



The Metropolitan Museum of Art BULLETIN

MARCH 1969





Edward Steichen (born 1879), American. Alfred Stieglitz and His Daughter, Kitty. 1905. Platinum print, 9½ x 9 inches. Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 49.55.228

Photographs in the Metropolitan

Photographs have been and continue to be an essential part of the Museum's *Bulletin*. This is the first issue, however, devoted entirely to photography, specifically to the Museum's collection of photographs. This collection is to a great extent unknown, and I hope the illustrations shown here will give some idea of its importance and scope. They will also point out its many weaknesses. The great strength of the collection is in photographs of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth; our aim is to make it as comprehensive as possible. We will keep on collecting the early work that we lack, but we also intend to acquire a fuller representation of recent work.

The beginning of the collection is an interesting and at times amusing story. It is best told by the participants, William Ivins, the Museum's first Curator of Prints, and Alfred Stieglitz, photography's tireless champion. Their accounts follow this note.

During the forty-one years since the first of the several extraordinary Stieglitz gifts, almost five thousand photographs have come to the Museum. It would be virtually impossible to form a comparable collection today, for much of the material in it is unique, and a great deal is so rare as to be almost unobtainable. On this strong foundation we must continue to grow. The collection has been built up through the generosity of donors, and it is only through their continuing help that we will be able to fulfill our aims.

JOHN J. MCKENDRY, *Curator of Prints*

An exhibition entitled Thirty Photographers: A Selection from the Museum's Collections will be on view in the Prints and Drawings Galleries from April 12 through the end of May

ON THE COVER:

Above: Alfred Stieglitz (1864-1946), American. Mrs. Selma Schubart (Stieglitz's sister Emma). 1907. Lumière Autochrome (reversed), 7 x 5 inches. Gift of Miss Georgia O'Keeffe, 55.635.14

Below: Gertrude Käsebier (1852-1934), American. The Picture Book, 1899. Platinum print, 6 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 8 $\frac{3}{16}$ inches. Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 33.43.143

General Cesnola and the Metropolitan

The founder of the Metropolitan Museum was General di Cesnola. The Museum had a small beginning, not in a building in Central Park – but in a small house, mid-town.

After the Museum was built in Central Park and had become an important institution, one fine day General Cesnola's secretary appeared at the Camera Club. It was in the very early nineteen hundreds.

"Mr. Stieglitz?"

It was at the time when I was the moving spirit of the Camera Club, the moving spirit of American photography, that is, when battles for its recognition in a modern sense were raging fiercest.

Those were days that produced real forces, when the museums of Europe called on me to send them what I felt was most representative of American work, when the Photo-Secession was internationally the leader, when whatever terms I demanded from the museums, whether in Europe or at home, were accepted.

The terms were invariably that the group sent should be hung as a unit, separated from all other exhibits and that the group be catalogued as a unit. That the institutions assume all risks, insure all pictures against damage, and the insurance was, when all is considered, pretty steep. Some photographs were insured for as much as five hundred dollars each.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin

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The museums accepted all conditions without a murmur. What was sent proved always to be the focus of the exhibition.

Cesnola's secretary – I'd never met Cesnola personally – said, "Mr. Stieglitz, the general has just received a cable from Turin from Duke Abruzzi – who is at the head of the international art and decoration exhibition which is shortly to open in Turin. The exhibition is to have a section devoted to International Photography." The Duke was a passionate photographer himself. He cabled that his friend Cesnola, who was born in Turin, must, by hook or crook, send at once a collection of Photo-Secession Photographs.

I told the secretary I'd see Cesnola, that Cesnola should designate an hour.

A few hours later I was at the museum in the office of Cesnola – a military looking man, flowing white mustache, white hair, very erect.

Cesnola said, "You know, Mr. Stieglitz, I know nothing about photography and I am told that I must come to you to get what the Duke wants for Turin."

I told the General what my fight for photography had been, still was, and that I would let him have the collection needed for Turin if he, Cesnola, guaranteed that when it came back it would be accepted by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in toto and hung there.

Cesnola gasped. He said, "Why, Mr. Stieglitz, you won't insist that a photograph can possibly be a work of art?"

I asked why his friend, the Duke, was so eager to have our work in an international exhibition devoted to the arts and crafts.

Furthermore I told Cesnola that much that was in the museum even though painted was not necessarily art and that there were certain photographs that I felt were art and could be hung next to any picture in the museum.

He said, "You are a fanatic."

"I am," was my reply, "but time will show that my fanaticism is not completely ill founded."

Cesnola, thinking for a moment, said, "No, I cannot accept your proposition."

"I respect your feelings but I also respect photography quite as much, so cable to your friend he cannot have the pictures."

Cesnola got up from his chair and said, "Is that final?"

"Yes, I have no choice."

"I've been told that you were a madman and now I see it for myself. I'll accept your terms. When can the collection be here?"

"To-morrow," I said.

And so the pictures went to Turin – the Steichens, Käsebiers, Whites, Eugenes, Keileys, Stieglitzes, Coburns and a few others.

One day about six weeks later the museum called up and I was informed that the American collection had received the King's Prize and five of us were each to receive a gold medal. The collection had created a sensation.

Cesnola was made an honorary citizen of Turin – (of course he had sent other things besides photographs).

I didn't think of the medals or of the King's prize but of the victory for photography, for photographs were to be hung in the Metropolitan Museum of Art on an equal basis with the other art expressions.

My life work seemed done, but before the collection had come back Cesnola had died. There was no written agreement and even if there had been a written agreement I wouldn't have insisted on carrying out the letter.

What had happened, happened between Cesnola, director of the museum, and myself. The new director could not have understood and so the spirit would have been lost, and it is ever the spirit that interests me.

The Boston Museum (1922-23) and the Metropolitan Museum (1926)

The doors of the Metropolitan Museum of Art were closed to photography. Billy Ivins, curator of prints of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, often asked me why I wouldn't give some photographs to the museum, primarily prints of my own.

Invariably I told him that as the museum bought paintings and sculpture and etchings and other things, I didn't see why, if photographs were deserving they should not be bought with museum funds.

At this he balked, and nothing ever happened. Finally one day De Forest, who was president of the museum, and Billy Ivins, appeared in the Intimate Gallery. They had become aware that the Boston Museum, that most conservative and possibly best museum in the country, had opened its doors to photography, that is to a collection of my photographs. It was through Coomaraswamy's interest in photography and his insistence, backed up by Lodge, both curators of Oriental Art in the Boston Museum, that the ultra-conservative trustees of that institution finally opened its doors. It was a case once more of a museum "not having any money," – but here was

a chance through their initiative to see my photographs hung on an equal basis with the black and white work of Goya and Dürer and others, and to see whether or not such photographs in that company would keep their identity.

In time the photographs were hung in the museum, flanked on one side by Goyas and on the other side by Dürers. I didn't see the exhibition but I received letters telling me about it, and saying, "You ought to see how your photographs stand up and sing."

Now it is not myself that I'm interested in but it is photography and its significance, its maltreatment, the stupidity with which it is looked at, even unto this day, that interests me.

De Forest and Ivins had come to tell me that the Metropolitan would open its doors to photography if I were ready to present it with a collection of my own work, similar to the prints I had given to the Boston Museum.

Again I heard "there was no money." I should have a heart. Framing the prints sent to Boston cost me three hundred dollars. Of course, Boston did not insist on frames, but I did. I wanted to protect my prints, presented in my own way and no other.

So, were I to give a collection to the Metropolitan it would mean another outlay of three hundred dollars for frames and it should be remembered that as I had but very little money, and but little time for my own photography I hadn't many prints to give away.

I told De Forest and Ivins I'd consider the matter and would let them hear from me.

I was very ill that summer. Suddenly the thought struck me that the prints should be given to the Metropolitan. In this way the Metropolitan would open its doors to photography. That was after all my chief aim. I was told by De Forest and Ivins that in no other way could they plead the case of photography before the trustees to start a photographic section in the Print Department.

I gave the prints in the names of people who at various times had given or sent me monies to be used for the work I was doing at 291 and the Intimate Gallery. The monies received by me I gave to painters, sculptors, literary people, a dancer and other workers in the arts. I also gave the donors a full equivalent of my own prints.

I eventually wrote to Billy Ivins that I was ready to act, that these individuals should be recognized publicly for their generosity. As for myself – it was not because the museum wanted my prints but because the Metropolitan was ready to open its door to photography.

