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NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

A HISTORY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF PHOTOGRAPHIC ART

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I N T R O D U C T I O N .

Ever since 1893, photography has been a vital means of communication and expression. The development of this contribution to the visual arts is the subject of this thesis.

Although the history of photography spans only about one hundred and fifty years a complete account of it would be outside the scope of this work. The bibliography provides information on general aspects of the subject.

The division of this thesis into four major sections is mainly for convenience. And have been organised chronologically. These divisions are not hard edged and just as photography developed and changed in its aims and methods so also did individual photographers change, often crossing new boundaries. Many photographs which are considered artistic now were just taken as social documents, such works though primarily serving a social function actually do carry artistic significance as well. For example, Lewis Hine (mentioned in chapter two) used his camera as a weapon to improve and change social conditions, likewise with news and documentary photography from its early beginnings with Roger Fenton to todays press photographers. The documentary photography followed its own course in the happenings of the world and recorded all sorts of events.

I have mentioned some of these photographers in each chapter in passing. The artists mentioned primarily are those who instituted or began new developments and movements. There are many notable photographers, not mentioned in the text who were very important in their own right. The reason for omitting them is that their work though important did not seem to have been influential to the development of the art.

The photographs have been selected to complement the points in the text.

CHAPTER 1.

EARLY PHOTOGRAPHY.

An hour after the public announcement of Louis Daguerre's photographic process was made in Paris on August 19th, 1839, opticians all over the city were jammed with customers shouting out orders for picture taking equipment. This was just the beginning. The popularity of photography increased so rapidly that in 1847, less than a decade later 2,000 cameras and more than half a million photographic plates were sold in Paris alone. The excitement and activity swept all over the world. In 1853, no fewer than 10,000 American daguerrotypists produced three million pictures. Londoners could rent a glass house for taking pictures and a darkroom for developing them, and the University of London added photography to its curriculum in 1856. A new vocation - an avocation - had been born.

It was an occupation of many facets and inexhaustible variations. It was open to people in all walks of life, many of its finest practitioners began as amateurs and quickly became professionals. It was an art that went hand in hand with scientific discoveries and technological developments. The invention that had begun it all - the daguerrotype - was a silver coated copper sheet that had been made sensitive to light, exposed in a camera and developed by mercury vapours. The image that materialised on the silvered surface had brilliant clarity and minute detail. Its accuracy, hard to surpass even today, astounded and delighted the nineteenth century public, for whom the exact, true-to-life reproduction of nature was the highest function of art. Here was a miraculous way to turn out anything a painter could do - and do it faster, less expensively and more faithfully.

Many a painter took up the new craft at once - some to make preliminary studies for painting, some to make more money than they could at painting. The painter Edgar Degas was an ardent amateur. In pose and composition, his photographs are reminiscent of his painting, though there is no evidence that he made direct use of them as studies. Edouard Vuillard, too, was an amateur, he liked to photograph social gatherings.

Many printmakers, painters, and sculptors in France reacted violently against photography and its incredible popularity. Condemnations were showered

upon it in press articles and caricatures. Not only had it become an economic threat to the artist; its claims as an art form were resented. Maxime Du Camp, scoffed at defecting daubers who drop the palette to enter the darkroom, abandoning their vermillions and browns for silver nitrate and hyposulphite of soda. But eventually Du Camp himself dropped his palette and entered the darkroom. Such defection was often irresistible, not only because of the infinite variety of possibilities offered by photography, but because of the obviously greater profit to be made in photography.

The mid-nineteenth-century status of photography is revealed most clearly by relationships that developed between photography and painting. The advent of the photographic process sent a shock wave reverberating through the world of art. At first a dangerous competitor was seen. The menace was the greater because the artistic ideal of detailed realism was so overpowering in those days. Partly in mourning, partly in pleasurable excitement, the painter Delaroche remarked that "from now on painting is dead", he went on to say that photography satisfied "all the demands of art and carried essential principles to perfection".⁽¹⁾

The most hostile reaction to photography came from the poet and critic Charles Baudelaire, who deplored the desertion of the secondary painters and predicted the corruption of art. Enough of an atmosphere of illegitimacy was thrown around photography so that, even today, many illustrators are reluctant to let it be known how much they depend on photos for information, study and even inspiration.

For all its popularity the daguerrotype was obsolete in a decade. Just three years after Dauguerres coup, another one was achieved in England, where William Fox Talbot (plate No. 1) an aristocratic man-of-all-interests, accounted that he had created permanent images on paper, instead of on copper plates. A year and a half and many experiments later, Talbot devised what came to be known as the calotype, it employed the negative-positive process on which modern photography was to be based. The image of the calotype was not so precise as that of the daguerrotype - it was the premature counterpart of impressionist painting, due to arrive in the 1860s - but its very softness had an appeal. Its major advantage was any number of prints could be made from a negative. Each daguerrotype had been unique and unproductive. But the calotype, too, quickly became obsolete as



1. William Fox Talbot Lacock Abbey N.D.



2. Gustave Le Gray France, Army Camp N.D.



3. Bisson Brothers Mount Blanc 1860.

methods were found for making negatives on glass plates, they produced sharper prints, and perhaps more important, permitted shorter exposures.

Photography was still a highly experimental craft, and anyone taking it up had to master all its phases personally. During the first two decades from about 1840 onwards, photographers learned a great deal about what their medium could do, and they began to decide what it should be doing. They explored the aesthetic possibilities of the medium as imaginatively as they did its technical potential. Almost every type of picture now in the photographers repertoire was attempted - landscapes, still lifes, documentation, portraits, and the results were often remarkable. The landscape scenes recorded by Gustave Le Gray (plate No. 2) and the Bisson Brothers (plate No. 3) are as dramatic as any made later. Le Gray, took up photography initially as an aid to his painting, never expecting to become absorbed in the new invention for its own sake. His outdoor scenes achieved effects that made his pictures a critical success when they were put on exhibition - success that was due in part to Le Grays artistic eye and in part to him being a gifted technician. He was also an influential teacher, and many French photographers of the day - including Negre and Du Camp learned from him. He declared that "the artistic beauty of a photographic print consists almost always in the sacrifice of certain details in such a manner as to produce une mise a l'effet which sometimes reaches the sublime of art."⁽²⁾

Such men, broadened the scope of their art as they worked and discussed the areas in which the true worth of photography could be revealed. There was, of course, no simple or direct answer to the question of photography's role in the world, it varied with each talented person who picked up a camera. But many of the first practitioners of this period excelled in four major categories: architecture and urban landscape, eye witness reporting, portraiture and the craft - or art - of making photographs that resembled paintings. Because of the shorter exposure times made possible by the recently invented wet-collodion process, photographers were no longer restricted to pictures of motionless subjects, as they had been with the daguerrotype.

In the United States, the Civil War, which began in 1861, propelled teams of adventurous photographers - most of them recruited by the leading portraitist Matthew B. Brady - out of their profitable studios and into the



4. Matthew Brady Ella Jackson, Actress N. D.



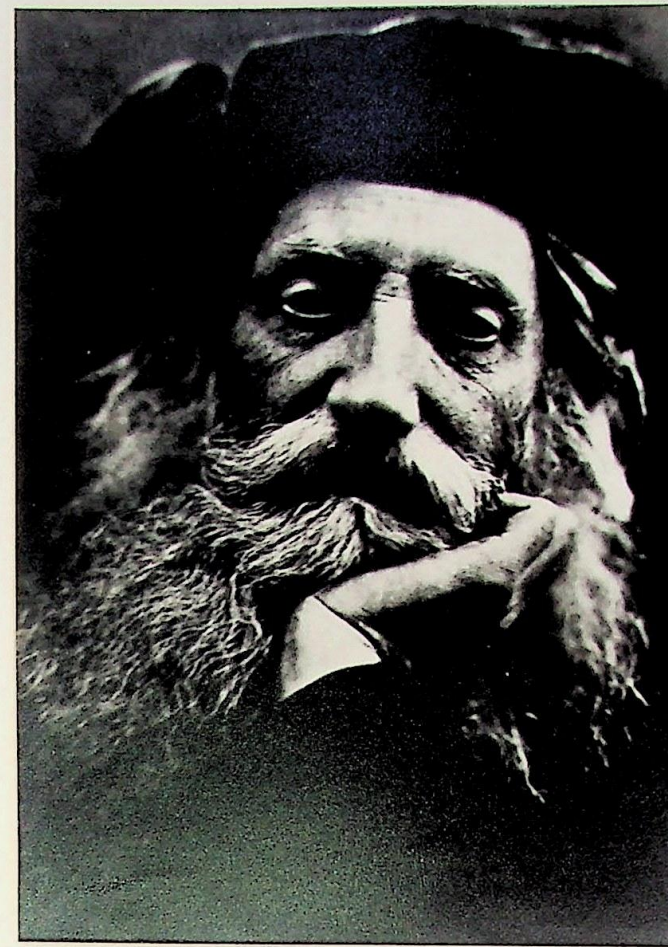
5. Nadar Theophile Gautier.

smoke and carnage of the battlefields. As they rode around in their rumbling darkroom wagons, these men gave the world its closest glimpse yet of the agonies of war. These photographs showed warfare in meaningful and poignant terms. The grim paradoxes of war - its heroism and its savagery - were exposed with truth and passion in works that notably expanded the scope of photography. "Photojournalism" was not yet part of the English vocabulary, but it was already a fully-fledged career in the 1860s.

In the hands of a few sensitive photographers, portraiture reaffirmed itself as one of photography's most incisive and popular forms. In America and on the Continent, men like Brady (plate No. 4) and Nadar 1820 - 1910 (plate No. 5) turned their lenses on some of the best known people of the times, making likenesses startling in their character revelation. The extraordinary reputation of Nadar as a photographer was attested by the fact that the great French classicist painter Ingres had him photograph everyone whose likeness the artist wanted. According to Ingres' biographer, E. de Mirecourt, Ingres painted his remarkable portraits from these photographs without having a need for the subject to be present. Artists called Nadar "the Titan of Photography".

In England, Julia Margaret Cameron, (1815 - 1876) (plate No. 6) one of the most famous figures in the history of photography produced portraits and allegorical scenes that delighted the Victorian taste for whimsy and romance. She photographed great Victorian personalities and managed to reflect their spirit, power, and character better than any portraitist. It was the soul of the subject she was after. The camera provided her with the ideal instrument to record the facial characteristics of her intellectual heroes. Mrs. Cameron was never known to photograph a landscape. The forms of the land and growing things did not satisfy her as did portrait subjects as a vehicle for expression of her feelings. However, her illustrations of Tennyson's romantic poems and of her own complex allegories pleased her artistic sensibilities. She learned illustration from George F. Watts; her allegorical photographs like Watt's allegorical paintings, were tasteless and sentimental. In her autobiographic 'Annals of My Glass House', she describes the intensity she brought to portraiture,

"When I have 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 person. The photograph thus taken has



6. Julia Margaret Cameron ... Sir Henry Taylor 1867.



6A. Julia Margaret Cameron ... Untitled N.D.



