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# THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53RD STREET, NEW YORK

FOR RELEASE Saturday afternoon or  
Sunday morning, March 13 or 14, 1937

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When the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53d Street, New York City, opens its first exhibition of photography on Wednesday, March 17, the public will find among the more than 800 items a camera obscura which the spectators can enter to see the inverted image cast on a sheet of ground glass inside the camera by the entrance of light through a lens in the camera. It was Aristotle who, in the fourth century B. C., noted this phenomenon: i.e. that light entering a minute hole in the wall of a darkened room casts on the opposite wall an inverted image of whatever lies outside the hole. In the sixteenth century a lens was substituted for the minute hole, thus making the image brighter. In this period the camera obscura was quite literally a dark room into which the draftsman entered. By tracing the outlines of the projected image, he obtained an accurate drawing of whatever happened to be outside the room.

In the eighteenth century the principle of the camera obscura was further developed by fitting a small box with a lens at one end and a hooded translucent screen at the other end. The draftsman pointed the lens at the scene he wished to draw, placed a thin piece of paper over the screen (or ground glass) and traced the outlines of the image within range of the hole or lens.

Shown in the Exhibition of Photography: 1839-1937 will be not only a camera obscura which the public may enter but also an actual eighteenth-century portable camera obscura which will show how the artist traced the outlines of the image on a piece of paper. In addition to this pre-photographic apparatus, the Museum will show a camera for each technique developed since 1835. Among these will be an early camera used by Talbot, the inventor of the calotype (photographs from a paper negative); a complete outfit for making daguerreotypes; a camera of the collodion (wet plate) period with a dark tent in which the collodion plate had to be made immediately before exposure; the first model Kodak in 1888; the first folding Kodak; and so on up to the very latest miniature camera.

The exhibition, including more than 800 items, will fill the four floors of the Museum. In addition to the early photographic apparatus, it will consist principally of fine examples of photography produced during the past 98 years, half of which will be the work of contemporary photographers. Supplementing the main historical sequence of the exhibition will be sections devoted to color, x-ray, infra-red ray, astronomical, aerial, stroboscopic, meteorological, press photography, and motion pictures. The exhibition has been assembled from private and museum collections in Europe and America by Beaumont Newhall, Librarian of the Museum of Modern Art. It will be open to the public through Sunday, April eighteenth.