Duly I was informed that it had happened, – that the trustees would accept the collection and install it in the museum. I have never gone there to see my prints.

The collection in Boston I saw in 1931. It had been kept in its original immaculate condition. It was a wonderful day, that day in Boston. All of nature, above all the sky, seemed to be singing.

The prints seemed part of that singing.

Twice a Year, 1940-1941

WILLIAM M. IVINS, JR. :

Photographs by Alfred Stieglitz

Mrs. Rebecca S. Strand, Mrs. Alma Wertheim, David A. Schulte, Paul Rosenfeld, and an anonymous friend have presented to the Museum a group of twenty-two photographs by Alfred Stieglitz, which are representative of the various aspects of his work during the last several years. . . . In them the artistic possibilities of photography are shown as in little other work of our day.

The last century has seen the development of photography and photographic process from its first beginnings in the laboratory of Niépce to its present status as one of the most important means of making visual records that has ever been known. Today available to all the world and so common and so cheap that it is taken as matter of course and without thought, photography has become as integral a part of our actual life as printing (with which socially and economically it is so closely allied), and the reading and writing that come from it. It is hardly overstating the case to say that it has brought about an even greater revolution in our visual knowledge and practice than printing did in our verbal knowledge and practice. As a means of conveying information, it is, within its rather broad limitations, more subtle, more accurate, and more easily handled than anything that has hitherto been known. Just as it is an integral part of our news-gathering mechanisms, so it is integral to our scientific thought, being the tool that records everything, from the position of stars so distant that they are not visible to the eye down to the tracks of alpha and beta particles which are so small that they are not visible to the eye. In other words, not only has it pervaded all of our daily business and practical life, but it has made possible the investigation and testing out of the theories and problems that under the catch names of relativity and quanta lie at the very bases of our modern philosophies and metaphysics of science.

Until photography and its derivative processes made their appearance it was impossible for a human being to make a picture of anything that did not tell more about the man who made the picture than it did about the things represented in the picture. For the first time was made possible such a thing as an objective picture which could be used as a scientific datum with respect to the object depicted. One remembers hearing it said that “the camera does not lie.” Because of this and because of the fact that all the world took to making photographs in the most casual and unthinking and unseeing way, it came about that photography acquired a reputation for being a wholly inartistic thing. And there is no question that only the most infinitesimal residuum of the photographs made could by any possibility be regarded as having even the slightest trace of any artistic quality. But in this, photography resembles speech and the words of which it is composed. Merely because less than a hundredth of one per cent of the words written and printed every day have any literary or poetic merit, people do not take the attitude that ordered words are necessarily incapable of having such merits. In the course of a great many thousands of years of practice in the use of words people have learned that they are capable of being used artistically. Photography, however, is as yet, at one and the same time, too youthful and too useful a pursuit for men to have realized its possibilities aside from those of mere utility. Today it is still a medium the various applications of which have to be worked out and developed. That it is capable of being turned to definitely artistic uses is none the less demonstrated beyond any question in these photographs made by Mr. Stieglitz, who is to be regarded as one of the pioneers in opening up a new artistic vision.

It has often been urged against the claims which from time to time have been put forth for photography as an artistic medium that in photography there is no creation in the sense in which there is creation in painting or sculpture, the taking of raw inchoate material and endowing it with form and character. This, however, is one of those arguments which are only half thought out. The welter of shapes and surfaces in which we live and over which our eyes continually play is even more inchoate than the sculptor's block of stone or the painter's box of pigments. To reduce part of these churning insignificant contours and textures to order and character through the lens of the camera requires a sharpness and sensitiveness of sight and an alertness of recognition which are not only essentially artistic but of the very essence of creative artistry. The point where sight crosses the line

from mere mirroring reflection to purposive recognition of order (or, as the psychologists would say, to apperception) is the point where artistry as distinct from mere handicraft makes its appearance, for this purposive recognition of order is neither more nor less than creation, the impress of character.

Mr. Stieglitz has shown that in the hands of the proper person photography is as apt a tool as any other for recording this recognition of order and character. And for having done it he deserves a recognition that as yet is denied only because of habits formed prior to his demonstration.

It all goes to show – oh! so many, many things.

The Bulletin of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1929

*Letter from Alfred Stieglitz
to Olivia Paine of the Museum's
Print Department :*

New York City
May 9, 1933

My dear Miss Paine,

When you came to An American Place and asked me whether I'd be willing to send my collection of photographs to the Metropolitan Museum of Art instead of destroying it as I had decided to do even though I knew that there was no such collection in the whole world and that it was a priceless one, I told you that the museum could have it without restrictions of any kind provided it would be called for within twenty four hours. You called me up on the phone within an hour and told me that the museum wagon would be down the next day to get it. This happened. I herewith tell you that the collection is given to the museum if it should decide to accept it without any restriction whatever.

The collection represents the very best that was done in international pictorial photography upwards of seventy odd years. Over two hundred and fifty of the prints were exhibited at some time or other in the art galleries of Europe and in some of the American art galleries. There are many priceless prints not existing in duplicate.

The collection as it stands cost me approximately fifteen thousand dollars. This includes the cost of storage for years. In the collection sent you there are what might be termed some duplicates. In reality there are but few of such. What might seem duplicates to you are in reality different methods of printing from one and the same negative and as such become significant prints each with its own individuality. Frequently similar differences exist in photographic prints from one negative as appear in different pulls from one etching plate – differences in paper, differences in impression, etc. etc., giving particular value to each pull.

In case the museum accepts the collection I shall be only too glad at a future date to come to the museum when Mr. Ivins returns and go through the same with him and you and select what I think should go into the museum's files and which prints might be discarded. Still Mr. Ivins may decide to discard none, for all the prints sent were at one time or another of importance or I should not have incorporated them in the collection.

I might add here that a year or so ago Mr. Ivins expressed the wish that I should present the collection to the museum but at that time I did not know whether I could afford such a gift. To-day it is not a question of being able to afford to make such a gift but the question of how I can continue to physically take care of it for I am a poor man as far as finances are concerned and therefore I decided to destroy the collection so as to get rid of storage charges rather than to go out and try to place the prints piecemeal or in toto. I am telling you this so that you and your museum trustees can understand the facts as they exist. I might add that the collection contains about fifty Steichens and fifty Clarence Whites and fifty Frank Eugenes, all very rare examples of these internationally famous American artists in photography. There are furthermore the very rare French prints and Austrian prints, German prints and English prints together with other famous American prints.

The collection naturally does not include any of my own work since it is a collection I have made of the work of others. The museum has a collection of my own work.

Sincerely yours,

Alfred Stieglitz



Joseph-Nicéphore Niépce (1765-1833), French. Reproduction of an engraving of George, cardinal of Amboise. 1826. Photo- gravure etched on pewter, 7¾ x 9½ inches. David Hunter McAlpin Fund, 52.524

Niépce became the first man to make a permanent solar image and invented the process of photoengraving. His exposures took several hours. The exposed metal plates were sent to an engraver who incised the lines and pulled proofs as from an ordinary etching plate.



Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre (1787-1851), French. The Artist's Studio. 1837. Modern photograph of the original daguerreotype in the Société Française de Photographie, Paris, 6¾ x 9⅞ inches. Gift of the Museum of Modern Art

Daguerre, a painter, was for a time a partner of Niépce, and his daguerreotypes were a modification of Niépce's heliographs. His exposure time was shorter – but it could still be as long as fifteen to thirty minutes – and the image did not appear on the plate until “brought out” by mercury vapor. Since they were positives, daguerreotypes could be reproduced only by rephotography or drawing.



William Henry Fox Talbot (1800-1877), British. Lacock Abbey. 1840. Photogenic drawing, 6⅞ x 7 inches. Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 36.37

Fox Talbot succeeded in making paper light-sensitive, and upon exposure he obtained a negative image, which he was able to partially preserve with chemicals. Still, most of these prints were so unstable they faded when exposed to light. But in 1839 Fox Talbot adopted the discovery of Sir John Herschel of a more permanent fixative, “hypo,” and made his first positives from his negative prints.

In 1840 Fox Talbot went on to devise a new process called “calotype,” in which the exposure time was shortened to as little as a minute and the image “developed” outside of the camera in a chemical bath.