7. Oscar Rejlander The Two Ways of Life 1857.

been almost an embodiment of a prayer". (3)

The relationship between photography and painting was an ambiguous one, with neither side sure whether the other was ally or enemy. Painters increasingly turned to photography as a handy aid in doing life studies. Photography was a step child, a mechanical process useful at best as an adjunct to a higher calling, and in some instances photographers themselves seemed to agree. A group in Britain used the camera in lavish imitation of brushwork, sentimental paintings of bucolic scenes inspired equally sentimental photographs. The pictorialists as these imitators came to be called, created their own world in their studio, their ideal being a well-staged photograph that looked just like a painting. Allegories were popular motifs, as were folk tales. Sometimes the intricacies of the plans required more than one plate - as many as thirty separate negatives might be combined to form a single print. The technique of using several negatives to make one picture was called combination printing. It was used by Oscar Rejlander, (1813 - 1875) a Swede working in Wolverhampton, for making allegorical compositions.

Rejlander was thoroughly grounded in the literary atmosphere of Victorian art. He had studied painting and sculpture at the Academy in Rome and later a stay in Paris served to confirm his approach to painting, his portraits glorified the sitter extravagantly and his complicated allegories became more involved. He went to England and decided to pursue photography for a livelihood, but he continued to paint portraits sporadically and several of these were exhibited at the Royal Academy. What he had learned of art and particularly the keen eye he had developed in observing unique facts of character in people benefited him greatly in photography when he emulated with the camera the vast theatrical and literary allegories he made with the brush.

In 1857, he produced an allegorical photograph entitled "The Two Ways of Life", (plate No. 7) which was exhibited at the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition. To produce it, he posed models in groups, making separate negatives that he then combined in one print. The photograph, a frank resemblance to contemporary painting was highly controversial, the scene involved two young men being introduced to life - one, calm and placid,

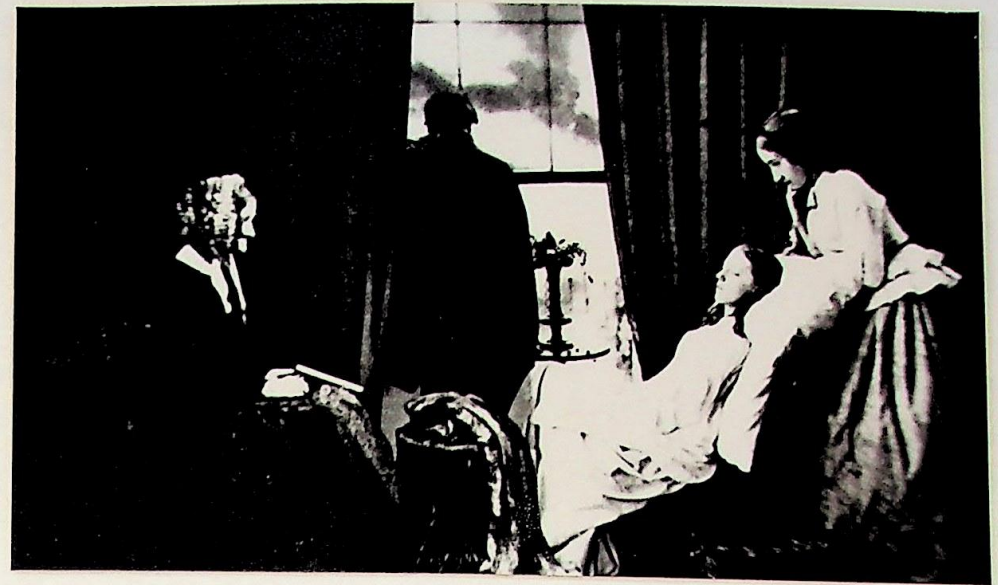
turns towards religion, charity and industry, and the other virtues, while the other rushes madly from his guide into the pleasures of the world, typified by various figures representing gambling, wine, insanity and death. The centre of the picture in front, between the two parties, is a splendid figure, symbolizing repentance, with the emblem of hope. The Two Ways of Life was hailed as a magnificent picture "decidedly the finest photograph of its class ever produced".⁽⁴⁾ Rejlander considered it an example of the camera's usefulness to artists in making a first sketch for an elaborate composition, and he said, "I can think of no other means which would enable me better to portray various draped figures as well as exhibit the beautiful lines of the human form".⁽⁵⁾

The nudity was not universally accepted, only the righteous half of the photograph was shown at the annual exhibition of the Edinburgh Photographic Society.

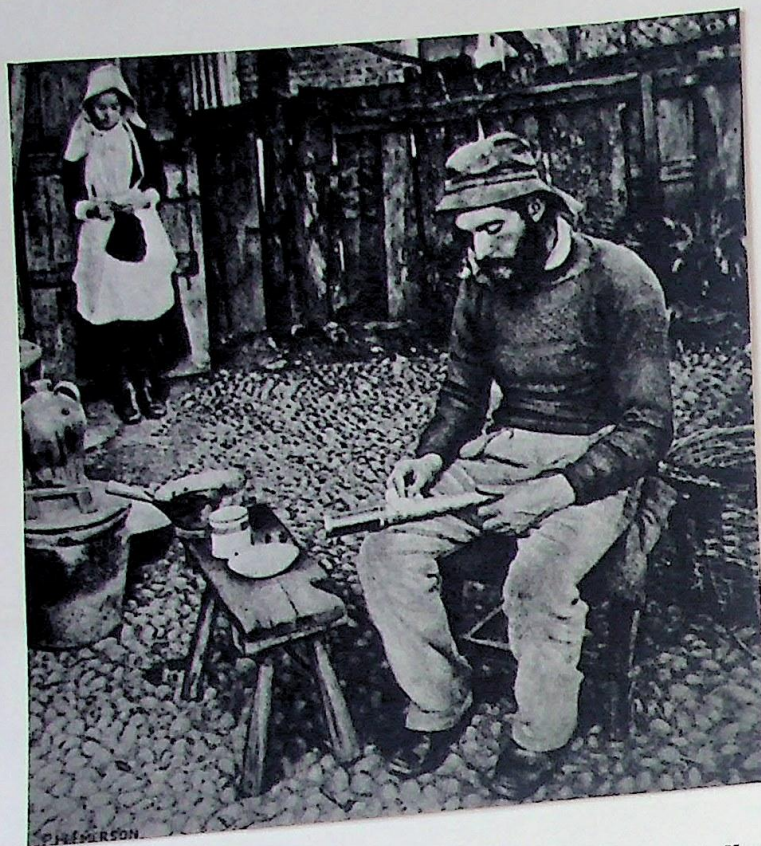
Henry P. Robinson made an equally famous picture "Fading Away", a year later (1858) (plate No. 8) from five negatives. The photograph shows a dying girl attended by grief-stricken parents. Contemporaries were shocked by the subject; it was felt to be poor taste to represent so painful a scene. Though the criticism seems ridiculous, we should not ignore it as Victorian sentimentality, for more painful subjects were painted in those days, for example Delacroix "Massacre de Scio" 1824. But the very fact it was a photograph implied that it was a truthful representation, and so the scene was viewed literally. Not only did Robinson popularize the emulation of paintings, but he encouraged artificiality. At the very time when painters were moving their easels outdoor, Robinson was building nature under the skylight.

Not all the work of these self-styled artis-photographers was artificial, Robinson produced charming genre scenes also. He became the leading pictorial photographer of England and was also a prolific writer of manuals and treatises on photography.

Jabez Hughes, while praising Robinson and Rejlander's work strongly rebelled against combination printing, "when an artist conceives a brilliant thought and hastens to put it on canvas, how he sighs that he is obliged to



8. Henry P. Robinson Fading Away 1858.



9. Emerson A Fisherman at Home 1888.

work piecemeal - that he cannot with one sweep of his brush realise the thought in his mind. It is the proud boast of photography that it can do this".⁽⁶⁾

These pictures no matter how questionable their goal still can exert a powerful attraction. The men who produced them - concerned with detail, obsessed with laws of aesthetics and convinced that their work was exalting the medium - charged their photography with a magnetism that belied its contrived nature. And this style of photography, like other styles that were successful during these early years, helped lay the groundwork for ensuing generations of artists.

Artistic photography in Europe of 1860 to 1890 was enmeshed in style and spirit in the stubborn conservatism and heaving sentimentality of the academic printing that its practitioners imitated and revered. In America at that time there was no interest in photography as art. American photographers were far too engrossed in making likenesses of their great-grandfathers and recording the wonders of the American West. They were exposed to the ideas and images of the European pictorialists through the wistful efforts of photographic publications, but responded to them not at all.

Peter Henry Emerson, an American physician living in London was the initiator of a bold new movement. Emerson must be regarded as one of the most important influences not only on late Victorian photography but also on the evolution of photography thereafter. As well as bringing direct pressure to bear on the photographic establishment through his own writing and photography, by recognising and encouraging talent in other photographers he began a chain of events which radically altered the course of photography. Emerson believed the camera had its own rules, and it was the photographers glorious task to discover them. At first he was a champion of soft focus photography (plate No. 9). It corresponded to natural vision he wrote in his Naturalistic Photography, and was surpassed as an art only by painting. He did an about turn after being convinced by Whistler that he was confusing art with nature.

In 1892, in company with other amateurs, Emerson formed the "Linked Ring", an international group dedicated to photography as an art. One of its

members was Frank Sutcliffe whose " Water Rats " (plate No. 10) of 1896 was a revelation of what could be done with a camera. Evoking the poetry of modern industrial life, the photograph prefigured the paintings of Luks, Sloan and other American painters of the Aschan School a decade or two later. (plate No. 10)^A

Another member of the Linked Ring was the extremely talented Frederick H. Evans, who took up photography rather late in life. He made straight forward and unsentimental but extremely sensitive portraits of his friends and admirers, Aubrey Beardsley (plate No. 11) and George Bernard Shaw. He also made large format views of English and French Cathedrals, impressive for their clean sense of space and texture and their grasp of Architectural forms (plate No. 12). Evans was not content with passive recording, he wanted his photographs to be so true and charged with feeling that looking at them would be equivalent to being in the very Cathedrals themselves. By photographing light, volume and substance, he wanted to lead the spectator through space.

In 1900, Edward Steichen called Evans work " the most beautiful rendering of architecture we have ever known. He stands alone in architectural photography.⁽⁷⁾

These photographers and their disciples brought realism, alive and well to the threshold of the twentieth century.

