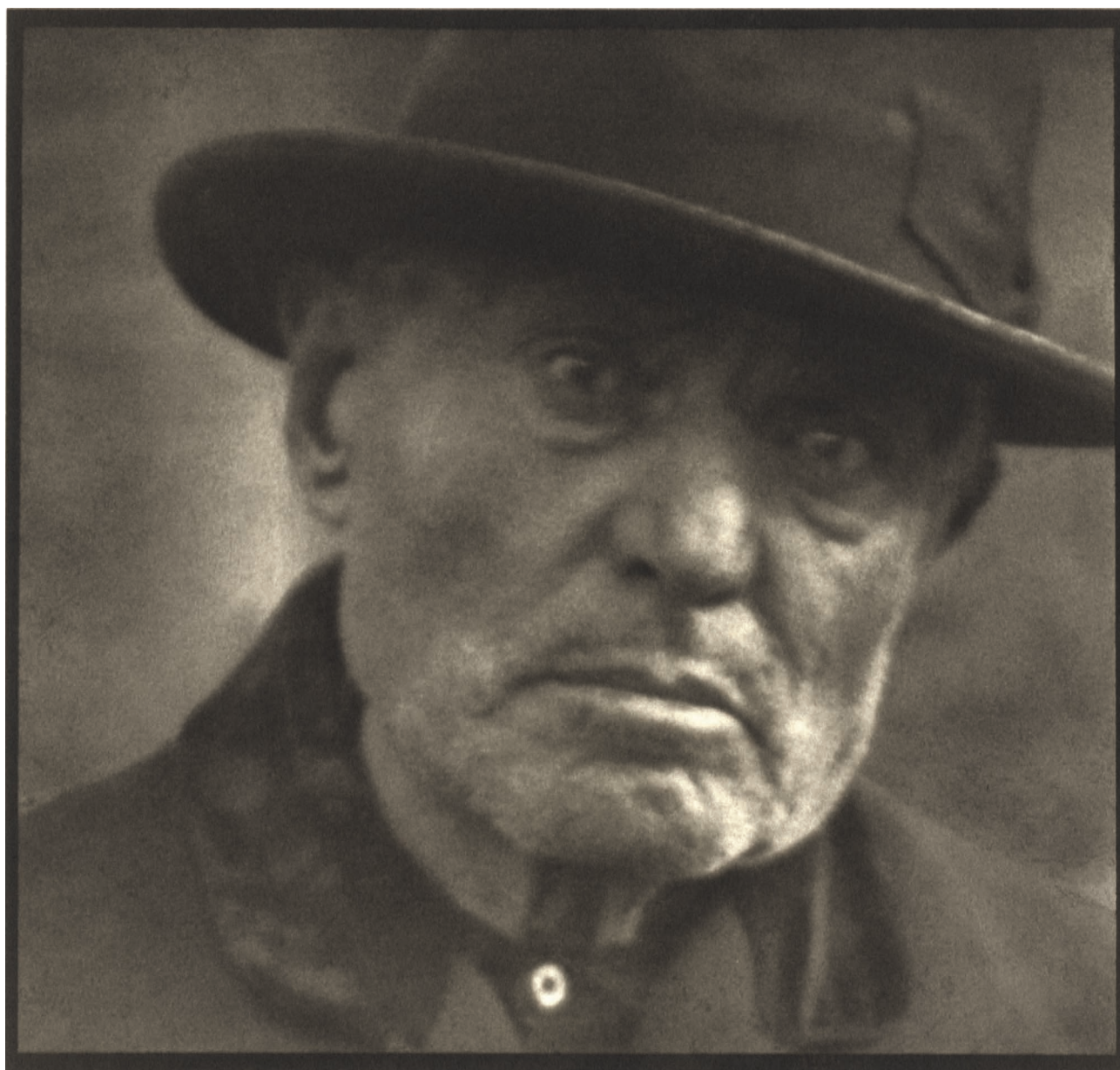












46.