Albert Sands Southworth (1811-1894) and Josiah Johnson Hawes (1809-1901), American. Lemuel Shaw (1781-1861). Before 1860. Daguerreotype, 8½ x 6½ inches. Southworth & Hawes - I. N. Phelps Stokes Collection of Early American Daguerreotypes, 38.34

ON SOUTHWORTH AND HAWES:

Chief Justice Shaw came to sit, and while waiting for the preparation of the plate, he happened to stand under the skylight in such a manner that his rugged features were brought out with striking power. They begged him to remain as he was, and hurrying for plate and camera, they secured this great portrait.

The Boston Evening Transcript, 1888

Gettysburg: Wheatfield in which General Reynolds was shot. Mathew Brady is standing in the foreground. Reproduced as a wood engraving in Harper's Weekly, August 22, 1863. Silver print, 6¼ x 8¼ inches. Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 31.65.391



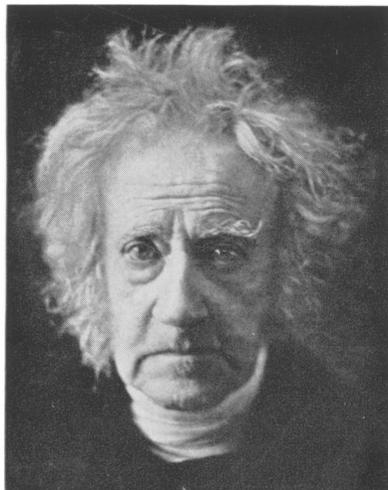
ON MATHEW BRADY:

The public is indebted to Brady of Broadway for numerous excellent views of "grim-visaged war." . . . His are the only reliable records at Bull's Run. The correspondents of the Rebel newspapers are sheer falsifiers; the correspondents of the Northern journals are not to be depended upon, and the correspondents of the English press are altogether worse than either; but Brady never misrepresents. . . .

Brady has shown more pluck than many of the officers and soldiers who were in the fight. He went - not exactly like the "Sixty-Ninth," stripped to the pants - but with his sleeves tucked up and his big camera directed upon every point of interest on the field. Some pretend, indeed, that it was the mysterious and formidable-looking instrument that produced the panic!

Humphrey's Journal, 1861-1862, quoted in Mathew Brady, Historian with a Camera, by James D. Horan. © 1955 by James D. Horan. (Used by permission of Crown Publishers)

Julia Margaret Cameron (1815-1879), British. Sir John Herschel (1792-1871). 1867. Copy of a silver print, 10½ x 13½ inches. David Hunter McAlpin Fund, 43.92



JULIA MARGARET CAMERON:

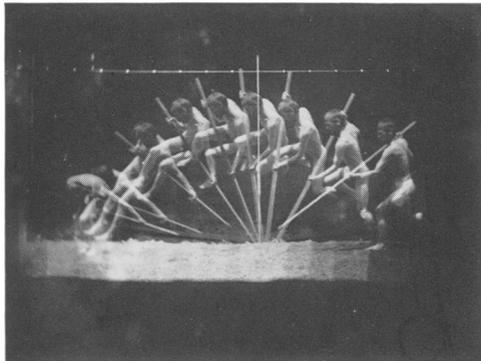
When I have had such men before my camera my whole soul has endeavoured to do its duty towards them in recording faithfully the greatness of the inner as well as the features of the outer man.

Annals of My Glass House (manuscript), 1874, quoted in Julia Margaret Cameron, Her Life and Photographic Work, by Helmut Gernsheim (London, 1948)



Franz Antoine (1815-1886), Austrian. The Photographer's Family. 1850-1875. Silver print, 10 x 14 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches. David Hunter McAlpin Fund, 48.83.19

The work of Franz Antoine is virtually unknown. His photographs of his family reflect the closed atmosphere and tedium that must have been characteristic of so much provincial life in the late nineteenth century.



Thomas Eakins (1844-1916), American. Motion study. 1884-1885. Modern silver print, 4 x 5 inches. Gift of Charles Bregler, 41.1606 (18)

ON EAKINS:

Where Muybridge separated the stages of action like playing cards dealt out for solitaire, Eakins stacked one on top of the other to satisfy his mathematical passion for relations. It was a step towards that series of pictures rapidly replacing each other on one spot which is the movie.

A. Hyatt Mayor, in The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin, 1946



Hilaire-Germain-Edgar Degas (1834-1917), French. Berthe Morisot's Salon - Renoir and Mallarmé. About 1895. Copy photograph, 7 x 5 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches. Gift of Mrs. Henry T. Curtiss, 65.500.1

ON DEGAS:

Paul Valéry, in his book *Pièces sur l'art* (Paris, 1938), said that "Degas loved and appreciated photography in a period when artists disdained it or did not dare to admit that they made use of it. He made excellent ones: I jealously preserve a certain enlargement which he gave me. Near a big mirror, can be seen Mallarmé leaning against the wall, Renoir on a sofa. In the mirror, ghost-like, are seen Degas and his camera, Madame and Made-moiselle Mallarmé. Nine gasoline lamps, and a terrifying quarter-hour of utter immobility, were the conditions for this sort of masterpiece."

Beaumont Newhall, in Image, 1956



Gertrude Käsebier (1852-1934), American. Blessed Art Thou among Women, and The Picture Book. 1897, 1899. Platinum prints, 9 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 5 $\frac{3}{16}$ inches, 6 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 8 $\frac{3}{16}$ inches. Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 33.43.132, 143

ON GERTRUDE KÄSEBIER:

I know of no photographer, at home or abroad, and not too many portrait-painters, who display so much charm of invention. There is always in her work the delight of surprise; not ordinariness, not even a tolerable repetition of motive; but, throughout, a perpetual freshness of conception, as extraordinary as it is fascinating. . . . And the creativeness is not limited to happy choice of pose and gesture; it circulates through all the elements of the picture; giving quality to the scheme of light and shade, to the tone and to the textures; permeating the whole composition and making a generously artistic ensemble.

Charles H. Caffin, in Camera Work, 1903

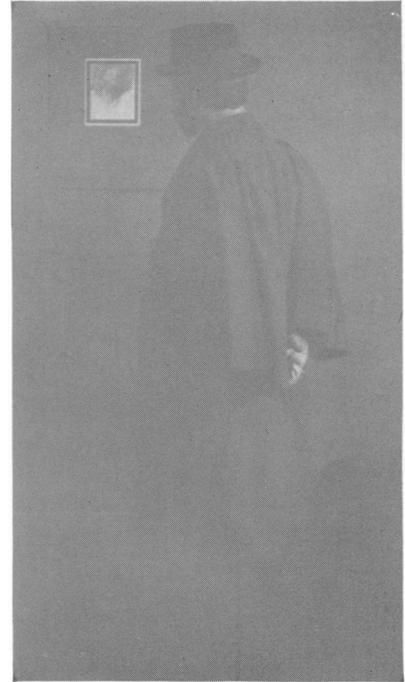




The Seven Last Words is part of a series of 250 negatives, beginning with the Annunciation and ending with the Ascension, that Day took from June through September 1898.

Steichen wrote of it: "Few paintings contain as much that is spiritual and sacred in them as do the 'Seven Words' of Mr. Day. It is a narrow mind indeed that introduces personalities into such a work of art as this. If we knew not its origin or its medium how different would be the appreciation of some of us, and if we cannot place our range of vision above this prejudice the fault lies wholly with us. If there are limitations to any of the arts they are technical; but of the *motif* to be chosen the limitations are dependent on the man – if he is a master he will give us great art and ever exalt himself."

The Photogram, 1901



ALFRED STIEGLITZ:

One day there was a great snow storm. The Flat-Iron Building had been erected on 23rd Street, at the junction of Fifth Avenue and Broadway. I stood spellbound as I saw that building in that storm. I had watched the building in the course of its erection, but somehow it had never occurred to me to photograph it in the stages of its evolution. But that particular snowy day, with the trees of Madison Square all covered with snow, fresh snow, I suddenly saw the Flat-Iron Building as I had never seen it before. It looked from where I stood, as if it were moving toward me like the bow of a monster ocean steamer, a picture of the new America which was in the making. So day after day for several days, while the snow was still covering Madison Square Park, I made snapshots of the Flat-Iron Building.