In Germany, artistic photography was launched by Alfred Lichtwark, Art Historian. In 1893, he enlisted the support of both professionals and amateurs in organising an "International Exhibition of Amateur Photography", in the Museum of Hamburg. He said that the purpose of the exhibition was to revive the dying art of portrait painting. Lichtwark felt that the only good portraiture in any medium was being done by amateur photographers, who had economic freedom and time to experiment, and he persuaded the professionals, for their own good to study and emulate their work. For the first time, Germans saw the new art photography movement. The Hamburg exhibition became a yearly event. At these International Exhibitions a most frequent and honoured American exhibitor was Alfred Stieglitz, who was a student in Berlin, Stieglitz won his first recognition from Emerson who awarded him first prize in a contest held by the British Amateur Photographers in 1887. Stieglitz was to carry on the fight for the recognition of photography as an independent art.



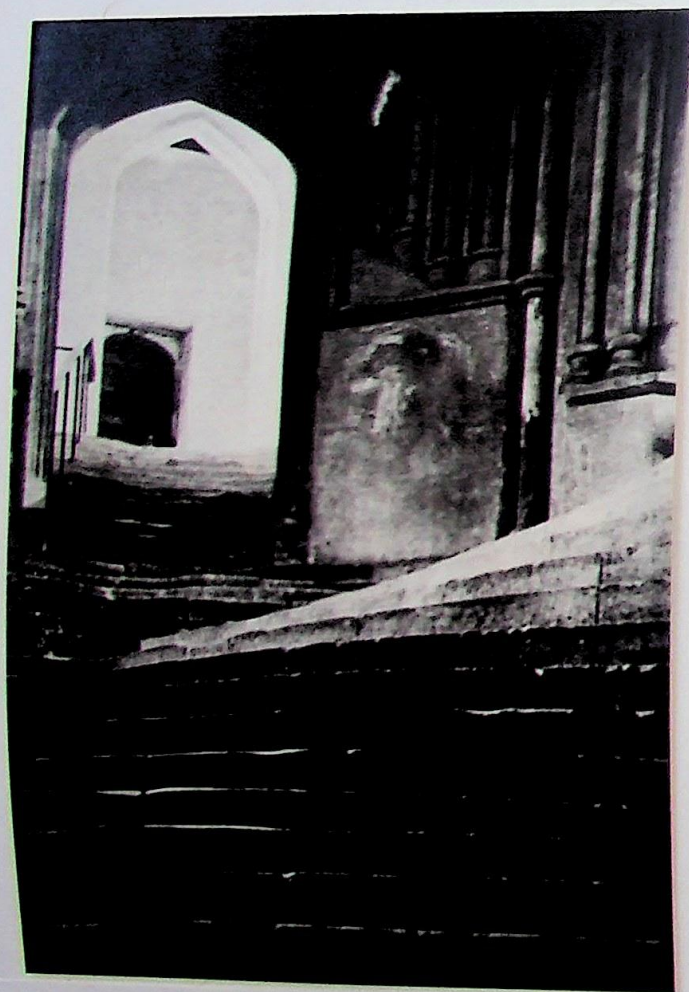
10. Sutcliffe Water Rats .



10A. Sutcliffe Excitement 1888 .



11. Frederick H. Evans Aubrey Beardsley 1895.



12. Frederick H. Evans Sea of Steps N.D.

FOOTNOTES.

1. Peter Pollock, The Picture History of Photography, 1963, page 31, without documentary evidence supplied.
2. Letter from Alfred Stieglitz to Charles M. Kurtz, February 6th, 1909, in the archives of the Albright Knox Art Gallery.
3. Photo Journal, July 1927, page 29. Beaumont Newhall, The History of Photography, 1972, page 59, without full documentary evidence.
4. Humphreys Journal of Photography, July 15th, 1857, pages 92/93. Buaumont Newhall, The History of Photogrpahy, 1972, page 60, without full documentary evidence supplied.
5. Photo Journal, April 21st, 1858, page 193. Beaumont Newhall, The History of Photography, 1972, page 60, without full documentary evidence supplied.
6. Photonotes, 1861, page 56/60. Beaumont Newhall, The History of Photography, 1972, page 61, without full documentary evidence supplied.
7. Peter Pollock, The Picture History of Photography, 1963, page 69, without full documentary evidence supplied.



13. Alfred Stieglitz The Terminal 1892.

CHAPTER 2.

THE PHOTO SECESSION.

In the early years of the new century there was no longer any question that photography was here to stay, its technical foundations had been laid and a number of great photographers had graced the medium with their art.

In 1903, Alfred Stieglitz, (plate No. 13) wearied by years of unsuccessful attempts to cajole the camera clubs of the United States to organize exhibitions of such high aesthetic standards that photography would be recognized as an art in America, took the fight upon his own shoulder. With the enthusiastic co-operation of friends, Gertrude Kasebier, Clarence H. White and Edward J. Stiechen, he founded an informal society that he named the Photo Secession in remembrance of his years in Germany and Austria, "where groups of artists breaking away from the academic establishment called themselves the ' Sezession' so photo secession really hitches up with the art world".

The societies aim was threefold; to advance photography as applied to pictorial expression; to draw together those Americans practising or otherwise interested in art; to hold from time to time at varying places, exhibitions not necessarily limited to the productions of the Photo Secession or to American work.⁽²⁾

Stieglitz contributed many articles about the aims and goals of the group to photographic magazines; however, the most succinct definition of the purpose of the Photo Secession - and a clarion call to photographers everywhere appeared in The Bausch and Lomb Lens Souvenir, a brochure reproducing the prize-winning photographs of a 1903 competition held by The Bausch and Lomb Optical Company of Rochester, New York. Stieglitz won the grand prize for the Street Winter which was reproduced in the brochure together with the accompanying statement.

"The progress of the ages has been rhythmic and not continuous although always forward. In all phases of human activity the tendency of the masses has been invariably towards ultra conservatism.

Progress has been accomplished only by reason of the fanatical enthusiasm of the revolutionist, whose extreme teaching has saved the mass from utter inertia. What is today accepted as conservative was yesterday denounced as revolutionary. It follows then, that it is to the extremist that mankind largely owes its progression. In this country photography also has followed this law, and whatever has been the achievements which have won it exceptional distinction, they have been attained by the efforts of the enthusiastic so-called extremists. True, however, to this general law of development these results have been achieved only through bitter strife, until those most deeply interested in the advancement of photography along the lines of art have been compelled to register their protest against the reactionary spirit of the masses. This protest, this succession from the spirit of the doctrinaire, of the compromiser, at length found its expression in the foundation of the Photo-Secession. The attitude of its members is one of rebellion against the insincere attitude of the unbeliever, of the phillistine and largely of exhibition authorities. The secessionists lay no claim to infallibility, nor does he pin his faith to any credo, but he demands the right to work out his own photographic salvation". (3)

Alfred Stieglitz has been schooled in nineteenth century traditions of art but grown beyond them in creating a personal style. More than any other man, he enabled photography to shake off the inferiority complex inflicted on it by artists and critics who held that painting and sculpture were legitimate art forms and photography was not. In fighting to have his craft accorded a higher status, he gained in stature himself. Paradoxically his battles on behalf of photography won victories in America for modern art in general. The famous New York Armony Show in 1913 (in which he was a moving spirit) is usually credited with introducing that country to the modern masters of painting and sculpture. Actually it was Stieglitz personally, through exhibits in his photo-secession Gallery, later known as "291", who gave major artists their first American showings. Rodin, Matisse, Toulouse - Lautrec, Picasso and others.

On the walls of "291" as the Little Galleries came to be called, the American public began to see work of the most daring and progressive painters and sculpturs. Stieglitz said "that the gallery was a laboratory, an experimental station, and must not be looked upon as an Art Gallery, in

the ordinary sense of that term.⁽⁴⁾ Stieglitz's determination to win for pictorial photography recognition as a fine art had not been shared by all the members of the Camera Club. Many had been slighted by Stieglitz in his eagerness to reproduce in Camera Notes the best, no matter by whom. The members felt that the periodical, with its emphasis upon pictorial photography, was not representative of the interests of the Club, and Stieglitz found himself forced to resign the editorship. At the urging of his friends he planned a new magazine, "Camera Works", to avoid confusion and compromise he took upon himself the entire responsibility of editing and publishing it, choosing as co-workers friends in the Photo-Secession. The first number was devoted to Gertrude Kasebier, the second to Edward Steichen.

In 1910, the Photo-Secession was invited to arrange an international exhibition of pictorial photography at the Albright Art Gallery in Buffalo, Stieglitz with the aid of his friends, C. White and Max Webber the painter, transformed the museum. They covered the exhibition walls with over six hundred photographs. Each photographer invited was represented by enough prints to enable his artistic developments to be traced. It was gratifying to the Photo-Secessionists to be able to show photographs with such dignity in an art museum; it was even more gratifying that the museum purchased fifteen prints from the exhibition for its collection and planned to set aside a room for their permanent display, for it was a vindication of their belief that photography had a right to recognition as a fine art. "Camera Work" contained criticisms of the exhibition by various writers. They unanimously praised the exhibition as the most impressive they had ever seen.

This exhibition marked a turning point. Camera Work itself threw more and more emphasis upon modern painting. To those who complained that Camera Work had less and less of photographic content, Stieglitz wrote: "photography should take its place in open review with other mediums in order that its possibilities and limitations might be fully judged".⁽⁵⁾

Charles H. Caffin pointed out that:

"After claiming for photography an equality of opportunity with painting, Stieglitz turns about, and with devilishly remorseless logic shows the critics, who have grown disposed to accept this view of photography, that they are wrong again. As long as painting was satisfied as it had been for half a century, to represent the

appearances of things, photography could emulate it. Now, however, that it is seeking to render vision of things not as they are palpable to the eye, but as they impress the imagination, Mr. Stieglitz proves what he has known all along, that photography is powerless to continue its rival with painting".⁽⁶⁾

Had Stieglitz expressed himself through any of the accepted media of art, instead of through photography, his affirmation could not have been anything but a great one. In using the camera he has demonstrated the power of man. He has made the very machine demonstrate the unmechanicalness of the human spirit. In liberating the medium, Stieglitz managed to liberate himself. The earliest of his photographs, it is true, have aesthetic form; it is surprising to what an extent the photographer, managed to make his prints three dimensional, to interweave foreground and background. As time passed he managed to press more and more power into his work without sacrificing its purity.

Stieglitz pitted his belief in the validity of experimental styles against the general taste for established styles. Eventually he won, and the arts in general and photography in particular have never since had to apologize for expressing an artist's personal view of the world. It is true that the new century was a time ripe for change and that the entire world of art was in ferment. Though none was to achieve Stieglitz stature, some other photographers simultaneously were working with intensely personal vision. One was Clarence H. White, who methodically expanded the boundaries of photography as he experimented with evocative scenes. White's pre-occupation with mood coincided with some of the most sensitive work being done by Stieglitz, and another contemporary, Alvin Langdon Coburn.

