

The Museum of Modern Art

11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 956-6100 Cable: Modernart

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ONE-EYED DICKS, a continuously projected 14-minute film comprised of photographs taken by triggered, automatic cameras during bank robberies, will be on view from July 31 through October 3 in the Steichen Galleries of The Museum of Modern Art.

William Burback, Curatorial Intern in the Department of Photography and director of the exhibition, notes that the show challenges the idea that a photograph is necessarily the product of a photographer's unique vision, realized through a series of decisions based upon aesthetic considerations. According to Mr. Burback, "The 'hold up' pictures, which are not presumed to be art, are the result of chance and accidental arrangements of architecture, bank patrons, cops, and robbers alike." The visual material exists purely as evidence of an action (the robbery) and a process (automatic photography). "The pictures are not shown because they are particularly beautiful or important but because they resist conventional aesthetic criteria," adds Mr. Burback.

Once activated during a bank robbery, the automatic camera snaps pictures at the rate of two per second on a roll of 35mm film. For ONE-EYED DICKS, sequences from various robberies were optically printed on super-8 movie film in order to show a large number of photographs. Each separate picture remains on the screen for almost one second, to retain the sense of a still photograph. Except for these measures to facilitate presentation, the chosen sequences were not altered or edited in any way.

As each image is visible for slightly less than one second, the conventional spectator-photograph relationship is changed. Viewing becomes an act of scanning a large number of photographs, rather than focusing on single pictures.

(more)

While these incidental photographs were decidedly not made with a consciousness of art history, they do suggest the attitudes of certain artists, as exemplified by the following quote from Andy Warhol: "Machines have less problems. I'd like to be a machine, wouldn't you?" While the pictures are, in themselves, neutral, they can make these attitudes more accesible and understandable while, at the same time, "it is hoped that this exhibition of incidental pictures can relax our usual aesthetic expectations and expand our sense of the photographic tradition," Mr. Burback concludes.

The material for the show was made available with the cooperation of the Chase Manhattan Bank, the Manhattan Savings Bank, the Dry Dock Savings Bank, Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company, and the Holmes Electric Protective Company.

Additional information available from Mark Segal, Assistant, and Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10019. (212) 956-7296 (7501).

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ONE-EYED DICKS

Wall Label

"Machines have less problems. I'd like to be a machine, wouldn't you?"

-Andy Warhol

THE DEVICE AS PICTURE-MAKER: These photographs were taken every half-second by triggered, automatic cameras during bank robberies, when aesthetic considerations were irrelevant. Free of temperament, the translation from event to picture was entirely mechanical. The pictures were made to be used as evidence in courts of law.

In regarding photographs as works of art we can easily limit our viewing of them to preconceived notions. The "hold up" pictures, which are not presumed to be art, are the result of chance and accidental arrangements of architecture, bank patrons, cops, and robbers alike. The changing kaliediscopic patterns may at first seem humorous and then disconcerting as we find how little we understand of the printed event. Realizing that the pictures do not entirely satisfy our curiosity, we may begin scanning them for visual ingredients as well as clues to content. The pictures are not shown because they are particularly beautiful or important but because they resist conventional aesthetic criteria. Ordinary, everyday photographs such as these have added a new dimension to the way we see the world. It is hoped that this exhibition of incidental pictures can relax our usual aesthetic expectations and expand our sense of the photographic tradition.

William Burback

The pictures, originally shot on 35mm film, have been optically printed on super-8mm movie film in order to show a large number of the photographs as they were taken.