Mirrors and Windows
American Photography since 1960

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

July 28–October 2, 1978

This exhibition has been made possible by generous support from Philip Morris Incorporated and the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington, D.C.



List of Photographers

Robert Adams
Diane Arbus
Bill Arnold
Lewis Baltz
Anthony Barboza
Joseph Bellanca
Jim Bengston
Richard Benson
Gary Beydler
Paul Caponigro
Walter Chappell
Michael Ciavolino
William Clift
Mark Cohen
Linda Connor
Marie Cosindas
Robert Cumming
Darryl Curran
William Current
Joseph Dankowski
Judy Dater
Bruce Davidson
Roy DeCarava
John M. Divola, Jr.
William Eggleston
Elliott Erwitt
Reed Estabrook
Larry Fink
Lee Friedlander
William Gedney
Ralph Gibson
Frank Gohlke
Emmet Gowin
Jan Groover
Ernst Haas
Charles Hagen
Betty Hahn
Gary L. Hallman
Charles Harbutt
Chauncey Hare
Dave Heath
Robert Heinecken
Richard P. Hume
Scott Hyde
Christopher P. James
Ken Josephson
Simpson Kalisher
Colleen Kenyon
Irwin B. Klein
George Krause
Leslie Krims
William Larson
Helen Levitt
Sol LeWitt
Jerome Liebling
Danny Lyon
Joan Lyons
Nathan Lyons
Michael McLoughlin
Jerry McMillan
Larry McPherson
Robert Mapplethorpe
Roger Mertin
Ray K. Metzker
Sheila Metzner
Joel Meyerowitz
Duane Michals
Richard Misrach
John Mott-Smith
Nicholas Nixon
Tetsu Okuhara
Arthur Ollman
Bill Owens
Tod Papageorge
Gianni Penati
Sylvia Plachy
Eliot Porter
Douglas Prince
Edward Ranney
Robert Rauschenberg
Leland Rice
Edward Ruscha
Lucas Samaras
Naomi Savage
Stephen Shore
Art Sinsabaugh
Keith A. Smith
Rosalind Solomon
Eve Sonneman
Wayne Sorce
Lew Thomas
George A. Tice
Jerry N. Uelsmann
Max Waldman
Todd Walker
Andy Warhol
Henry Wessel, Jr.
Geoff Winningham
Garry Winogrand
Bill Zulpo-Dane



Far left: JERRY N. UELSMANN. Untitled. 1964. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Purchase

Above: GEOFF WINNINGHAM. *Tag Team Action*. 1971. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. John Spencer Fund

Mirrors and Windows

This exhibition attempts a critical overview of the art of photography as it has evolved in the United States during the past twenty years. With few exceptions, the selection is limited to the work of photographers who have come to public attention during the past two decades. This definition excludes many major contemporary figures whose work was already a significant force by the 1950s.

The changes in American photography during this period have been profound, and reflect mutations in the professional circumstances and artistic environment in which the photographer has worked. In the earlier days of its brief history, photography was considered an esoteric craft. In this setting, most photographers performed a role similar to that of the scribe in illiterate cultures: they recorded and interpreted things that others found of interest. As photography became easy, almost everyone came to make photographs, and the special social function of the serious photographer was progressively eroded. In these circumstances, his work became increasingly personal, and often increasingly private.

After World War II, the rapid expansion of photographic education in the art schools created a new intimacy, and a heightened mutual curiosity, between photographers and artists working in traditional forms. This new rapport resulted in extensive borrowing among the various media. Included in this exhibition are representative photographic works by artists who do not call themselves photographers, but whose work has helped broaden our sense of the medium's potentials.

The characteristic work of younger photographers during this period has been committed to a highly personal vision of the world, and to the proposition that photography can, in aesthetic terms, clarify that vision. Within this broad consensus, a significant but undefined divergence of view has existed. This divergence might be described in terms of the difference between the goal of self-expression and that of exploration—between the romantic and the realist visions of artistic possibilities.

The distinction might reflect alternative views of the artistic function of the exterior world. The romantic view is that the meanings of the world are dependent on our own understandings, and that a work of art serves as a metaphor for the subjective and independent apprehension of meaning experienced by an artist at work. It is the realist view that the world consists of discoverable patterns of intrinsic meaning, and that by discovering these patterns, and forming models or symbols of them with the materials of his art, the artist is joined to a larger intelligence.

The word realist is used here to denote an interest not only in the surface appearance of things but also in objective structure, and the logic of process and system. The word romantic is used not to suggest a similarity to any historic style but to identify the central presence in the picture of its maker, whose sensibility is the picture's ultimate subject, and the standard against which its success is measured.

The view proposed here is meant to describe a difference, not a dichotomy. It is not intended as a method of dividing recent photography into two discrete parts. On the contrary, the model is that of a continuous axis, the two poles of which might be defined in the terms proposed above.

The two creative motives that are contrasted in this exhibition are each part of a larger, single, plastic tradition. The prejudices and inclinations expressed by the pictures shown here recall those that are familiar from older disputes. In the photography of a half century ago, a similar divergence might be noted between the work of the romantic Alfred Stieglitz and the realist Eugène Atget. The distance between them is to be measured not by the relative force or originality of their work, but by their conceptions of what a photograph is: is it a mirror, reflecting a portrait of the artist who made it, or is it a window, through which one might better know the world?

John Szarkowski, Director
Department of Photography

Mirrors and Windows

American Photography since 1960
by John Szarkowski

Published on the occasion of the exhibition is this review of American photography in the past two decades. John Szarkowski, Director of the Department of Photography at the Museum, discusses the polarity between photographers of an essentially romantic tendency who see art as a mirror, reflecting the self, and those who might be called realists, viewing art as a window, a means of exploration. He analyzes significant changes in photography since 1960, including the diminution of opportunities for the professional photographer, the demise of many picture magazines, the explosive growth of photographic education, and the increasing recognition of the photographic potentials of color.

152 pages, 127 plates (17 in color), 7 reference illustrations

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Lectures

Tuesday, September 19, 8:30 p.m.
Robert Adams
Robert Cumming
Joan Lyons

Tuesday, September 26, 8:30 p.m.
John M. Divola, Jr.
Jan Groover
Henry Wessel, Jr.

Six photographers from across the country will give illustrated talks about their work. Their diverse attitudes toward photography suggest the wide range of work reported in this major exhibition, which examines the changes in American photography during the past two decades.

Advance tickets may be obtained at the Lobby Information Desk at $3, Members $2, Students $1, or by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope with payment to Education Department, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, New York 10019.

These lectures have been made possible by generous support from Philip Morris Incorporated and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Schedule of the Exhibition

The Museum of Modern Art, New York
July 28–October 2, 1978

Cleveland Museum of Art
November 13, 1978–January 1, 1979

Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minn.
January 29–March 11, 1979

J. B. Speed Art Museum, Louisville, Ky.
April 1–May 15, 1979

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
June 7–July 29, 1979

University of Illinois, Krannert Art Museum
Champaign, Ill.
August 19–September 23, 1979

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, Va.
November 12–December 23, 1979

Milwaukee Art Center
January 10–March 2, 1980

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