In Europe at the same time, an enthusiastic group of well-to-do photographers were trying to merge art and photography in quite a different way. In the previous 20 years the naturalist photographers led by Emerson had dealt a serious blow to the fad for photographs cut and pasted to look like paintings.

But now under the leadership of Robert Demacy, (plate No. 14), many photographers sought to compete with the visual arts by interposing their own handiwork between their negatives and their prints, inventing new or reviving old techniques, they varied the finishes, textures and even the



14. Robert Demachy Untitled. N.D.



15. Eugene Atget Street Musicians Paris N.D.



16. Lewis Hine Italian Immigrant Family 1905 .

images of the final prints. At their best, as in Demachys work, such photographs were as graphically sophisticated as any ever produced.

Not all photographers of this period were concerned overtly with the mediums art, though the best of them were artists in their own way. Eugene Atget (1857 -1927) (plate No. 15) and Louis Hine (Plate No. 16) for example concentrated on capturing the world around them and made documentary photographs that were more than mere pictorial records. Atget turned to the camera in 1898 when he was forty two years old. He wanted to record everything he felt was of importance in Paris and for this the brush was inadequate. For the next twenty years until he died in 1927, Atget photographed as realistically as possible, whatever appealed to him in his beloved Paris. His photographs showed the city and its people in such a straightforward manner that later generations, long accustomed to the clean, uncluttered style of documentary photography have marvelled at his command and prescience.

Louis Hine was a restless, questing man who travelled extensively to expose the exploitation of workers, particularly of children and immigrants, in the sweatshops of industrial America. He was one of the originators of a tradition in which the photographer became a social critic - a tradition that later produced during the depression of the 1930s, some of Americas finest pictorial commentary. For instance he photographed the shacks used as accommodation for seasonal labourers working on the cranberry harvest in New Jersey in 1910. For the most part, though, he made portraits, and outlined his charges in captions and notes which were later reworked in articles, posters and pamphlets. Where the Ellis Island immigrants, newcomers in a strange land, showed themselves anxious and reserved Hine's exploited children address his camera with confidence. They have or seem to have stories to tell. They appear as speaking likenesses, testifying to their own condition and in this respect they anticipate much of what follows in the 1930, in which virtually every documentary portrait comes supported by a plain statement, aphorism or complaint.

The documentary photographers saved the ideal of individual existence from oblivion in general categories and statistics, and raised personal voices and country idioms against the dry prose of surveys and reports. The European tendency, by contrast, was analytical and objective.

Europeans observed covertly and drew conclusions, for they were acting in a culture in which social distance was accepted as a matter of course.

Lewis Hine was guided by artistic canons, with the works of such masters as Raphael as his model, he organised his compositions on the stern principles of balance, line and form. But the compelling power of Hine's pictures does not derive from his adherence to classical art - it comes from the photographic sympathy for his subjects. Through similar compassion and intellectual control over their work all the best photographers of this period exalted their art and sent it confidently into the twentieth century.



16A. Lewis Hine Unhealthy Child, Chicago 1910 .

FOOTNOTES.

1. Stieglitz conversation recorded in Twice a Year, No. 8/9, (1942), page 117.
2. The Photo-Secession, No. 1 1902. Beaumont Newhall, The History Of Photography, 1972, page 105. Without full documentary evidence supplied.
3. Reprinted from - The Bausch and Lomb Lens Souvenir, Rochester, New York : Bausch and Lomb Optical Co. 1903.
4. Camera Work, New York, No. 30 (1910), page 47. Beaumont Newhall, The History of Photography, 1972, page 108. without full documentary evidence supplied.
5. Camera Work, New York, No. 32, (1910), page 48. Beaumont Newhall, The History of Photography, 1972, page 109. without full documentary evidence supplied.
6. Camera Work, New York, No. 37, (1912), page 43. Beaumont Newhall, The History of Photography, 1972, page 109 without full documentary evidence supplied

THE NEW REALISTS.

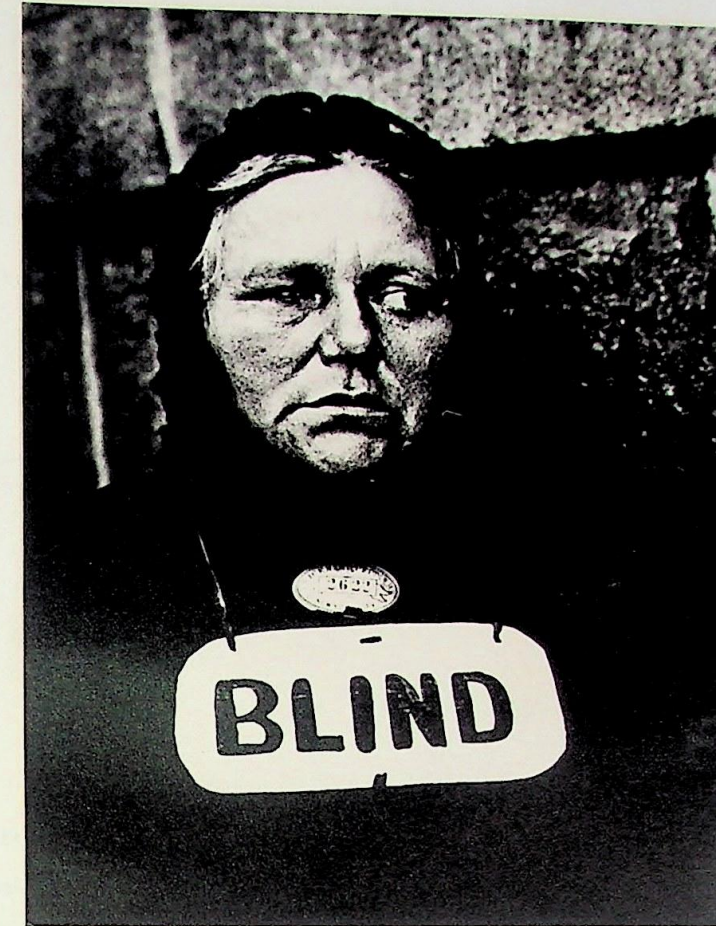
In the last two issues of Camera Work, dated 1916 and 1917, Alfred Stieglitz reproduced photographs by a newcomer Paul Strand (Plate No. 17). They included a forceful series of studies of people taken unawares in the streets, and pictures in which form and design were emphasised - a semi-
abstraction of bowls, a downward view from a viaduct, an architectural scene dominated by the vertical accents of a white picket fence. As Stieglitz said "the work was brutally direct, pure and devoid of trickery".⁽¹⁾

It was in striking contrast to much of the work which had been produced by the Photo-Secession. It was prophetic of the re-orientation in photographic aesthetics and of the return to the tradition of straight photography - that is devoid of any trickery and devoted to maximum fidelity reproduction - which was to gain force in the years after the war.

Strand wrote in 1917:-

"The photographers problem is to see clearly the limitations and at the same time the potential qualities of his medium for it is precisely 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 ... through a range of infinite tonal values which lie beyond the skill of the human hand. The fullest realization of this is accomplished without tricks of process or manipulation, the use of straight photographic methods".⁽²⁾

Paul Strand was among the first to discover the photographic beauty of precision machines. On a trip to Maine he discovered the beauty of large-scale details of drift-wood, cobwebs, plants and other natural objects. In 1923, lecturing to the students of the Clarence H. White School of Photography, he made a strong plea for the revival of craftsmanship and told them of the need to free photography from the domination of painting, and to recognise that the camera had its own aesthetic.



17. Paul Strand Blind Woman, New York 1916 .



18. August Sander Circus People 1930.



19. Edward Steichen Rodin, Le Penseur 1902 .

Strand's work had a quality rarely found in photography, a quality which can only be described as lyrical. He was at ease with nature, an absorbed and reverent explorer. He also sought to honour what was beautiful in the material world. He expressed himself forcibly on the nature of 'true' photographic practice. He claimed that the photographer should be a creator looking for forms in which to cloth 'his feelings and ideas'. He spent little time trying to resolve this apparent contradiction between straight photography and personal creativity, because in his own work there was no contradiction. His feelings and ideas were at one with the objects of his contemplation. Strand's vision of photography as a subject - rooted exploration of reality was adopted about 1915, by his exact contemporary Charles Sheeler, who was influenced in the new direction by the example of modern art, especially cubism. He was fascinated by the strong forms of Bucks Country barns, which he saw as patterns, as clearly defined interesting planes, photographing and painting with the precision of a scientist and the sensibility of a poet.

Few new talents appeared in Europe during the years that marked the event of Strand and Sheeler, the young men of the old world were again at war. The novel spirit in photography continued to be represented by such veterans, as Emerson and Evans. New European talents, however appeared in vast numbers in the 1920s and promptly proceeded to make up for lost time. The spirit already manifest in Strand and Sheeler began to appear in Germany in the photographs of the - Weue Sachlichkeit - The New Realism Movement - notably in the straightforward, unretouched, aggressively close up views of objects of our common perception. Some of the best of these were taken by A. Renger - Parsch and August Sander (plate No. 18). The revolution had come to photography and not just in America but all over the world.

