

# The Museum of Modern Art

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

NO. 11

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## MICHAEL SNOW FILM AND PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITIONS AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

The work of Michael Snow, one of the important avant-garde artists of the past 15 years, will be featured at The Museum of Modern Art in a dual exhibition of large-scale photographic works and a film retrospective both opening February 19. Michael Snow will be present to introduce the film series at 8:00 p.m. beginning with his three-hour work "La Région Centrale." The series includes the premiere of "Breakfast."

The photography exhibition, part of the Museum's PROJECTS series devoted to the work of younger artists, is directed by Dennis Longwell, Assistant Curator of Photography, and will be on view in the third-floor Steichen Galleries through April 25.


In conjunction with the entire program, which has been made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Museum is sponsoring a special symposium on Monday, February 23 and 6:00 p.m. on "The Artist as Filmmaker: Michael Snow." The three panelists will be Richard Foreman, playwright and director of the Ontological Hysteric Theatre, filmmaker Hollis Frampton, and Pierre Theberge, Curator at the National Gallery of Canada. Regina Cornwell, critic, teacher, and guest programmer of the film series, will be moderator.

Snow belongs to the tradition of artists, such as Marcel Duchamp, Man Ray, and Moholy-Nagy, who have worked in more than one medium. Both his films and his photography, however, show a consistent concern with the properties of light and color and the formal devices inherent in the medium in which he is working.

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In his films, Snow often deals with either continual camera movement or total stasis of the camera. Stasis is employed in "One Second in Montreal" (1969), composed solely of stills of wintry park sites in Montreal; it is also used in "Side Seat Paintings Slides Sound Film," and "A Casing Shelved," both of 1970.

In "Wavelength" (1967) the camera also remains stationary, zooming in slowly on one spot, eliminating from view more and more of the space of the eighty-foot loft in which it is situated.

Camera movement is used in a work titled by the sign  (1968-69), which is a continual panning of the camera back and forth horizontally from the corner of a classroom, and in "La Région Centrale" (1970-71), Snow's landscape film shot in a remote region of Quebec, for which special equipment had to be constructed so the camera could perform the spirals, zig-zags, twirls, tilts, sweeps, arcs, and other combinations of patterns that he desired.

Regina Cornwell has written in her program notes to the film retrospective, "Many of Snow's works suggest analogies with Minimalism in painting and sculpture...his following through of a single idea, use of various anti-illusionist tactics, nonhierarchical structuring, and stress on the presentness and immediacy of the art object. And like the painterly and sculptural objects of Minimal art, Snow's films place heavy demands on an audience."

Snow himself has defined an important aspect of the art he practices. "I make up the rules of a game, then I attempt to play it. If I seem to be losing, I change the rules." This is particularly evident in his ten large photographic works on display in the Steichen Galleries. His work is involved with photographs as three-dimensional flat objects, and in

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several pieces, such as Midnight Blue (1973-74) and Light Blues (1974), other objects, such as lamps, wood, and wax are incorporated. Snow is also concerned with photography as a document of something he has done -- lit a candle, photographed a ladder, photographed himself photographing himself. The photographs are documents, and like all good evidence they have an objective existence and can themselves be photographed. This is true of even such disparate works as Authorization (1969) and Red5 (Red to the Fifth) (1974).

Dennis Longwell, director of the photography exhibition, has written "[Snow's] large photographic works can perhaps best be understood...as visual evidence of the kind of superior game playing that is the making of art. These works refer back into themselves, self-reflexively, to present evidence to the viewer who, like a detective, is bound to reconstruct the process of their creation. Unlike some art which appears to have an existence entirely separate from the viewer's, Snow's work demands our inquisitive investigations for its full realization."

Michael Snow was born in 1929, in Toronto, Canada, where he now lives. He began his career as a painter in the early 1950s and later turned to sculpture. His introduction to film came while working at Graphic Films in Toronto during 1955 and 1956.

The film program is attached.