"In Memoriam: Alfred Stieglitz: Six Happenings (And a Conversation Recorded by Dorothy Norman)," in Twice a Year, 1946-1947



LEFT:

F. Holland Day (1864-1933), American. *The Seven Last Words*. 1898. Platinum print, $3\frac{3}{4} \times 13$ inches. Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 49-55-222

Edward Steichen (born 1879), American. Frederick H. Evans looking at "Father Forgive Them . . ." from *The Seven Last Words* by F. Holland Day. 1900. Platinum print, $7\frac{5}{8} \times 4\frac{3}{8}$ inches. David Hunter McAlpin Fund, 68.688.4

LEFT:

Alfred Stieglitz (1864-1946), American. *The Flat-Iron Building, Winter*. 1903. Photogravure, $12\frac{1}{8} \times 6\frac{5}{8}$ inches. Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 49-55-16

BELOW:

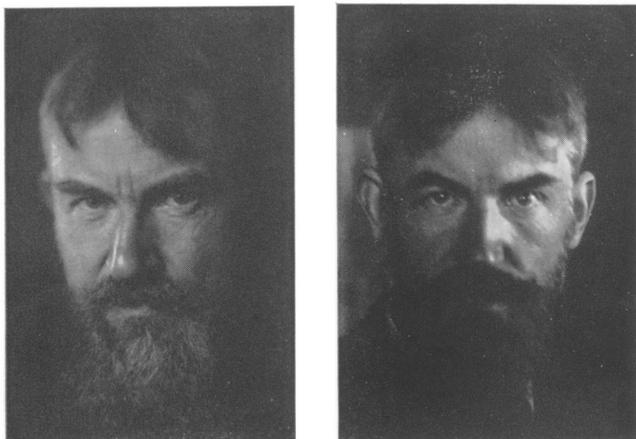
Edward Steichen. *The Flat-Iron Building*. 1905. Platinum and ferroprussiate print, $18\frac{1}{8} \times 15\frac{1}{8}$ inches. Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 33-43-43

RIGHT:

Alfred Stieglitz. *Spring Showers*. 1900. Photogravure, $12\frac{1}{4} \times 5$ inches. Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 49-55-14



George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950), British. Self-portraits. 1904. Platinum print by F. H. Evans, $3\frac{3}{4} \times 2\frac{1}{4}$ inches; aristotype, $5\frac{7}{16} \times 3\frac{11}{16}$ inches. Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 49-55-185, 184



GEORGE BERNARD SHAW:

Critics who have never taken a photograph elaborately explain why the camera can not do what every painter can do, the instance chosen being generally of something that the camera can do to perfection and the painter not at all. For example, one writer has taken quite pathetic pains to demonstrate the inferiority of the camera to the hand as an instrument of portraiture. The camera, he explains, can give you only one version of a sitter: the painter can give you a hundred. Here the gentleman hits on the strongest point in photography, and the weakest point in draughtsmanship, under the impression that he is doing just the reverse. It is the draughtsman that can give you only one version of a sitter. Velasquez, with his skill, had only one Philip; Vandyke had only one Charles; Tenniel has only one Gladstone; Furniss only one Sir William Harcourt; and none of these are quite the real ones. The camera, with one sitter, will give you authentic portraits of at least six apparently different persons and characters. . . . Even when the photographer aims at reproducing a favorite aspect of a favorite sitter, as all artist-photographers are apt to do, each photograph differs more subtly from the other than Velasquez's Philip in his prime differs from his Philip in his age. The painter sees nothing in the sitter but his opinion of him: the camera has no opinions: it has only a lens and a retina.

Camera Work, 1906



Edward Steichen. Cyclamen - Mrs. Philip Lydig. About 1905. Gum pigment print, $12\frac{1}{2} \times 8\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Instructions on the back for making a photogravure plate for Camera Work, 1913: Keep this composition/ make plate size of Rodin portrait / in Rodin number. The light outline around head in this print exag[gerated] / the whole print is a trifle hard. Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 33-43-9

RIGHT:

Clarence H. White (1871-1925), American. Laura Monsarrat. 1905. Gum platinum print, $9\frac{1}{2} \times 6\frac{15}{16}$ inches. Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 33-43-316

ON CLARENCE H. WHITE:

There is never a suggestion of exploiting the sitter, to secure a technical achievement or to pursue a personal notion of his own. It is to the personality of the subject that he looks for suggestion, sets the key of his motive, and attunes, for the time being, his technique. . . . Then he sheds around his subject an atmosphere of spiritual significance that is poignantly alluring.

Charles H. Caffin, in Camera Work, 1908

RAYMOND SARRAT

1905





Edward Steichen. Steeplechase Day, Paris: After the Races. 1905. Gum pigment print, 10⁵/₈ x 11¹/₈ inches. Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 33.43.51

EDWARD STEICHEN:

The sense of timelessness can be rendered with the utmost in optical precision of detail and tone, as well as by the swiftest freezing of an exact instant. Photography records the gamut of feelings written on the human face in its contrasts of hope, serenity, or despair; the beauty of the earth and the skies that man has inherited, and the wealth and confusion that man has created within this inheritance.

Steichen the Photographer, by Carl Sandburg, Alexander Liberman, Edward Steichen, and René d'Harnoncourt, 1961 (Museum of Modern Art)

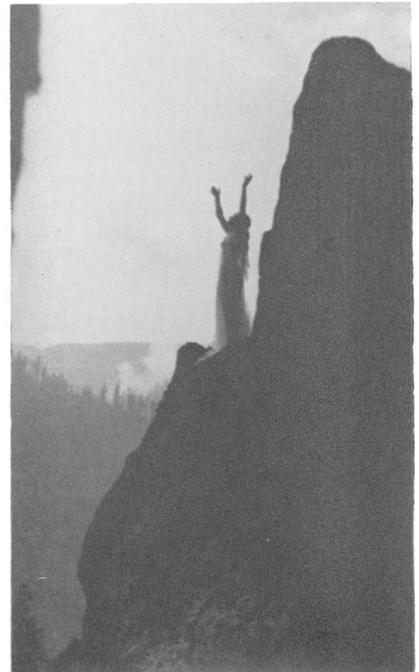




Alvin Langdon Coburn (1882-1966), British. St. Paul's Cathedral, London. 1908. Hand photogravure, 16 x 12 inches. David Hunter McAlpin Fund, 60.649.6

Arnold Genthe (1869-1942), American. After the San Francisco Earthquake. April 1906. Silver print, 5¼ x 9¼ inches. Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 33.43.223

Annie W. Brigman (1869-1950), American. Incantation. 1905. Platinum print, 10⅞ x 6½ inches. Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 33.43.121



ON ANNIE W. BRIGMAN:

Certain of her prints are fraught with that same brooding, elemental feeling that distinguish the speech and gestures of those old viking heroes. While this is the dominant, prevailing characteristic of her work, there are not wanting touches of idyllic, almost lyrical beauty . . .; but always there is mystery and a sense of aloofness in her figures which have the added virtue of never seeming out of place in their setting. In Mrs. Brigman's work, the human is not an alien, has not yet become divorced by sophistication from the elemental grandeur of nature; rather it serves as a sort of climactic point, wherein all that nature holds of sheer beauty, of terror or mystery achieves its fitting crescendo.

J. Nilsen Laurvik, in Camera Work, 1909



Sherril V. Schell (1877-1964), American. Rupert Brooke. 1913. Platinum print, 9 x 7⁵/₈ inches. Gift of Sherril V. Schell, 63.530

SHERRIL V. SCHELL :

I made about a dozen exposures of him that day, the last one a pose that he himself suggested, his face in profile showing his bare neck and shoulders. For this he stripped to the waist, revealing a torso that recalled the young Hermes. This photograph appeared in the 1914 volume of his poems and made quite a sensation.

The Bookman, 1926

RUPERT BROOKE :

Nothing's happened: except that my American photographer has sent me a photograph of me—very shadowy and ethereal and poetic, of me in profile, and naked-shouldered. Eddie says it's very good. I think it's rather silly. But anyhow, I don't look like an amateur popular preacher—as in those others.

And no one will ever be able to put it into an interview, with the words "We want great serious drama" underneath.

Letter to Cathleen Nesbitt, 1913

RIGHT :

Frederick Henry Evans (1852-1943), British. Across the Transept, Westminster Abbey. 1911. Platinum print, 9¹/₂ x 6³/₄ inches. Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 49.55.236

FREDERICK H. EVANS :

. . . the whole . . . should convey the sense of space, dignity, mystery, the quietude that reigns in these noble buildings; the sense of aloofness from the idle-busy life that crowds outside, up to its very doors almost.