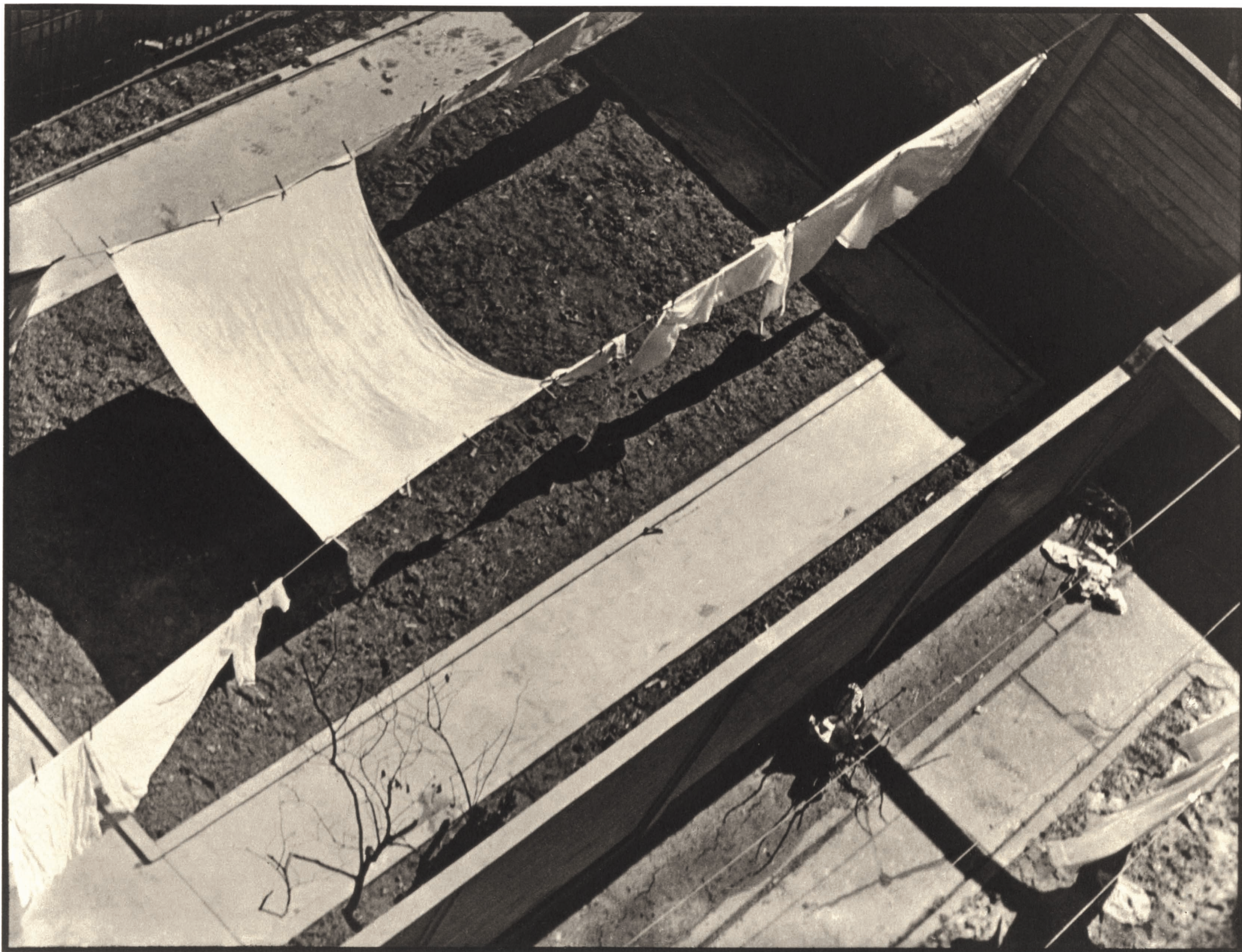






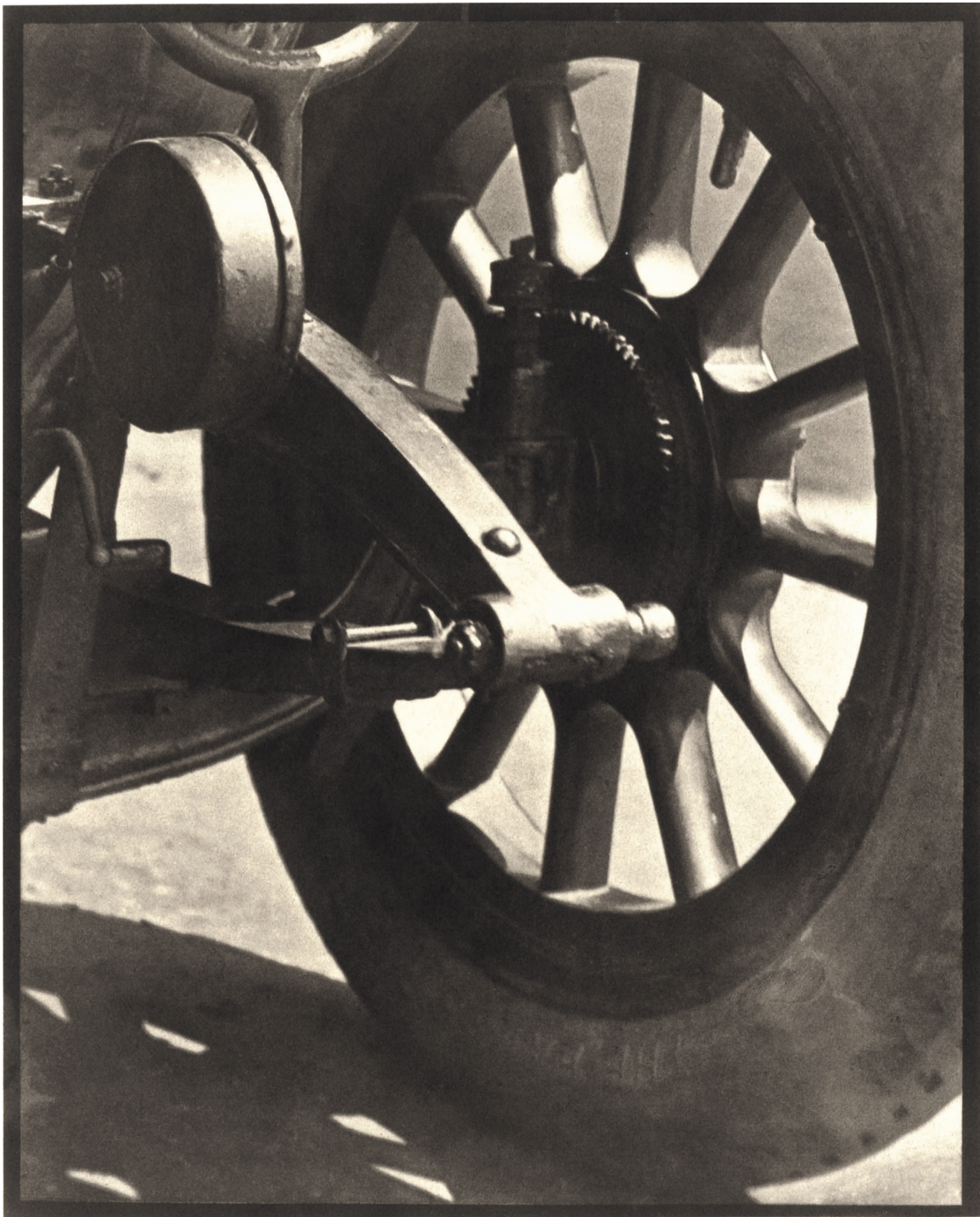












ON THE PRINTS

Paul Strand had a high estimation of craftsmanship learned during his years at the Camera Club; he knew that to make an object with integrity often required much experiment and many steps. Despite lip service to the straight approach outlined by Stieglitz, early in his career Strand ignored the “rules” against manipulation and cropping and used whatever techniques he needed to achieve the desired expression.

To make most of the pictures reproduced in this volume, Strand first photographed the scene on a $3\frac{1}{4} \times 2\frac{1}{4}$ -inch glass-plate negative in a hand-held English Ensign camera equipped with a Smith semi-achromatic soft-focus lens. In the club’s dark-room he developed the negative and from it made a lantern slide, which is a positive on glass. To rework areas of the image—to tone down or heighten a detail, to remove unwanted intrusions, or to add his monogram—he would mark with pencil on the lantern slide or a piece of ground glass, which he would tape to the slide.¹ Strand then projected the positive slide, or the slide and ground glass sandwich, to create an 11 x 14-inch glass negative on which he sometimes made further markings before contact-printing it directly on a large sheet of platinum paper.