Edward Steichen, (plate No. 19) came back from World War 1, where he had been in charge of U.S. Army aerial photography. He vowed to devote himself to 'pure' photography and abandoned painting in 1920. On his nineteenth birthday, March 27th, 1969, Edward Steichen commented:-

"When I first became interested in photography... my idea was to have it recognized as one of the fine arts, today I don't really care about that. The mission of photography is to explain man to man and each to himself. And that is the most complicated thing

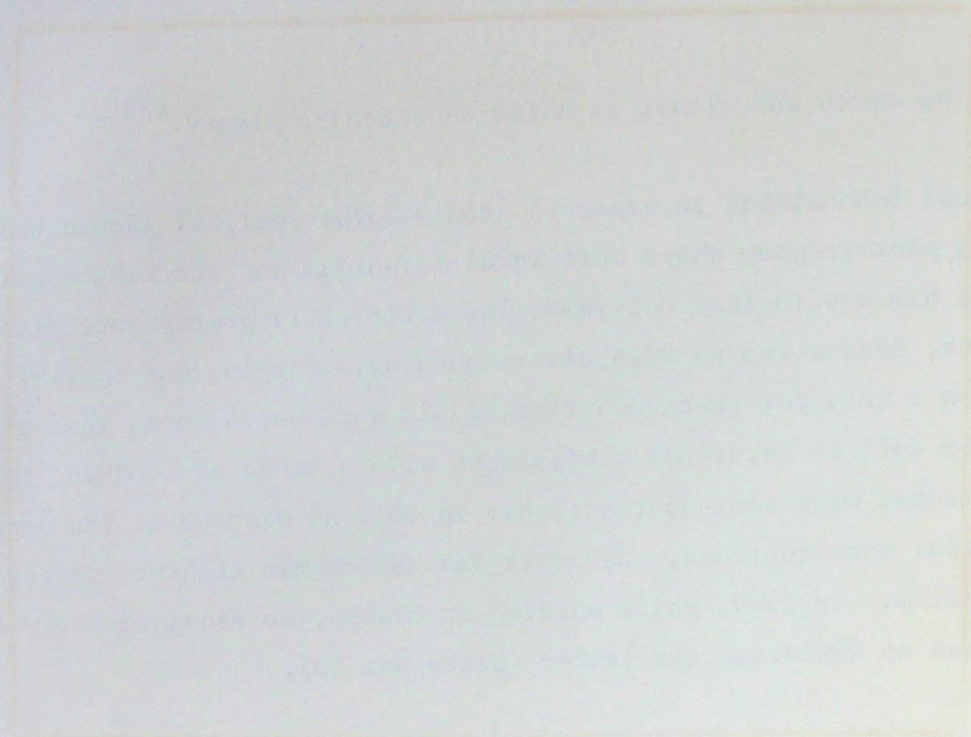
on earth and almost as naive as a tender plant".⁽³⁾

The trend intensified in order to attain total realism. Edward Weston a young photographer whose soft focus technique and striking tonal effects brought him wealth from Hollywood for artificially pretty portraits of starlets, became fed up with his retouching, cropping and special effects. He began a critical re-examination of his work which up to that time, had been soft in focus but always done with a sense of line and form. He experimented with semi-abstractions: In Ohio he discovered the beauty of industrial constructions. His work was taking two trends: Abstraction and realism. In 1924, while working in Mexico, he recognised the duality and chose to emphasize the latter (plate No. 20).

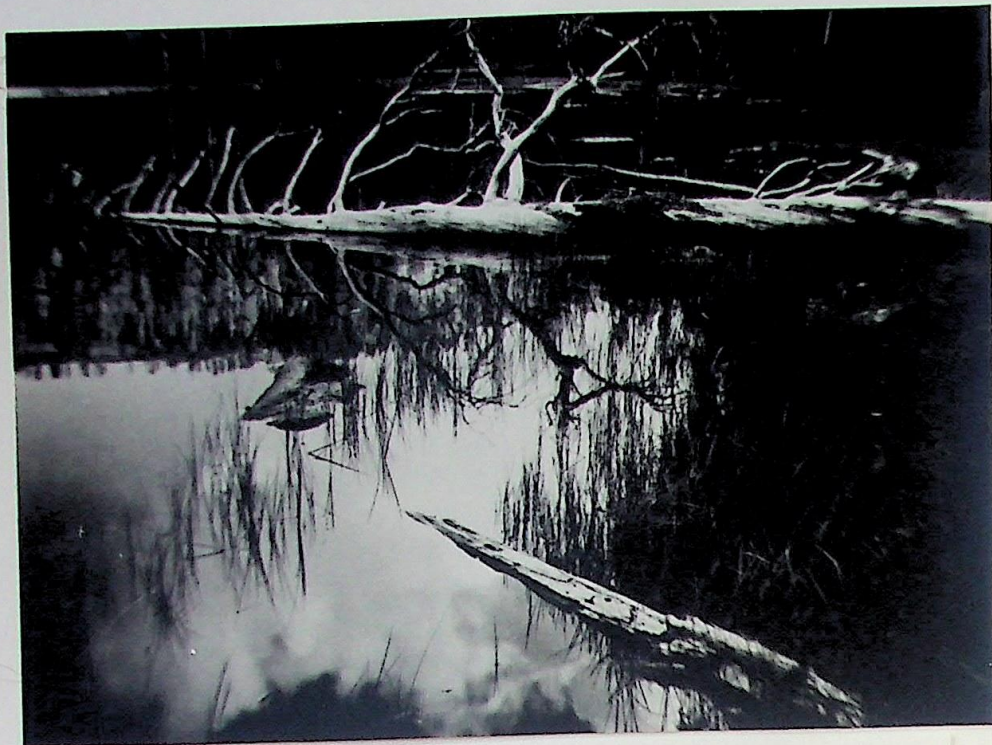
"The camera must be used for recording life - he wrote in his daybook - for rendering the very substance and quintessence of the thing itself ... I shall let no chance pass to record interesting abstractions, but I feel definite in my belief that the approach to photography is through realism".⁽⁴⁾

He called his approach the 'direct' approach and spoke of the camera's 'inherent honesty' which allowed him to look into the nature of things. And to present them 'in terms of their basic reality'. In other words, he was much concerned to get at truth, as any of his predecessors among the art photographers of 1900s, yet he disapproved of their means and called their successors 'photo painters'.

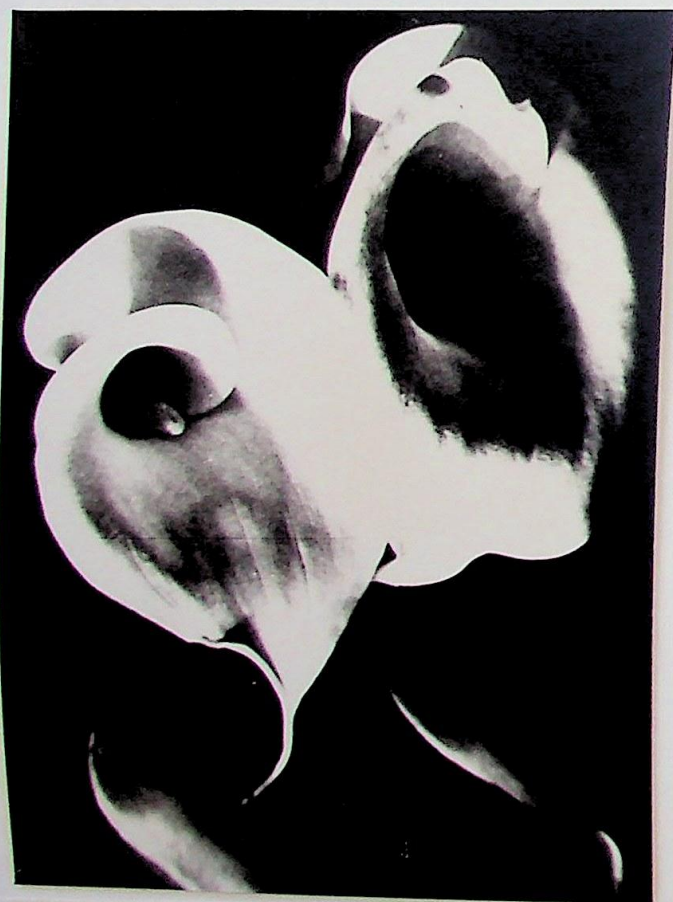
Edward Weston did not, as Stieglitz had done, cite natural laws as his guiding principle. He was not nearly so concerned with pictorial integration or harmony as Stieglitz had been, his pictures tend to be of rocks, trees, plants, bodies set against backgrounds and not forced with them. Weston had no quarrel with realism. His vision led him straight, often brutally direct, approach which made use of the phenomenon with powerful effects. It must be noted, however, that the rendering of detail alone was not his criterion; it was governed by his taste, imagination, and feeling for form. In short, Weston's is an extremist Art. He looked for whatever was most opulent and most complete. On the other-hand, he was drawn to whatever was most alienating, to extremes of desiccated and abandoned landscape. He was an ironist, in a very



20. Edward Weston White Dunes, California 1936 .



21. Ansel Adams Siesta Lake 1963 .



22. Imogen Cunningham Two Callas 1929.

fundamental sense, working always with regard for the twin poles of fullness and desiccation, life and death of the senses.

In 1932, a number of younger photographers, greatly impressed by Weston, and his work, formed a society to which they gave the name 'Group f.64'. The technical term f. 64. was chosen by a group of photographers in California as the name for an informal society dedicated to what they often called 'pure photography', since their most basic tenet was focus. 'Pure photography' was a reaction to the latter-day pictorialism that followed the demise of the photographic Salon of London and the Photo-Secession in America; it was a time when the weakest of soft focus pictures of the most banal subject matter and obvious composition was being widely exhibited and published

John Paul Edwards (1883-1958) a founding member of Group f. 64, as well as Edward Weston, Ansel Adams (plate No. 21) and Imogen Cunningham (plate No. 22), and Henry Swift, describes its formation:-

"In August 1932, a group of photographic purists met informally at a fellow workers studio for a discussion of the modern movement in photography. It was felt that these kindred interests could be fostered to mutual advantage by the formation of a small active working group. Such a group was formed and given the significant albeit provocative title 'Group f. 64. The group was strongly bound by appreciation of pure photography as a medium of personal expression. The purpose of Group f. 64 is not militant. It has no controversy with the photographic pictorialist. It does feel however that the greatest aesthetic beauty, the fullest power of expression, the real worth of the medium lies in its pure form rather than in its superficial modifications. The modern purist movement in photography emphasized by the work of Group f. 64 presents nothing essentially new, but is a definite renaissance. Group f. 64's goal technically was perfect renditions of the world as it is seen in the camera's eye, and it seemed the antithesis of the introspective photographer". (5)

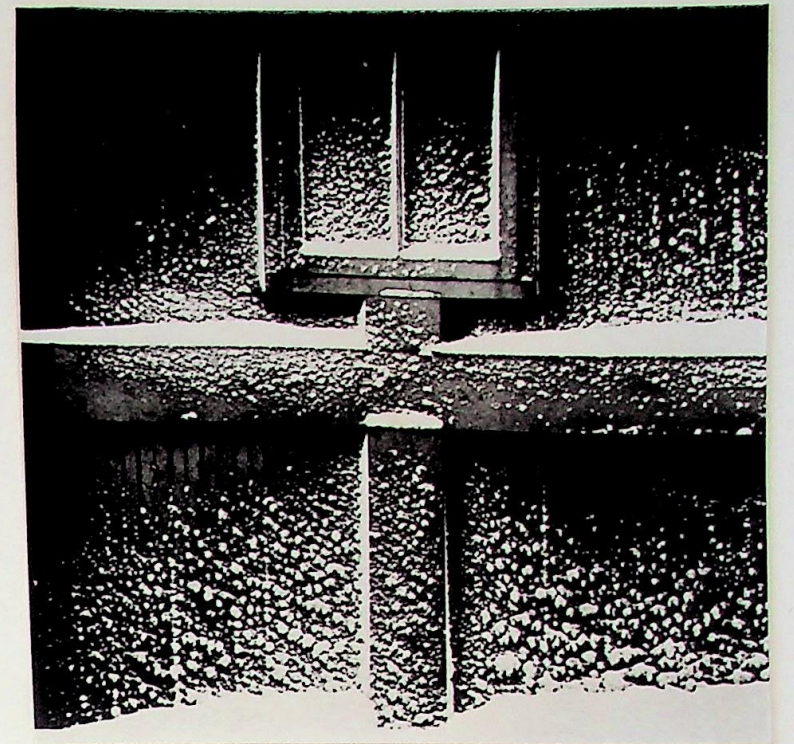
Shortly after the group was set up, members began to talk in strangely, nonobjective, almost mystical terms. "A photograph is an instrument

of love and revelation", proclaimed Ansel Adams, "that must see beneath the surfaces and record the quality of nature and humanity, which live in all things".⁽⁶⁾ Adam's leading disciple Minor White (plate No. 23), went even further; his precisely detailed photographs of rocks, icicles, driftwood and other objects were, he felt, 'inner landscapes discovered on a metaphysical voyage of self discovery through a camera'. But perhaps the inner most limits were reached by another photographer of this period. Aaron Siskind (plate No. 24), asked to comment on some close up pictures declared, "I'm not really interested in rocks. I am really interested in myself". It was a statement that no photographer a few decades earlier would have thought of making, but that no serious photographer in this period would consider at all strange.