Photograms of the Year, 1903

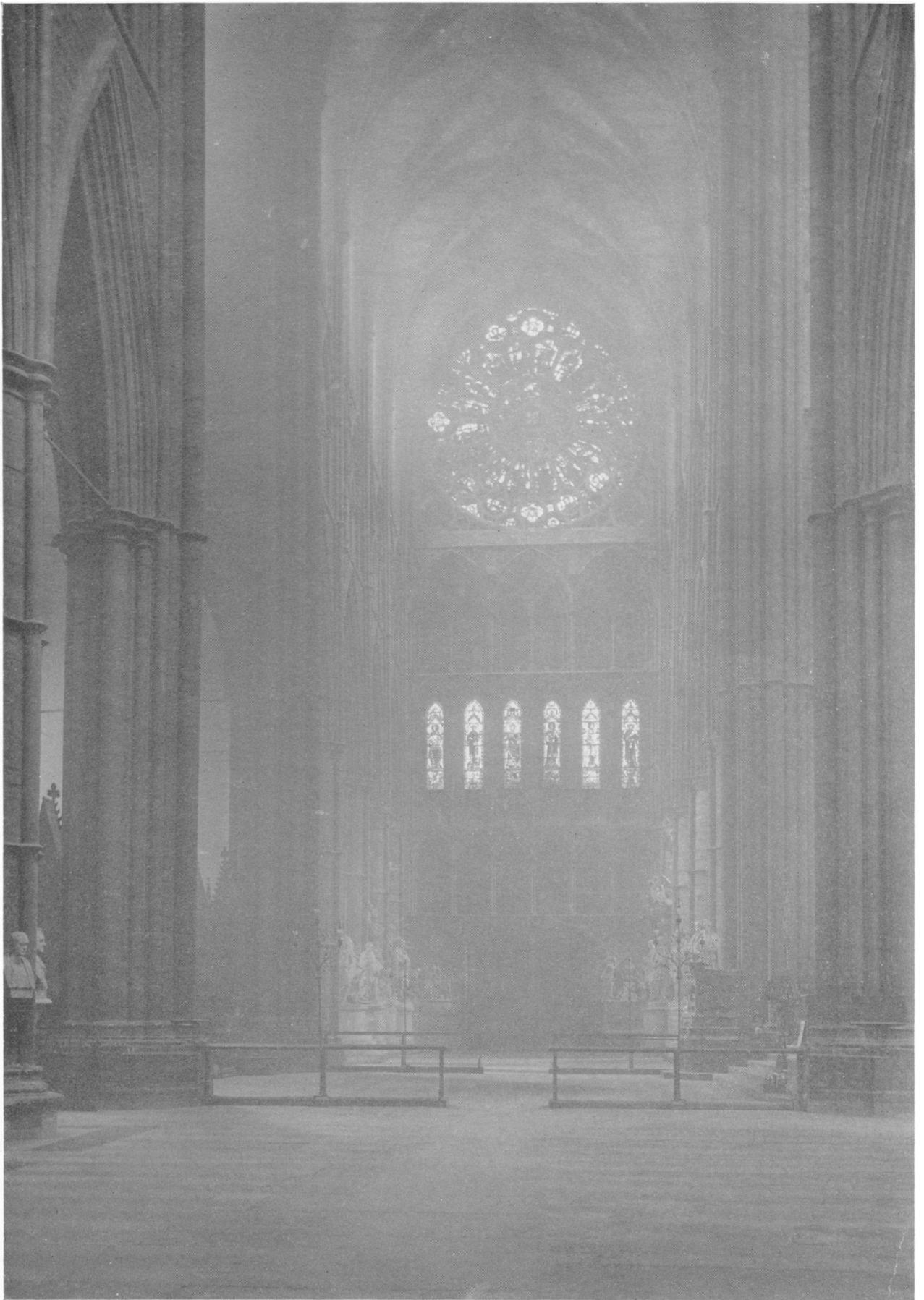


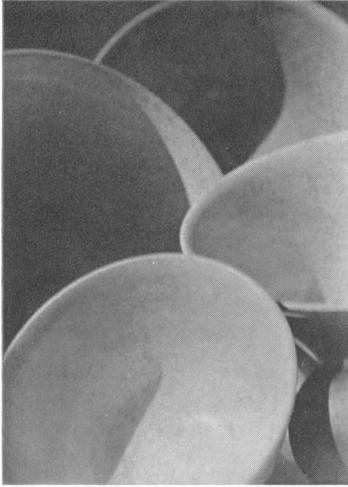
Jean-Eugène-Auguste Atget (1856-1927), French. Shop Front, 3 Quai Bourbon. This shop front is now in the Metropolitan Museum. About 1910. Silver print, 7 x 8⁷/₈ inches. David Hunter McAlpin Fund, 62.548

ON EUGÈNE ATGET :

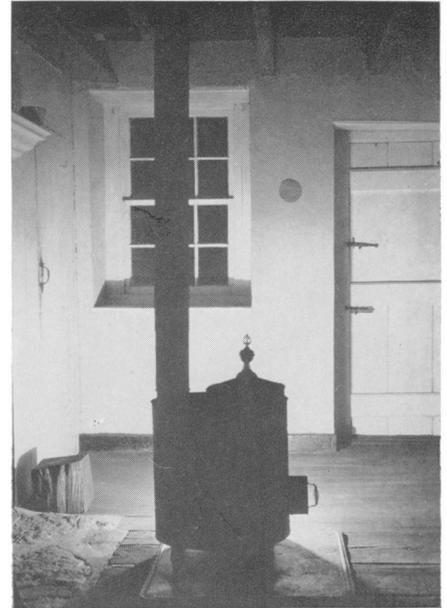
He undertook to photograph whatever startled his imagination. Almost anything served him to make a haunting image—the wash basin of a chambermaid, the Seine beyond winter branches, a rococo park gate clutched in weeds, some battered cobblestones. France thronged too richly to be photographed in individual subjects but collected itself in whole series and sequences such as the statues of Versailles, street vendors, living rooms and dining rooms, sculpture on Gothic churches, portraits of trees, fountains, ironwork, reflections in shop windows, buildings about to be demolished and much beside. . . . Atget's photographs make the best window we have for looking at life in Paris from 1900-1925. Nothing short of the visible world itself was filed in orderly categories for sale in his upstairs studio above his modest sign DOCUMENTS POUR ARTISTES.

A. Hyatt Mayor, in The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin, 1952





Paul Strand (born 1890), American. Bowls. 1916. Platinum print of a copy of a photo-gravure, 13 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches. Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 49.55.317



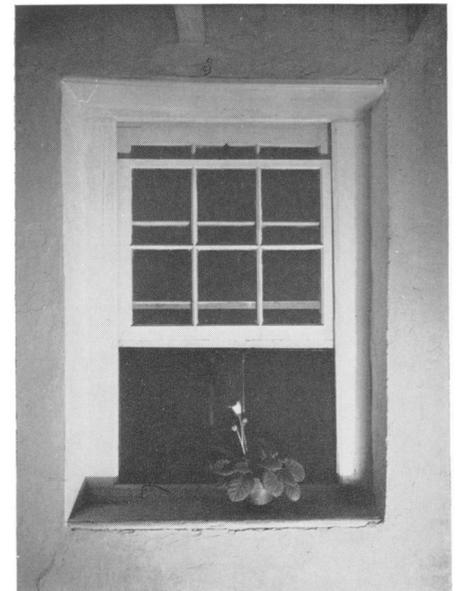
Charles Sheeler (1883-1965), American. Interior with Stove, Doylestown, and Window with Plant. 1917. 9 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 6 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches, 8 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 33.43.259, 260

