

# THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS BY WILLIAM A. M. BURDEN, PRESIDENT OF THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE OPENING OF THE FAMILY OF MAN EXHIBITION

JANUARY 24, 1955

Thank you Carl Sandburg.

You have just heard a poet's interpretation of the great exhibition we are  
are to see tonight.

I am very happy to welcome you here tonight at the Museum of Modern Art for  
a preview of THE FAMILY OF MAN, an exhibition of creative photography, dedicated  
to the dignity of man.

Captain Edward Steichen conceived the idea of this exhibition five years ago.  
He had been Director of the Museum's Department of Photography for 3 years, coming  
here, as I am sure you all know, after an extraordinary series of achievements -  
as a pioneer in introducing Europe's great modern painting and sculpture to this  
country, as a Captain in the United States Navy in World War II, as a great photo-  
grapher himself, and as the man who helped give photography its place among the  
other, older visual arts.

Many of you undoubtedly saw two famous exhibitions Captain Steichen directed  
at the Museum before he joined our staff as a Department head - ROAD TO VICTORY  
and POWER IN THE PACIFIC. In these exhibitions, which were followed by others,  
Captain Steichen created a new art form, a kind of exhibition that was more than  
the sum of its parts, that held a meaning and conveyed a message above and beyond  
that of any single picture.

He pioneered in art and found new roads to men's hearts and minds; they were  
high roads because he always scorned the trick, the fake, and always insisted on a  
high standard of quality for each individual picture he showed. And the roads  
he followed led to men's hearts as well as their minds, because in all his life  
Steichen has kept the individual human being, man, at the center of whatever he  
did.

This is a man who sets his sights high. But never in his career has he had so  
vast a dream, so broad a theme as THE FAMILY OF MAN. The amount of work the

more...

project demanded was so tremendous that few could see how it could be realized - few except Captain Steichen. He is not one to give up. Through him, gradually, the impossible became possible.

This is what happens often with great ideas - they generate new energy and create force of their own that overcomes the greatest obstacles. Today we are not only ready to accept the concept of this exhibition and its message of hope and dignity, but to recognize the great need it fills.

This great exhibition, THE FAMILY OF MAN, contains more than 500 photographs taken in 68 countries. These 500 were selected from 10,000 photographs which were studied and compared and looked at by Captain Steichen and his assistant Wayne Miller. And before those 10,000 were selected, Captain Steichen and Mr. Miller estimate they looked at between two and four million pictures. An international appeal was sent out and photographs came into the Museum in a steady stream from all parts of the world. Captain Steichen went to Europe to seek material, regional meetings were organized across the width of our own country and the great photo files of magazines and of agencies were reviewed and photographer's studios visited. In an old loft on 52nd Street, Captain Steichen and his staff worked through many long nights, selecting, rejecting, creating this exhibition from the great work done by photographers all over the world.

Captain Steichen, you have said so much in the exhibition that we will all see this evening that it hardly seems fair to ask you to say more, but I think we would all like to pay a tribute to a great idea - and a great man.

(Captain Steichen read a few lines that are on a wall in the exhibition - from the Charter of the United Nations)

"We the peoples of the United Nations (are)

Determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of War which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal right of men and women and of nations large and small."

(Mr. Burden) Thank you, Captain Steichen. I am particularly glad that in our audience tonight, the first persons to view this exhibition, there are so many representatives of the United Nations from all parts of the world, as well as

men and women in other spheres of activity - writers, artists, public servants - concerned with the dignity and worth of the human person, wherever he may be.

It means a great deal to us to have at the Museum tonight a man who is and always has been one of our warmest friends and patrons, who has served this institution for many years as its President and whose interest in this exhibition is not limited to his interest in art, but who has dedicated his life to furthering the concepts characterized here tonight (man's hope and dignity) in public service here and abroad for his government and as a private individual.

I am happy to present Nelson A. Rockefeller, Special Assistant to the President of the United States.

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