The members of f. 64 held their own exhibitions, and for several years the group was the most progressive photographic society in America. Even after they disbanded, their influence persisted, and f. 64 came to be a convenient label for straight photography.

Photography, at this time, was fast emerging as a major tool of mass communications. A whole new territory of themes and contents was added to the range of legitimate subjects. In 1934, the U.S. Government itself institutionalized the photographic revolt. When economist Roy Stryker was called in to keep the Congressional budget-axe away from a programme for helping poor share croppers and tenant farmers, he decided photography was his best defence. He sent a squadron of photographers including, Dorothy Lange (plate No. 25), Walker Evans (plate No. 26), and Ben Shann

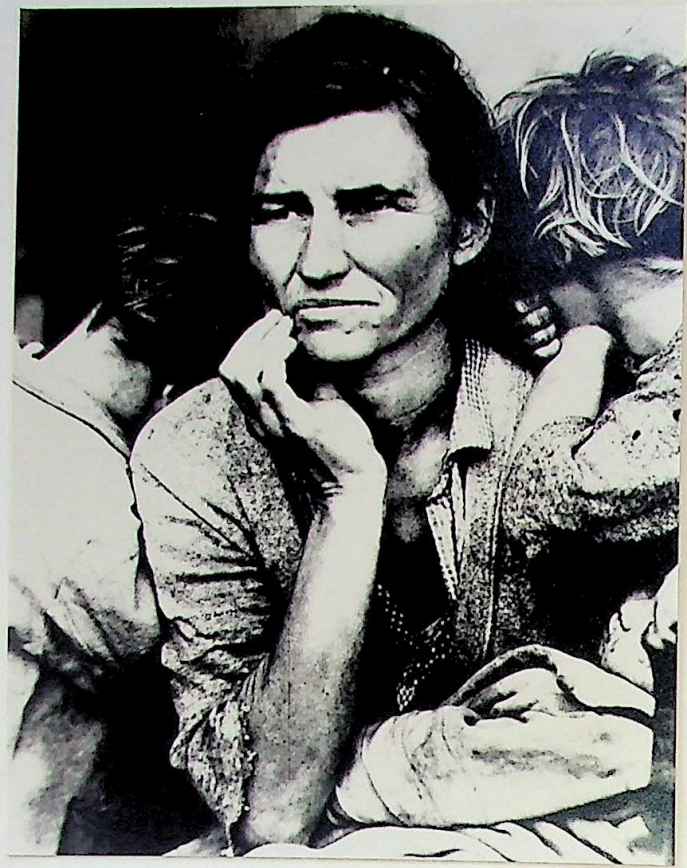
out into rural areas of poverty. There were a lot of difficulties that confronted these photographers. Their immediate subject was agrarian distress, but inevitably this raised larger issues of meaning and identity. Moreover, they were being asked to consider and to portray people, especially in the South, who had already been effectively typecast as hopeless cases. In American conditions in the thirties there were few hiding places, and the migrants were an easy prey to photographers. They brought back on film bitter truths about the farmers plight; their photographs, widely reproduced in newspapers and magazines, not only gave the farm programme a respite, but also inspired photographers all over the country to seek and tell the truth.



23. Minor White From Sequence The Book of Infinity 1959 .



24. Aaron Siskind From Most Crowded Block 1936 .



25. Dorothy Lange Migrant Mother 1936 .



26. Walker Evans Flood Refugees 1937 .

Spiritually, this generation of photography was a thundering success. Materially it gave little to many of the men and women from whom it asked and got so much. The realists had a remarkable sense of mission to portray as it really was - a pre-war world in one decade; a post-war world in the next - and they succeeded.

FOOTNOTES.

1. Camera Work, New York, No. 49/50, June 1917, page 36.
Beaumont Newhall, Photography, Images and Essays, 1972, page 223,
without full documentary evidence supplied.
2. Seven Arts, No. 11, May 1917, page 524/25. Ian Jeffrey,
Photography A Concise History, 1970, page 150, without full
documentary evidence supplied.
3. Quoted in the New York Times, March 28th, 1969, page 49.
4. Edward Westons Daybook, Volume 1, Mexico.
Rochester, New York, 1916, page 102.
5. Beaumont Newhall, Photography, Essays and Images, 1981, page 150,
without full documentary evidence supplied.
6. Time Life Great Photographers, 1980, page 194, without full
documentary evidence supplied.

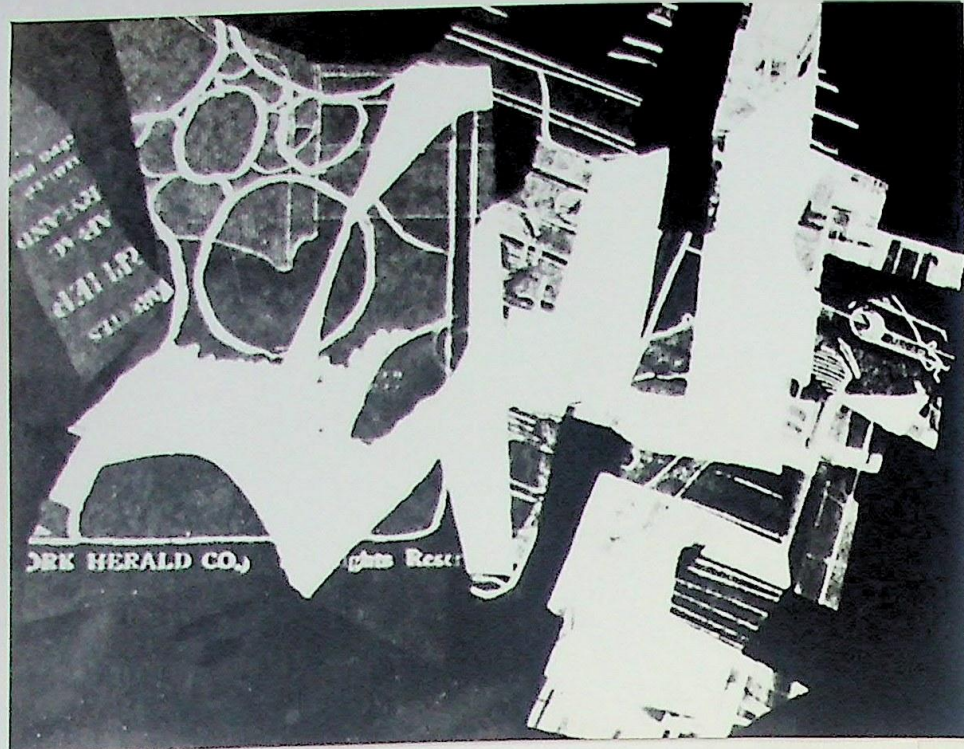
FURTHER EXPANSIONS OF PHOTOGRAPHIC BOUNDARIES.

After the war of 1914-18, photography entered a new phase - that of the 'New Photography' and appeared to concern itself with society rather than with nature. Belief in a right order inherent in nature waned somewhat, but did not disappear. Mankind, wilfully constructing and arranging approached the centre of the stage. Sane artists especially in Russia and Germany, imagined a new society built to new plans. A society in which artists and engineers would play leading roles. A new generation of photographers saw themselves as publicists and designers of this new order which was about to come into being. Others now mostly overlooked or relegated to the sidelines of Modernist photo-histories, clung to old values and asserted continuity with the past and the priority of nature.

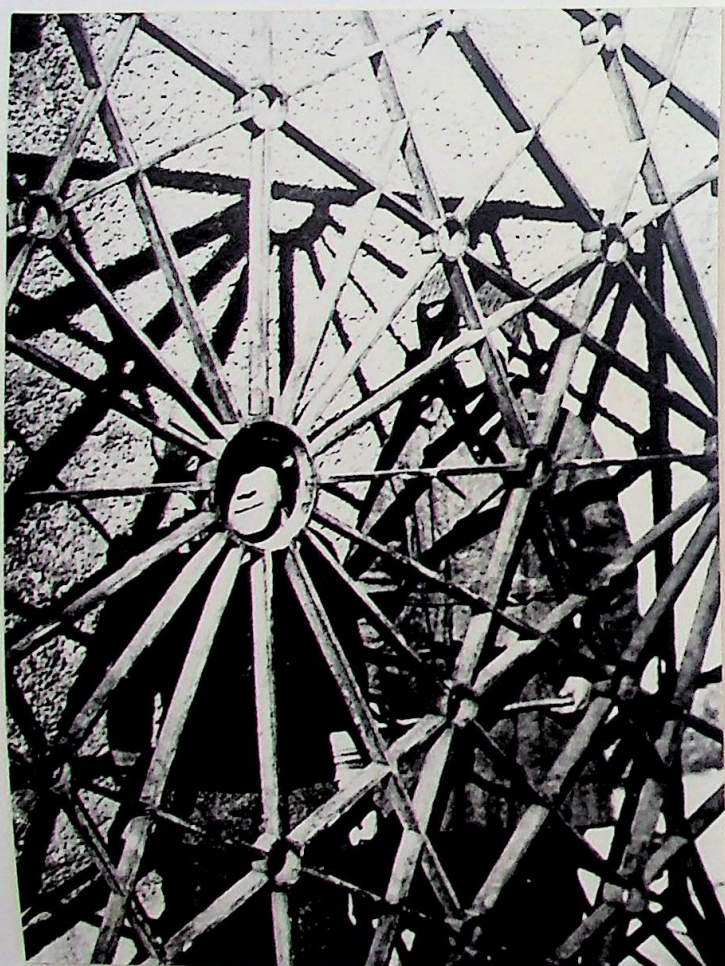
In 1913, Alvin Langdon Coburn (plate No. 27), the youngest member of the Linked Ring, the leading British society of pictorial photographers, was the first of the pictorialists to be captivated by the new abstract movement in painting. He had a one man show at the Goupil Gallery, London where he introduced a series of photographs under the title 'New York from its Pinnacles'. They were all views looking down and the distorted perspective emphasized the abstract pattern of streets and squares and building - views looking down from high sky-scrapers - that in their perspective he compared to cubism. In the catalogue he pointed out that one of them was almost as fantastic in its perspective as a cubist fantasy, but why should not the camera artist break away from the wornout conventions, that even in its comparatively short existence had begun to cramp and restrict his medium, and claim the freedom of expression which any art must have to be alive. He was encouraged by the Vorticist group of progressive British abstract artists, who gathered around writer Ezra Pound and painter Wyndham Lewis, he began working out the kaleidoscopic multi mirror device he named the Vortoscope, which distorted the optics of the camera so that the image became unrecognizable. Though short lived, these Vortographs' were the first experiments in this field, he urged, fellow photographers to investigate -