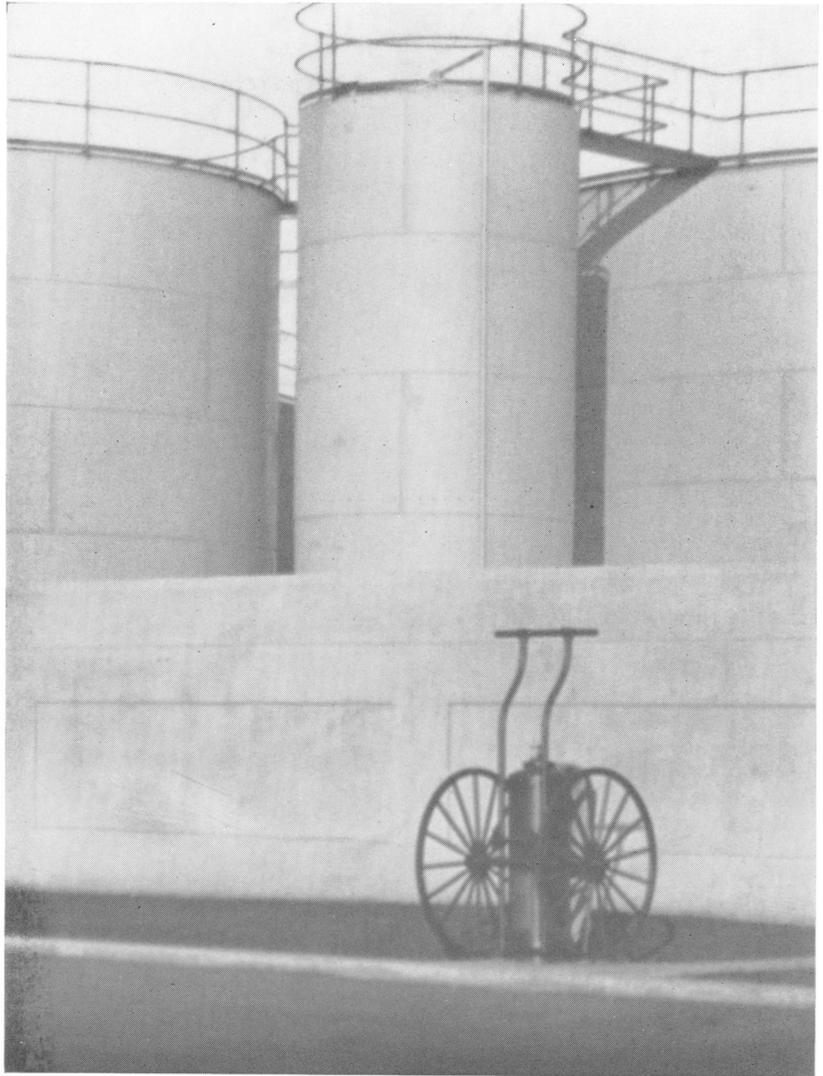
PAUL STRAND:

Photography, which is the first and only important contribution thus far, of science to the arts, finds its *raison d'être*, like all media, in a complete uniqueness of means. This is an absolute unqualified objectivity. Unlike the other arts which are really anti-photographic, this objectivity is of the very essence of photography, its contribution and at the same time its limitation. . . . The full potential power of every medium is dependent upon the purity of its use, and all attempts at mixture end in such dead things as the color-etching, the photographic painting and in photography, the gum-print, oil-print, etc., in which the introduction of hand work and manipulation is merely the expression of an impotent desire to paint. . . .

The photographer's problem therefore, is to see clearly the limitations and at the same time the potential qualities of his medium, for it is precisely here that honesty no less than intensity of vision, is the prerequisite of a living expression. This means a real respect for the thing in front of him, expressed in terms of *chiaroscuro* (color and photography having nothing in common) through a range of almost infinite tonal values which lie beyond the skill of human hand. The fullest realization of this is accomplished without tricks of process or manipulation, through the use of straight photographic methods. It is in the organization of this objectivity that the photographer's point of view toward Life enters in, and where a formal conception born of the emotions, the intellect, or of both, is as inevitably necessary for him, before an exposure is made, as for the painter, before he puts brush to canvas. The objects may be organized to express the causes of which they are the effects, or they may be used as abstract forms, to create an emotion unrelated to the objectivity as such. This organization is evolved either by movement of the camera in relation to the objects themselves or through their actual arrangement, but here, as in everything, the expression is simply the measure of a vision, shallow or profound as the case may be.

Camera Work, 1917





*Johan Hagemeyer (died 1961), American.
Gasoline Tanks. 1926. 8¼ x 6¼ inches.
Estate of Johan Hagemeyer, 62.684.115*

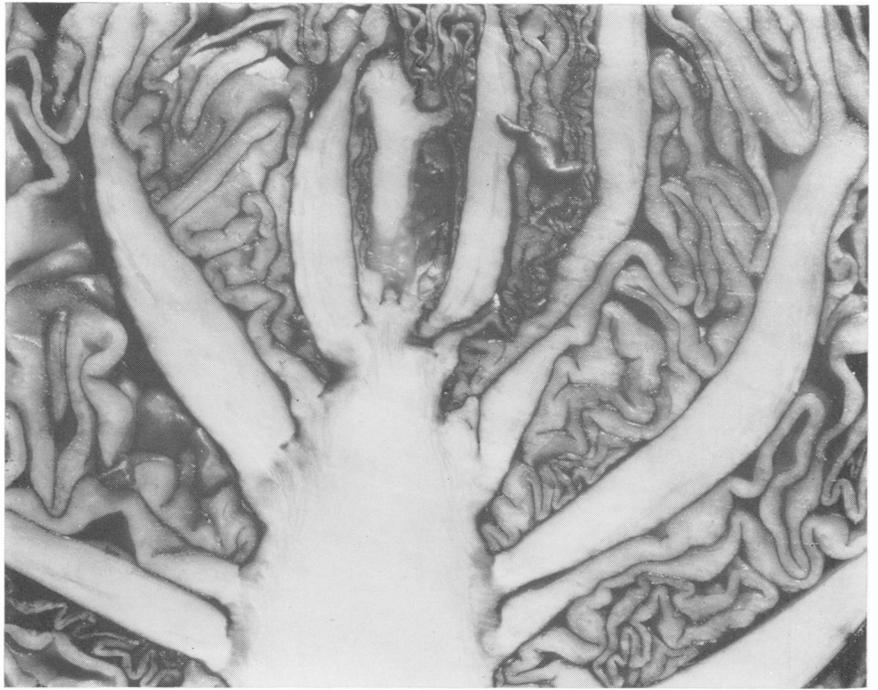


*Walker Evans (born 1903), American.
Dedham, Mass. About 1930. 6¼ x 8¾ inches.
Gift of Lincoln Kirstein, 51.565.3*



LEFT:

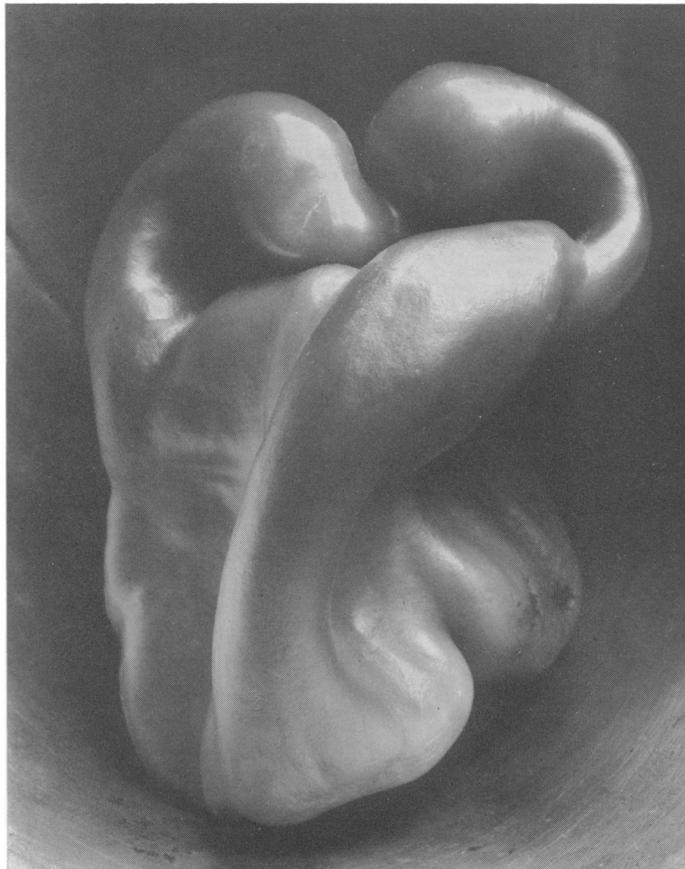
Paul Strand. *Virgin, Oaxaca*. 1933. Hand photogravure, 16½ x 13 inches. David Hunter McAlpin Fund, 40.107 (3)



Edward Weston (1886-1958), American. *Cabbage Halved, and Pepper*. 1930. 7¼ x 9⅜ inches, 9⅜ x 7¼ inches. David Hunter McAlpin Fund, 57.519.22, 11

EDWARD WESTON:

The glorious new pepper Sonya brought me has kept me keyed up all week and caused me to expose eight negatives. . . . But the pepper is well worth all the time, money, effort. If peppers would not wither, I certainly would not have attempted this one when so preoccupied. I must get this one today: it is beginning to show the strain and tonight should grace a salad. It has been suggested that I am a cannibal to eat my models after a masterpiece. But I rather like the idea that they become a part of me, enrich my blood as well as my vision. *The Daybooks of Edward Weston*, edited by Nancy Newhall, 1966 (Horizon Press, in collaboration with The George Eastman House)





Walker Evans. Circus Poster, and South Street, New York. 1936, 1932. 6 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches, 5 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 7 $\frac{3}{16}$ inches. Gift of Lincoln Kirstein, 52.562.16, 5

WALKER EVANS:

The real significance of photography was submerged soon after its discovery. . . . The latter half of the nineteenth century offers that fantastic figure, the art photographer, really an unsuccessful painter with a bag of mysterious tricks. . . .