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 Additional information available from Michael Boodro, Assistant, and Lillian Gerard, Special Projects Coordinator, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53 St., New York, NY 10019  
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All the films in the program are 16 mm. Unless otherwise noted, all films are sound.

- Thursday, February 19      LA REGION CENTRALE. 1970-1971. 190 minutes.  
8:00
- Friday, February 20      WAVELENGTH. 1966-67. Assisted by Ken Jacobs.  
2:00                              45 minutes.
- Saturday, February 21      STANDARD TIME. 1967. Assisted by Joyce Wieland.  
3:00                              8 minutes.  
                                     $\longleftrightarrow$  . 1968-1969. 52 minutes.  
                                    Premiere of BREAKFAST. 1972 and 1976. 10 minutes.
- 5:30                              ONE SECOND IN MONTREAL. 1969, 1963, 1932 (?)  
                                    Silent. 26 minutes.  
                                    DRIPPING WATER. 1969. Co-filmmaker, Joyce Wieland  
                                    10 minutes.  
                                    SIDE SEAT PAINTINGS SLIDES SOUND FILM. 1970.  
                                    20 minutes.  
                                    UNTITLED SLIDELength. 1969-71. Eighty slides.  
                                    20 minutes.
- Sunday, February 22      NEW YORK EYE AND EAR CONTROL (a 'WALKING WOMAN'  
3:00                              work). 1964. 34 minutes.  
                                    A TO Z. 1956. Silent. 7 minutes.  
                                    SHORT SHAVE. 1965. 4 minutes.
- Monday, February 23 (2:00) - see 3:00, Sat. Feb. 21.
- Monday, February 23 (4:00) - see 2:00, Fri. Feb. 20.
- Tuesday, February 24 (2:00) - see 5:30, Sat. Feb. 21.
- Thursday, February 26      "RAMEAU'S NEPHEW" BY DIDEROT (THANK TO DENNIS YOUNG)  
6:00                              BY WILMA SCHOEN. 1972-1974. 267 minutes.
- Friday, February 27      (2:00) - see 3:00, Sun. Feb. 22.
- Saturday, February 28 (3:00) - see 6:00, Thurs. Feb. 26.
- Sunday, February 29 (3:00) - see 2:00, Fri. Feb. 20.
- Monday, March 1 (2:00) - see 8:00, Thurs. Feb. 19.
- Tuesday, March 2 (2:00) - A CASING SHELVED. 1970. Slide with audio tape.  
                                    40 minutes.
- Thursday, March 4 (5:30) - see 2:00, Tues. March 2.

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Projects: Michael Snow--Photographs

February 19 - April 25, 1976

Wall Label

Michael Snow has himself defined an important aspect of the art he practices. "I make up the rules of a game, then I attempt to play it. If I seem to be losing, I change the rules." These ten large photographic works can perhaps best be understood, therefore, as visual evidence of the kind of superior game-playing that is the making of art. They refer back into themselves, self-reflexively, to present evidence to the viewer who, like a detective, is bound to reconstruct the process of their creation. Unlike some art which appears to have an existence entirely separate from the viewer's, Snow's work demands our inquisitive investigations for its full realization.

Snow uses photography to document something he has done--lit a candle, taped colored rectangles to a white board, photographed himself photographing himself. And a fundamental rule of the creative game Snow has invented is that these documents, like all good and true evidence, have an objective existence and can themselves be photographed. It is this idea, rather than any formal stylistic resemblance, that unites such works as Authorization, 1969, and Red<sup>5</sup>, 1974.

Yet Snow challenges our naive belief in the objective nature of the photograph in works like Glaires, 1973, A Wooden Look, 1969, and Of a Ladder, 1971. Here the rigid grid pattern (or the rigid shape of the "real" ladder) is contrasted to the distortions of reality apparent in the photographs. Similar photographic distortions involving light, its

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brightness and its color, are played with in Glares and Light Blues, 1974. And photography's power to create compelling illusions of reality is deftly exploited in Midnight Blue, 1973-74.