27. Alvin L. Coburn Vortographs 1917 .



28. Christian Schäd Schadograph 1918.



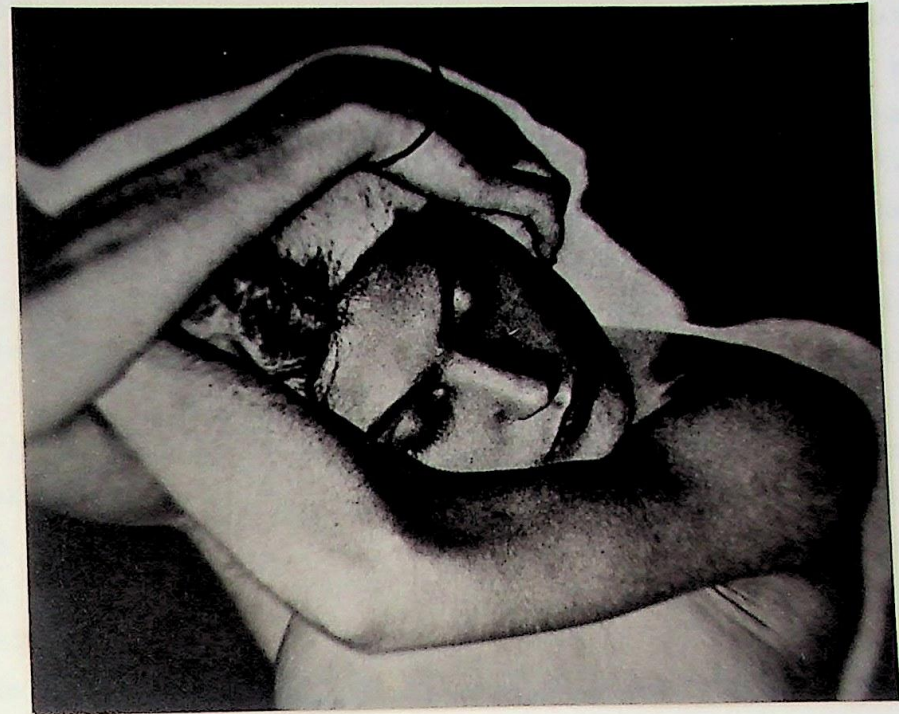
29. Laszlo Moholy Nagy Boys behind Iron Fence N.D.

"There was at that time a notion that the camera could not be abstract and I was out to disprove this. The vortographers were made with three mirrors clamped together in a triangle, into which the lens of the camera was projected, and through which various objects - bits of crystal and wood on a table with a glass top, were photographed, for the patterns amazed and fascinated me".⁽¹⁾

In 1918, Christian Schäd (plate No. 28), a member of the Zurich Dada group of modern artists, produced abstractions photographically without a camera. He laid cut out paper and flat objects on light sensitive paper which, upon exposure to light, recorded designs that closely resemble those cubist collages made of pieces of paper and other items stuck on to canvas. Photography's reputation increased especially in Germany where the Hungarian Laszlo Moholy-Nagy and Man Ray an American painter, began to make, quite independently, their somewhat similar Rayographs and photograms. Both constructivist abstract painters, became interested in the aesthetic potentials of photography in Berlin around 1920. Moholy-Nagy (plate No. 29) soon found out that the camera could be used as a tool for the visual discovery of forms; that rich abstract designs could be made with out the camera. He began making these 'photograms,' as he called them at the same time Man Ray (plate No. 30) was producing similar 'Rayographs'. They placed three dimensional objects on light sensitive paper and not only contours were recorded but texture and also cast shadows. Often several exposures were made each with different objects. Technically, the photogram is a revival of Talbot's photographic drawing. Aesthetically, however, it is entirely different. Talbot sought to exploit the representational characteristics of the medium. He related in The Athenaeum in 1839:-

"Upon one occasion, having made an image of a piece of lace of an elaborate pattern, I showed it to some person at the distance of a few feet, with the enquiry, whether it was a good representation? When the reply was, that they were not so easily to be deceived, for it was evidently no picture, but the piece of lace itself".⁽²⁾

Moholy-Nagy, on the other hand, found that the photogram opened up perspectives of a hitherto wholly unknown morphosis governed by optical laws peculiar to itself. "It is the most completely dematerialized medium which the new vision commands".⁽³⁾ The photogram is visually so closely related



30. Man Ray Sleeping Woman 1929 -

to abstract painting that it may be considered a branch of that artistic discipline. It was devised by painters, the most significant results have been achieved by them, Moholy-Nagy discovered the technique through painting, and more recent photogram maker Gyorgy Kepes, speaks of his products as 'photodrawings'. Moholy-Nagy was the moving spirit in Bauhaus photography. He thought that the photographic image should be a fresh original interpretation of visual experience and he himself created many abstract photographs inspired by - and in turn inspiring - abstract painting.

Man-Ray thought that much depended on his art as he wrote of his pictures as having a large social role. He was faced with the need to justify such individualistic work as his own in an era preoccupied with the problem of perpetuation of a race or class and the destruction of its enemies. His own pictures, of strikingly lit close-ups and fragments, glowing nudes, dreaming faces and images of shadow and light-traces, had to do, he claimed, with the lyrical expression of a common desire. His own particular emotions and desires lyrically expressed in photographs, contributed to the discovery of universal qualities in mankind, and challenged the divisiveness inherent in ideas of race and class. Man-Ray was a surrealist and a believer in the fundamental rectitude of the emotions, as against the constraining and belittling power of social convention.

In the United States itself, photographers worked for the betterment of society, although unsupported by such a powerful ideology as that of the Surrealists. In some respect the 'New Photographers' were innovators, certainly they experimented with new processes and styles. They sought out images that hint at control, they also referred, as if obsessed by opposites to subjectivism, spirit and nature, to forces not easily gauged and manipulated. Although both Man-Ray and Moholy-Nagy as painters looked upon photography as a means rather than an end, neither were unappreciative of the direct camera image. Man-Ray produced photographic portraits of uncompromising directness and he was the first to recognize the aesthetic value of Atget's photographs. Moholy-Nagy took quantities of photographs, wherever he travelled. What separates him, however from the straight photographer is that he discovered beauty after the photograph had been taken, and it did not matter to him who made the photograph or why it had been made.

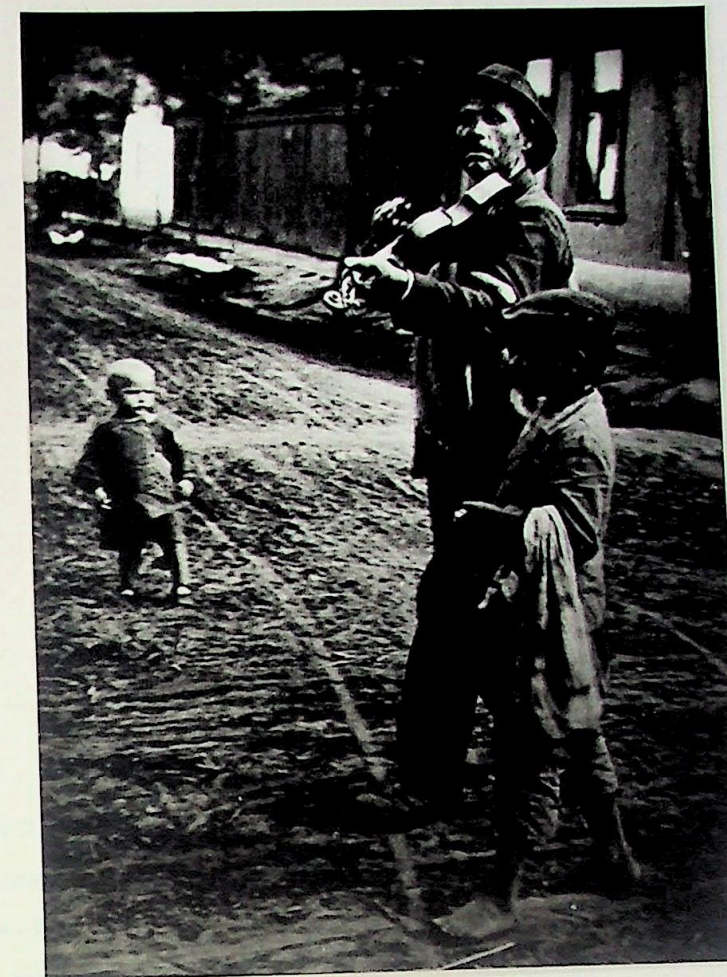
"Photography as a representational art is not merely a copy of nature. This is proven by the fact that a 'good' photograph is a rare thing. Among millions of photographs which appear in illustrated newspapers and books you will find only occasionally a really 'good photograph'".⁽⁴⁾

This is a summary of his theory, taken from his book - Painting, Photography, Film (1925).

In the throbbing avant - garde art world of the 1920s, photography played a major role. No longer did artists and critics look down upon the camera, they embraced it with enthusiasm. As we look over the art literature of the period, particularly German publications, we find a surprising interest in photography, even among art historians who previously had paid little attention to its significance. Many of the art periodicals of the 1920s had frequent reproductions of photographs and critical articles on photographers and their work. By the end of the decade, photography had become of sufficient importance in Germany, to organize a large and imposing International Exhibition 'Film and Foto' in Stuttgart in 1929. Where Moholy-Nagy and Man-Ray exhibited many of their prints, also Edward Weston, Imogen Cunningham, Charles Sheeler, and Edward Steichen.