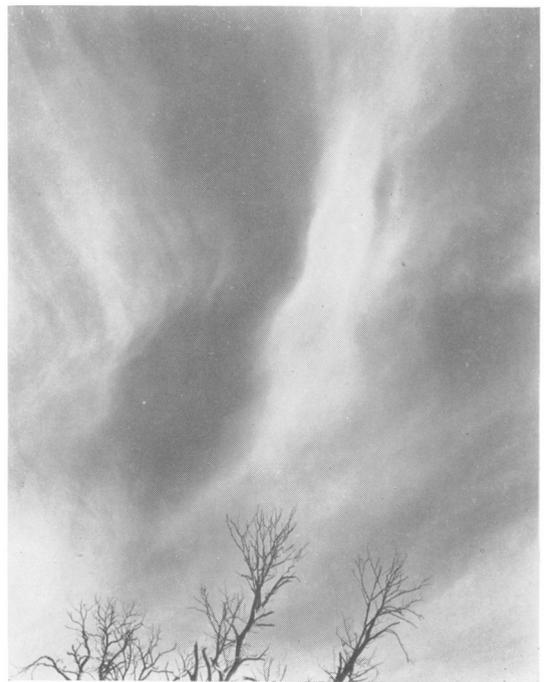
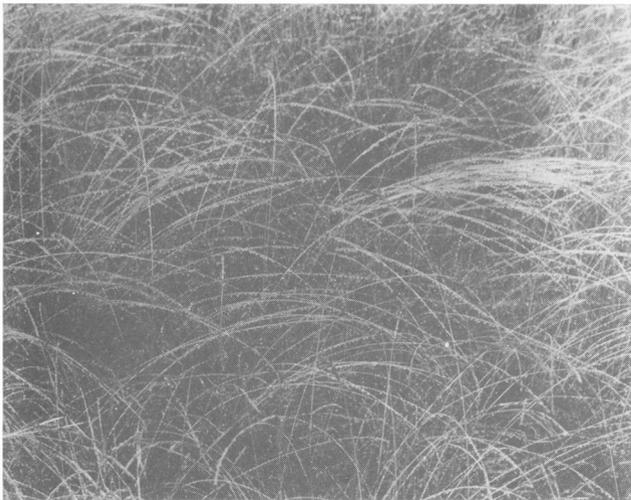
Suddenly there is a difference between a quaint evocation of the past and an open window looking straight down a stack of decades. The element of time entering into photography provides a departure for as much speculation as an observer cares to make. Actual experiments in time, actual experiments in space exactly suit a post-war state of mind. The camera doing both, as well as reflecting swift chance, disarray, wonder, and experiment, it is not surprising that photography has come to a valid flowering – the third period of its history.

Hound & Horn, 1931





Alfred Stieglitz. From An American Place. 1931. 7½ x 9⅞ inches. Alfred Steglitz Collection, 49.55.48



LEFT:

Alfred Stieglitz:

Lake George. About 1923. 5 x 4 inches. Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 49.55.23

Equivalent. 1925. 3 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 4 $\frac{5}{8}$ inches. Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 28.128.8

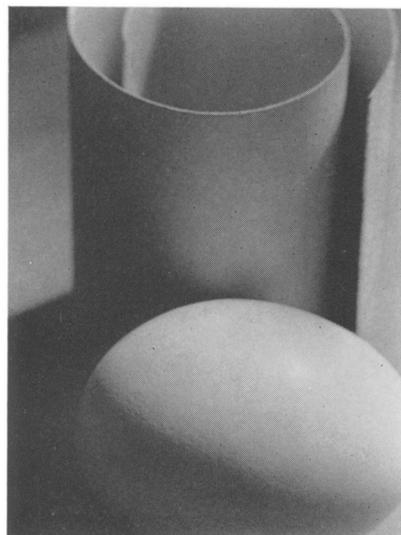
Equivalent. 1927. 3 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 4 $\frac{5}{8}$ inches. Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 28.128.10

Equivalent. 1930. 5 x 4 inches. Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 49.55.27

ALFRED STIEGLITZ:

When I am moved by something, I feel a passionate desire to make a lasting equivalent of it. But what I put down must be as perfect in itself as the experience that has generated my original feeling of having been moved.

As told to Dorothy Norman, published in an Aperture monograph on Stieglitz, 1960

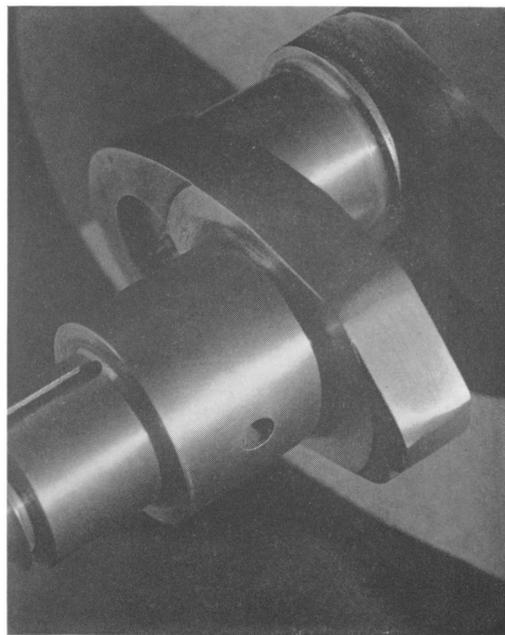


Paul Outerbridge, Jr. (1896-1958), American. Semi-abstract, and Crankshaft. 1924, 1923. Platinum prints, 4 x 2 $\frac{1}{16}$ inches, 4 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 3 $\frac{5}{8}$ inches. Gift of Paul Outerbridge, Jr., 29.82.3, 8

PAUL OUTERBRIDGE, JR.:

The underlying element of all fine art is form, and composition is the organization of forms. . . . As regards seeing form as such, if you look at objects, such as a chair or table for example, from a purely functional association point of view you merely see the chair as a thing to sit in, or the table as something used for the purpose of eating or writing, and you are missing the artist's-eye view of it. His view would be simply that of a shape or a form in relation to other surrounding shapes or forms. So with this in mind, look at all the simple, useful things found in any household; look at them in a new way; look at them carefully, and at their shapes, which is the pictorial way to look at objects.

