

**TIGHT BINDING**

**THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART**

**11 WEST 53 STREET**

**ADMIT ONE**

**ADDRESS BY**

**HONORABLE NELSON A. ROCKEFELLER**

**IN THE AUDITORIUM AT 8:45 P.M.**

**AND PREVIEW OF**

**THE FAMILY OF MAN**

**MONDAY JANUARY TWENTY-FOURTH**

**THIS TICKET IS NOT TRANSFERABLE**

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# THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53 STREET, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

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FOR RELEASE: TUESDAY,  
January 25, 1955

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ADDRESS BY THE HONORABLE NELSON A. ROCKEFELLER  
Special Assistant to the President of the United States  
at the Preview of  
THE FAMILY OF MAN  
January 24, 1955, at The Museum of Modern Art

It is a warmly gratifying privilege to welcome you here and to share with you the moving experience of viewing the Museum's exhibition on The Family of Man.

I am sure that all of you have found, just as I have, that recourse to works of art yields a refreshment of the spirit that can be attained in no other way. For the artist sees with an eye that is clearer and more penetrating than the vision of ordinary perception; and his craftsmanship communicates to us, with the excitement of new awareness, insights that we may have sensed but were never able to formulate.

Tonight we are offered the high spiritual and intellectual adventure of sharing and making our own the perceptive insight of a great creative artist -- Captain Edward Steichen. His leadership in obtaining acceptance of photography as an art has been recognized throughout the world. Through this art he has been able to communicate his deep sympathy and love for man, his contagious zest for the flowing stream of life, and his undeviating respect for the inherent dignity of the human spirit.

In this exhibition -- a culminating expression of his great insight -- his medium of communication is much more than a collection of magnificent photographs, although no one can fail to sense and be moved by the beauty of the pictures he has selected. The boldness of Steichen's conception and the reach of the imagination that he invites us to share rests in his creation of an entire exhibition, drawn from all over the world, as one unified work of art.

Like all works of art, this exhibition will carry as many and varied meanings as the individual minds it may touch. To me it says three things with the dramatic and convincing force of reaffirmed truth.

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First, it creates a sense of kinship with mankind. Here are a variety of elemental human experiences common to all of the peoples of this earth. These experiences derive from a set of human relationships that are the common heritage of all -- the relations of man to man, of man to his physical environment, and of man to his fellows. In pattern these relationships are as varied as the shape of snowflakes, but in quality they are as immutable as the law of gravity. In their universal applicability to all human beings, they cut across the barriers of time, place, climate, race, language, religion, nationality, ideology and culture pattern.

In the exhibition you will see, there is spread out before you a great pageant of the relationships and experiences that are common to all men at all times -- a pageant not of events that have happened, but of experiences that matter. Here are the relationships of the lover to beloved, of mother to child, of father to son, of children in the family and in the community. Here is the incredibly old, the never-changing and ever-changing relationship of men and women at work -- on the land, as artisans, in household tasks, in industries and the professions.

Here is play and laughter, and the enjoyment of the good things of life -- food and drink, music and the dance, lazing in the sun, and communing with one's friends. Here is the high adventure of learning and teaching, of law and government -- from the local village council to the United Nations. Here are the deep personal emotions of men and women and children -- courage, noble and inspiring, loneliness and compassion, worship, resignation and revolt, hope and worry and suffering. Finally, here is the universal experience of death and loss through death, and the ever-recurring miracle of new birth, new youth, a new stream of life.

There is a second message to be read from this profession of Edward Steichen's faith. It demonstrates that the essential unity of human experience, attitude and emotion are perfectly communicable between all peoples through the medium of pictures. The solicitous eye of the Bantu father, resting upon the son who is learning to throw his primitive spear in quest of food, is the eye of every father, whether in Montreal, Paris, or in Tokyo. There is not a child in Manaus or Monrovia or Jakarta

who cannot ride with the children of New York upon their gaudy, joyous carrousel in Central Park. Everyone in the world can savor and be nourished by the food and drink at the simple repasts in India, France and Russia, at the hot-dog stand in America, or from the lunch pail of the workman perched on the towering skeleton of a skyscraper of steel.

With cameras in many hands throughout the world, and through the sensitive selectivity of his own artistic perception, Steichen has found a means of communicating to individuals everywhere their inherent kinship with individuals anywhere. In his hands the art of photography has brought into sharp focus a basis for human understanding.

Here is hope that such instant understanding may eventually extend to all human relationships.

The further we move from the basic relations of man to man or man to environment that are dealt with here, the more formidable grow the barriers to a common basis of understanding. It is when we move into the more complex and organized relationships among groups of peoples that our sense of the unity of human purpose falters.

There is a great and weighty need for peoples to learn to speak to peoples, for, despite the technological achievements in communication of the modern world, we have failed to break through the barriers between man and man.

There is one picture, and one only, that you will see recurring in a number of the individual sections into which the exhibition is divided. It is the picture of a boy playing a flute. His reed flute seems to be offering a commentary, now gay, now sombre and grave to the unfolding pageant of which he is a part. I think of him as the artist brooding over what he observes, searching for meaning and unity, and attempting to give it expression through the instrument he commands. Is it not possible that the keen perception and creative power of the artist can help us to see each other more clearly and with greater understanding?

There is yet a third and more profound truth for us all in this exhibition. Steichen's beautiful demonstration of the community of experience and aspiration in fundamental human relations gives us hope

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that we can find the basis for a broad community of interest in the more complicated relationships of mankind. It gives us hope that in all human relationships we can find a common framework of objectives -- objectives broad enough to encompass the hopes and aspirations of all mankind.

In the words of President Eisenhower:

"It is time for all of us to renew our faith in ourselves and in our fellow men. The whole world has been far too preoccupied with fears. It is time for people throughout the world to think again of hopes, of the progress that is within reach."