Thus The Deutsche Werkbund (an organization seeking the reconciliation of art and technology), summed up the photographic contribution of the decade in a fashion not dissimilar to the International Exhibition of Pictorial Photography, organized by the Photo-Secession in the Albright Art Gallery in Buffalo in 1910. Both of these exhibitions marked the end of a period. What is remarkable is that half a century later, the selection of photographers and their work by these two societies has withstood the test of time. French photographers were altogether more equivocal about modernity than their German counterparts. They too were ideologists but chose, for the most part, to act on behalf of private life. They became and remained, skilled observers of everyday subjects. Their principal mentor, in photography was Andrew Kertesz (plate No. 31).

He was an enduring and substantial influence especially in French photography. Kertesz uncovered a whole range of significant imagery. His friends in Paris were the revolutionary artists of their day. Mondrian,



31. Andrew Kertesz Wandering Violinst 1921 Hungary.



32. Brassai Dance Hall, 1932 .



33. Robert Capa Images of War 1964 .

Leger, Chagall, Lurcat and Calder -each in revolt against art, morality and society. Brassai (plate No. 32), a disciple of Kertesz followed and expanded his principles. Like Kertesz he was committed to 'little happenings' a devotee of small transactions, intimate moments, glances. Both of these photographers were ironists invariably conscious of illusion and artifice. Although both took candid pictures, neither intruded to any great degree. Their subjects, in the streets and bistros were on home ground, in control of the situation. By 1935, however, circumstances were beginning to change, and 'human interest' photography changed accordingly. Where Kertesz and Brassai had distanced themselves from their subjects, their successors valued immediacy and looked continually for affecting pictures of man under stress. One of these photographers was David Seymour, born in Warsaw in 1911, and Robert Capa (plate No. 33), a Hungarian, both were killed in action, were daring and compassionate reporters. Both broke new ground, they had a positive vision of man as heroic and fraternal.

Henri Carter-Bresson (plate No, 34) a contemporary of Capa and Seymour, worked with a similar scheme in mind, and his name came to be virtually synonymous with photoreporting in post-war Europe. He travelled extensively, taking photographs nearly everywhere he went. During this period Britain's only equivalent to these photographers, was Bill Brandt, (plate No. 35), his emphasis was on a different sort of private experience, that of a traveller in search of welcoming space. A darkly introspective quality fills Brandt's documentary pictures, turning them into an intensely personal visual poetry.

In photography the recent past is marked both by a new self-consciousness and by an acute sense of tradition. Up to the 1950s, photographers worked for the sake of societies which might be informed if not always improved. Or they strove to declare impersonal truths - as Stieglitz did. From the 1950s onwards these impersonal forces were questioned.

Photographers continued to focus on nature and on society, but became increasingly concerned to declare personal viewpoints. Under the old rules meaning was social and accessible: Capa and Seymour, for example, addressed the public in traditional terms. In the sixties and seventies this common language was used sardonically - if at all. Confidence in public symbols, and a common destiny waned. Photography's new idiom was to be intimate,



34. Henri C. Bresson Children in Madrid 1933 .



35. Bill Brandt Young Housewife in Bethnal .
Green 1937 .



36. Robert Frank Political Rally, Chicago 1956 .

disconcerting, at times inscrutable. One of the first, and eventually, the most influential, of new photographers was Robert Frank (plate No. 36), a Swiss whose pictures have been featured in 'The Family of Man Exhibition', (1955). Frank's major work was *The Americans*. He dramatized the ordinary world of the human interest photographers. In retrospect, perhaps the three most important events in American photography during the fifties were the finding of 'Aperture' Magazine (1952), the organization of the 'Family of Man Exhibition', and the publication of Frank's book 'The Americans' (1959). The enthusiasm with which the exhibition was received had rarely been recorded at any exhibition, regardless of medium or subject. It was the last and greatest achievement of the group journalism concept of photography - in which the personal intentions of the photographer are subservient to a larger, overriding concept.

In contrast, the quarterly review 'Aperture' and Frank's 'The Americans' were both characteristic of the main thrust of the new photographers of the fifties. Aperture, which expressed the views of its chief founder and editor Minor White (1908-1976) reflected values that had grown out of American tradition defined by Alfred Stieglitz and enlarged by Ansel Adams and Edward Weston: a love for the eloquently perfect print an intense sensitivity to the mystical content of the natural landscape a belief in the existence of a universal formal language and a minimal interest in man as a social animal. In the twentieth issue of 'Aperture', Minor White published a tentative -

"Outline for the experiencing of photographs. The article stated that there are four kinds of photographs: documentary, pictorial, informational, and the equivalent. It was also stated 'no normal educated adult will find any difficulty with any of the pictures in the first three groups', but that the equivalent was a more complicated matter'. Alfred Stieglitz said it was a photograph that stood for a feeling he had about something other than the subject of the photograph'. In addition, the article continued an equivalent must 'evoke' a very special emotion ... a heightened emotion such as the East Indian would say 'takes one heaven-ward' or Bernard Berenson would say is 'life enhancing'. Minor White seemed to relax these standards drastically later in the article by saying that 'one of the safer identifying marks of the



37. Bruce Davidson East 100th Street
New York City 1966 .



37A. Bruce Davidson New Arrivals Being Processed
Before Entering Prison .



38. Danny Lyon Ellis Prison 1968, Texas .



39. Diane Arbus The Twins N.D.

equivalent is a feeling that for unstatable reasons some picture is decidedly significant to you' ".⁽⁵⁾

Minor White's magazine and Frank's book were characteristic of the New York of their time, in a sense that they were both uncompromisingly committed to a highly personal vision of the world, and to the proposition that photography could, in aesthetic terms clarify that vision. As one approaches the present, it becomes progressively more difficult to identify with confidence that figures who have significantly revised our understanding of photography's potential, it would in fact be a philosophical error to assume that such figures must exist. A given generation of artists are not obligated to revise its premises radically, merely because some previous generation did so. It may be the function of that generation to see to the efflorescence of ideas that were defined at an earlier time. Bruce Davidson, (plate No. 37), Danny Lyon (plate No. 38), and Diane Arbus, and others who came to the fore in the sixties dealt in alienation, danger and loneliness. Diane Arbus (plate No. 39) favoured the confrontational mode used by some of her contemporaries. She worked close to her subject like Davidson. Her photographs stand the social world on its head. Her subject was convention and its meaning in a socialized world. She discovered a fundamental melancholy in the human condition, a melancholy only dispelled by artifice and imagination. The 'real world', a gloomy backdrop, is best shut out. Diane Arbus was not a theorist, but an artist. Her concern was not to buttress philosophical traditions but to make pictures. Her pictures challenge the basic assumptions on which most so called documentary photography has been assumed to rest. They are concerned with private rather than social realities with psychological rather than visual coherence. Her real subject is no less than the unique interior lives of those she photographed.

One of the most interesting and suggestive developments in photography during this period was colour photography. Among the twenty or thirty outstanding artists working in the 1950/60 era, it is likely that only two - Eliot Porter (plate No. 40) and Ernst Hass (plate No. 41), would have said that their most important photographs were in colour. In the fifties and the early sixties, Helen Levitt and Elliot Porter made photographs which demonstrated that colour, like other aspects of pictorial form, was not necessarily a distinct issue, but could be seen as an organic



40. Elliot Porter Silk Worm N.D.



41. Ernst Hass Corner of 38th Street, 1952



42. Elliot Porter Untitled N.D.

part of meaning. Porter's work described the aboriginal landscape and Levitt's the crowded street theatre of the city, but the best work of each absorbed colour into a seamless fabric of perception that was responsive to their sense of the subject. Already work had been done in every field with colour, practically every photographer has worked with the new technique. The line between the photographer and the painter is no more clearly drawn than in colour photography. Imitation is fatal. By the nature of his medium, the photographer's vision must be rooted in reality; if he attempts to create his own world of colour he faces a double dilemma: his results have no longer that unique quality we can only define as 'photographic', and he quickly discovers that with only three primary colours modulated in intensity by three emulsions obeying sensitometric laws, he cannot hope to rival the painter with the range of pigments, which he can place at will upon the canvas. On the other hand the painter cannot hope to rival the accuracy, detail and above all the authenticity of the photograph. Edward Weston stated, writing about his work he did in 1940:-

"So many photographs - and paintings too, for the matter are just tinted black and white. The prejudice many photographers have against colour photography, comes from not thinking of colour as form. You can say things in colour that can't be said in black and white Those who say that colour will eventually replace black and white are talking nonsense. The two do not compete with each other. They are different means to different ends."⁽⁶⁾

Colour allowed habitual contexts to be seen afresh, and made possible an innocence of vision. It also opened photography to a whole range of concerns which came traditionally within the aegis of painting. Manuel Bravo, in the sixties, when colour was of concern to only a few American photographers, made pictures such as 'Verde', in which a green wall ironically carries the colour of foliage implied by the dark shadow of a leafy tree. In 1979 Harry Callahan made a witty substitution with a detail of a building in Ireland in which a colour-washed wall doubles as the sky. It is difficult to visualise a future for photography in which many more aspects of colour are not explored, and though much pioneering work has been done in this area by photographers already mentioned, a relatively uncharted field lies open to those who can bring energy, imagination and spirit to it. Never before has the photographer had more

flexible materials, more precise tools, and more technical control - than at present. Its boundaries are daily being pushed further and further. The world of art, however, does not progress in the cumulative way so characteristic of science and technology: our painting, music, architecture, differ from those of other generations, not in quality but in style, approach, content and form. Technique gives an age the means to paint, to compose and to build; man's spirit, his will to form, shapes vision. Like the other arts, the art of photography has its progression of style. The present style seems based on trends which have dominated photography in Europe and America since 1910, when the painterly approach fostered by the pictorialists lost its significance and force.

More and more are turning to photography as a medium of expression and communication. While it is too soon to define the characteristic of the photographic style today, one common denominator, rooted in tradition, seems in the ascendancy: the direct use of the camera for what it can do best, and that is the revelation, interpretation and discovery of the world of man and of nature. The greatest challenge to the photographer is to express the inner significance through the outward form.

FOOTNOTES.

1. Letter to Beaumont Newhall, April 1947. Beaumont Newhall, The History of Photography, 1972, page 161, documentary evidence not supplied.
2. Athenaeum, February 9th, 1839, page 115. Beaumont Newhall, The History of Photography, 1972, page 163, without documentary evidence supplied.
3. The Listner, 1938, page 686. Beaumont Newhall, The History of Photography, 1972, page 163, without documentary evidence supplied.
4. The Future of The Photographic Porcess, 1929. Beaumont Newhall, Photography, Essays and Images, 1972, page 239, without documentary evidence supplied.
5. Aperture, Volume 5, No. 4 (1957), page 156. Beaumont Newhall, The History of Photography, 1972, page 194, without documentary evidence supplied.
6. Modern Photography, December 1953, page 54. Beaumont Newhall, The History of Photography, 1972, page 194, without full documentary evidence supplied.

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