Photographing in Color, 1940



Henri Cartier-Bresson (born 1908), French. Valencia, and Madrid. 1933. 6 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 9 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches, 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 9 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches. Gift of Photography in the Fine Arts, 59-559.11, 14



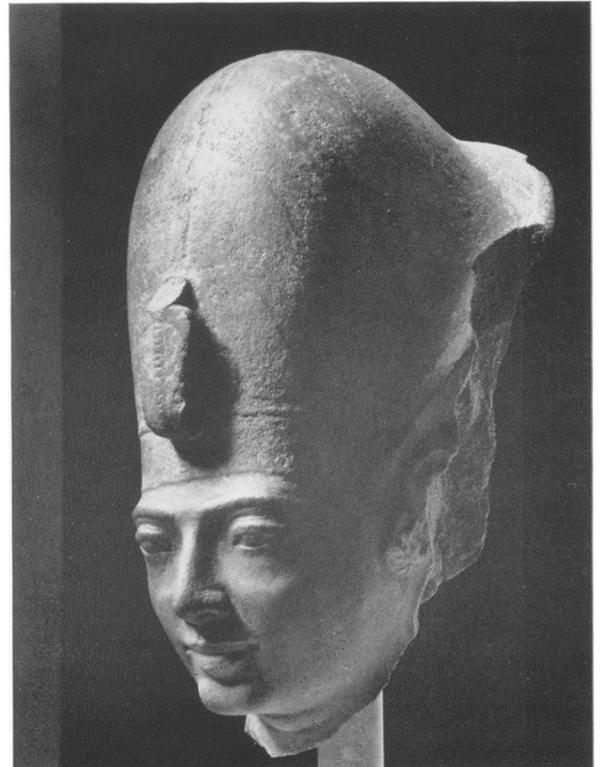


*George Platt Lynes (1907-1956), American. Edith Sitwell.
February 1937. 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 6 $\frac{5}{8}$ inches. David Hunter McAlpin Fund,
41.65.8*

*Charles Sheeler. Head of Ramesses II. Photographed while
Sheeler was a member of the staff of the Metropolitan Museum,
1945. Modern print from the original negative, 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches*

HENRI CARTIER-BRESSON:

The chief requirement is to be fully involved in this reality which we delineate in the viewfinder. The camera is to some extent a sort of notebook for recording sketches made in time and space, but it is also an admirable instrument for seizing upon life as it presents itself. Without the participation of intuition, sensibility, and understanding, photography is nothing. All these faculties must be closely harnessed, and it is then that the capture of a rare picture becomes a real physical delight. *The World of Henri Cartier-Bresson. Copyright © 1968 by Henri Cartier-Bresson. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission of The Viking Press, Inc.*



RIGHT :

Ansel Adams (born 1902), American. Winter, Yosemite Valley. About 1948. 9¼ x 7¼ inches. Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 49.55.177

ANSEL ADAMS :

To attempt emotional interpretation of a photograph . . . in written or spoken words promises failure from the start; the photographic print must stand as a complete expression in itself. *My Camera in Yosemite Valley, 1949 (Houghton Mifflin Company)*

Ernst Halberstadt (born 1910), American. Fire Escapes, Boston. 1950s. 7⅞ x 9½ inches. Gift of Eugene L. Schwaab, 59.650.8





The Arctic Regions



These photographs and quotations are from a vividly illustrated and engagingly written book called *The Arctic Regions*, published in 1873. The author was William Bradford (1823?-1892), an American marine artist. Bradford had read books about the North and become “seized with a desire, which became uncontrollable, to visit the scenes . . . and study Nature under the terrible aspects of the Frigid Zone.” After six journeys to Labrador, during which he made numerous sketches and studies, Bradford set off for Greenland with several friends and a hand-picked crew in a “remarkably staunch” steamer, the “Panther,” especially equipped for navigating the ice-strewn waters.

Our volume, according to Bradford, “is the result of an expedition to the Arctic regions, made solely for the purposes of art, in the summer of 1869. . . . I was also most fortunate in securing the services of Mr. Dunmore and Mr. Critcherson . . . [who] had accompanied me on previous voyages, and are two of our best and most skilful photographers.” This attractive example of a travel book illustrated by actual photographs (which were pasted on its pages) deals not only with the glacial topography and midnight sun that appealed to Bradford as ideal subjects for his art, but also with Eskimos and Scandinavian settlers, with geological phenomena, and with the animal life of Greenland.

The photographers had to bring not only many cameras but also complete developing paraphernalia. The men used wet collodion plates, which they exposed for about two seconds. Since they had to develop the negatives at the site of picture taking, on each photographing trip they were accompanied by jars of chemicals, tripods, glass plates, trays for developing baths, and so on. On one expedition they needed the help of twelve sailors to carry all their equipment and materials. Bradford was aware of the exceedingly adverse conditions under which Dunmore and Critcherson labored, and he gratefully acknowledged their work by saying: “They were indefatigable in their efforts to overcome the obstacles which were constantly presented, and which appeared really to have no end. I need only point to the specimens which illustrate this volume as proofs of their great fidelity and skill.”

While completing a sketch, my attention was attracted by some objects moving on the ice between us and the land, which, as they drew nearer, proved to be a polar bear with two cubs. They were attracted doubtless by the smoke and smell from the galley. . . . [They approached] within seventy-five or a hundred yards before exhibiting any signs of fear or hesitation. The mother walked along with dignity, her long neck projecting nearly in line with the back, making her appear longer than she really was; lifting her feet stealthily like a cat, and putting them far out in front, as if feeling to make sure that the ice was strong enough to bear her weight. The cubs, on the contrary, gambolled around their dam, playing with each other like two kittens, rolling over and over, and splashing the water about in the many pools that had formed on the surface of the floe, totally unconscious of danger. . . .

From their close proximity, I was enabled to sketch their natural movements upon their native ice, and I could not but note the different appearance they presented to the dirty, sleepy-looking animals of the same species that we see in menageries at home.



The curiosity of the natives at our presence was unbounded. We were moored within easy speaking distance from the shore; so near to it, in fact, that the features of the wonder-stricken crowd upon the rocks, composed largely of women and boys, could be distinguished without any difficulty. . . . We proceeded to Mr. Kursch's house, surrounded by the motliest-looking crowd that it was ever my fortune to encounter; men, women, and children, all dressed so nearly alike, that it was amusing to hear the remarks made by some of our party who were unacquainted with the peculiarities of Esquimaux *habits*. . . .

[A ball was given to honor the arrival of the "Panther."] The ladies here wear no crinoline, and their dress so nearly resembles the male apparel that it was difficult for the uninitiated to distinguish the sexes, which at first led to some laughable mistakes in the choice of partners, but generally speaking, everything went on without misadventure, the ladies acquitting themselves very well, especially in the waltz, schottische, and polka, having perfected themselves in this accomplishment under the tuition of the Danes.

There were several remarkable caves opening into the glacier directly from the land, and as they presented a singular phase of Arctic scenery, I was anxious to procure photographic views of them. To accomplish this, the photographers prepared their instruments, and, accompanied by some of the young gentlemen bound on a gunning expedition, started for shore in one of the ship's boats. The coxswain waiting for a favourable opportunity, at length pulled in to land his party, and everything was progressing favourably, when suddenly, three large masses of ice, the smallest nearly as large as the "Panther," broke from the glacier at a place about four hundred yards distant. The coxswain saw the danger, and was anxious to get the boat off and head her to the coming "rollers" produced by the falling of the ice. . . . Before [the shore party] could carry half of their implements up the hill-side, the surf came dashing in to a height of twenty feet, and, breaking, completely enveloped them in a cloud of foam and spray which recoiled with such force, that it was only by the strength of sheer desperation that they were able to cling to the rugged rocks. Fortunately no lives were lost, but the boxes containing plates for negatives and the jars of chemicals were utterly destroyed. The party returned wetter, if not wiser men, and as it was not deemed safe then to renew the attempt in photography, we deferred it to another time, when the effort was completely successful.





As the first watch, from 8 p. m. to 12, approached its termination, all hands were collected on deck to view – “The Midnight Sun!”

There was not a breath of wind; the sea was perfectly smooth, nor were any clouds in sight. Midnight – yet not a star in the sky! everything wore an unreal aspect. It seemed the work of enchantment. At a quarter to twelve the sun’s lower limb touched the horizon and rolled along its verge like a ball of fire. By midnight, less than one third of his disc being below the horizon, he commenced rising again, rolling slowly along to the eastward, literally beginning his daily course at the beginning of the day.

This, to most of us, was the first time the sun had ever been visible for twenty-four successive hours. . . . It was difficult to make ourselves familiar with the complete reversal of the whole order of nature. No one seemed to be conscious of bed-time, and there was but little sleeping by any of our company. In fact, slumber was the exception instead of the rule. The ship’s bell struck the hour as usual, meals were eaten, the daily routine of duty or amusement went on with accustomed regularity, but the day had no end, and nearly all were unable to reconcile themselves to the idea of retiring, with sunlight staring them in the face.

Gazing upon such a scene . . . the sense of solitude and desolation made a tremendous impression on me. No living thing was visible, neither bird, nor beast, nor insect. The unbroken silence was stifling, for none of us were inclined to talk; I could hear the pulsations of my heart; a species of terror took hold of me; – words cannot describe it, neither can the pencil reproduce the grandeur and immensity of the scene, while the camera, with all its truthfulness to nature, falls far short.



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