Platinum was the preferred paper for art photographers because of its presumed permanence and long tonal scale. Strand wanted that beautiful scale of values, and he appreciated the way the image is incorporated into the paper, like a stain. “You had the feeling of this enormous rich scale into which the eye could move without there being any sense of its being on top of something,” Strand later said.² If he wanted to change the characteristic blue-black tones of platinum, he added other metals known for their coloristic effects. Mercury made the resulting print more tawny, while gold produced violet under-

tones. Given the expense of printing with precious metals, as well as the labor of the intermediate steps required to create a large, printable negative, Strand in this period almost never made more than a single finished print of each image. He usually mounted the prints on Japanese rice paper and signed the mount below the right corner of the print with his name and the date, in pencil. He cut the windows of the overmats in Japanese vellum to reveal the black border he intentionally left on the prints.³ The omission of borders, as on the sides of *Wall Street*, represents an artistic decision, in this case presumably to enhance the open-ended, lateral flow of the picture’s movement.

Occasionally Strand made two prints of an image, as with *City Hall Park* (plate 14), *Fifth Avenue* (plate 16), and also *Wall Street*. The two prints of *Wall Street* allow us to see the sorts of exquisite distinctions Strand could make in his expressive palette. The mercury-toned print (plate 18) has a charge of high energy, as of sunshine or morning urgency. Shown at 291, this print was acquired by Harold Greengard, Strand’s high-school friend who worked on Wall Street.⁴ Through changes in hue and contrast, the incredibly powerful platinum print (reproduced on page 159) has a perceptibly slower tempo and a solemn, ominous mood. The political content of the picture is more evident in this print.⁵

When the manufacture of platinum paper was interrupted in the fall of 1916 owing to a war-related platinum shortage in England, Strand used a substitute paper with the brand-name Satista. Like true platinum paper Satista had a soft surface, albeit with less nap, and was printed in the same fashion. In color it had a taupe cast with greenish undertones. Unfortunately, the chemistry of Satista—based on silver, platinum, and iron salts—was not as stable as platinum, and virtually all the

prints on this material have lost some of their original density. As Strand's tiny retouching marks did not fade to the same degree, some Satista prints have an unintended mottled effect.

Most of the prints from the period before World War I remained in the artist's hands until the end of his life. Stieglitz retained six, which he gave to The Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1933 and 1949. Like Greengard, Kurt Baasch also owned one of the great *Camera Work* photographs, *Portrait, Washington Square Park* (plate 43), as well as the portrait Strand made of him in several printings (figure 11); these were acquired by the J. Paul Getty Museum in 1989. The year before Strand's death in 1976, his wife discovered a cache of several dozen early prints in a Manhattan storage vault. Dispersed by the artist's estate over the past twenty years, these unique, early prints have filtered into public and private collections around the world.

This book and the exhibition that accompanies it are based on the original vintage prints in every case except for the images reproduced as plates 35, 37, and 40. As vintage prints of these photographs could not be found, a modern platinum print from the original glass positive in the Paul Strand Archive was substituted for plate 35, and photogravures from *Camera Work* were used as sources for plates 37 and 40.

When the medium or date provided for the prints differs from previous publications, the difference generally reflects

more specific knowledge. Prints previously thought to be palladium turned out to be Satista, pictures thought to be of urban workers were revealed to be Connecticut farmers, and so forth. If Strand did not write the date on the mount, as was the case with most signed prints, the dates given represent our best estimate.⁶

1. Richard Benson pointed this out to the author. Strand's taste for the monogram dates to approximately 1913–14; evidently he lost interest in it by 1915. The soft halo around the pedestrian striding to the right in the lower center of *City Hall Park* (plate 14) is an area reworked in pencil on both the lantern slide and the enlarged glass negative. This handiwork covers an absence in the negative where Strand removed another pedestrian.
2. Tomkins, first interview, insert after p. 2a.
3. Rosenblum, manuscript notes [1975]. See also Homer, notes from a third interview on May 23, 1975: "In matting, Strand thinks his black borders should not be covered up. Can, if you like, leave a thin white gutter (breathing space) around the the total image, including the black borders."
4. Peter MacGill of Pace-MacGill Gallery, New York, acquired the print from the Greengard family in 1985 and sold it to the Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal.
5. See essay, p. 29.
6. For example, Naomi Rosenblum and Sarah Greenough thought that the print reproduced as plate 24 could have been made as late as 1919, when Strand returned from the service and made some still lifes at Twin Lakes using bowls and eggs. However, because of the repetition of elements in this picture and in the one reproduced as figure 25 and because of the organic imbrication of figure 25 with the other images Strand made in 1916 (see figures 25–27), together with the complete absence of any reason to think that the photograph is later than the others, we have dated the image to 1916.



LIST OF PLATES

- Frontispiece: *Pear and Bowls*, 1916
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Maria Morris Hambourg

*This book was set in Centaur,
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