Perhaps his most complex work, Field, 1973-74, contains forty-nine pairs of positive and negative photograms, photographs made by placing photo sensitive paper in a field of grasses and leaves, which modulated the light and shadows the papers recorded. A ninety-ninth photogram, number eleven in the series, was inserted to create an interesting disjunction in the pairs; the entire scene was photographed and appears in the large positive and negative landscapes at the bottom. Because Field includes images made both with and without a camera, because it presents us with two views, one positive and the other negative, of the same reality, and because it openly invites us to revel in the sumptuous richness of its photographic grays, this work is superior evidence of a mind acutely sensitive to the beauties, the contradictions, and the satisfactions inherent in photographs.

Dennis Longwell  
Assistant Curator

Born in Toronto in 1929, Michael Snow studied painting and sculpture at the Ontario College of Art in the early 1950s. In 1962 Snow and his wife, artist and filmmaker Joyce Wieland, moved to New York City, where they lived until their return to Toronto in 1971. Snow has received over a score of one man and group exhibitions in this country and Canada: for example the retrospectives of work in all media--painting, sculpture, film and photography--at the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto in 1970 and at the Center for Inter-American Relations in New York in 1972. Throughout his life Snow has been involved with music, and he has, at times, supported

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himself as a jazz musician playing trumpet and piano. Michael Snow/A Survey and his recently published Cover to Cover are two books available in the Museum's bookstores, as is his two-record album, Musics for Piano, Whistling, Microphone and Tape Recorder

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## PROJECTS: Michael Snow--Photographs

### CHECKLIST

All works by Michael Snow, Canadian, born 1929. The following measurements refer to image size, height preceding width.

- 1. 76.149                    Authorization, 1969  
21 1/2" x 17 1/2" (54.5 cm x 44.5 cm)  
Scratched on frame, L. right SNOW 69  
Lent by The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
  
- 2. 76.147                    A Wooden Look, 1969  
37 1/16" x 97 1/8" (94.2 cm x 246.9 cm)  
Signed SNOW 1969 verso upper left center. Also signed  
MICHAEL SNOW New York July 1969 on brass plate  
screwed to front center.  
Lent by The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal
  
- 3. 76.143. a-c              Glares, 1973  
59" x 39 1/4" (150.0 cm x 99.7 cm)  
Signed SNOW '73 on side in white ink  
Lent by First City Financial Corporation, Ltd., Vancouver
  
- 4. 76.142                    Midnight Blue, 1973-74  
28 1/2" x 26" (72.4 cm x 66.1 cm)  
Signed SNOW 73-74 bottom right front in black felt pen.  
Also signed SNOW 73-74 on bottom of wooden base and  
verso upper edge in black felt pen  
Lent by Canada Council Art Bank, Ottawa
  
- 5. 76.148                    Field, 1973-74  
70 1/2" x 66" (including frame) (179.2 cm x 167.7 cm)  
Masking tape label, in ball point pen: MIKE SNOW  
Lent by The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
  
- 6. 76.150                    Red<sup>5</sup>, 1974  
24 15/16" x 31 3/16" (62.2 cm x 79.2 cm)  
Signed SNOW '74 L. right  
Lent by The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa



PROJECTS: Michael Snow--Photographs  
CHECKLIST

7. 76.141. a-j      Of a Ladder, 1971  
13 1/2" x 20" (34.3 cm x 50.9 cm)  
Not signed  
Lent by The Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo
8. 76.144. a-d      Light Blues, 1974  
38" x 72" (96.6 cm x 183.0 cm)  
Signed SNOW, '74, L. left front. Also signed SNOW '74  
in black felt pen on horizontal strut. And signed  
MICHAEL SNOW in black felt pen on vertical strut  
Lent by The Isaacs Gallery, Ltd., Toronto
9. 76.145            Morning in Holland, 1969-1974  
49" x 48" (124.7 cm x 122.0 cm)  
Signed SNOW '69-'74, L. right corner, black ink on  
small rectangle of paper  
Lent by The Isaacs Gallery, Ltd., Toronto
10. 76.146           Imposition, 1976  
61" x 35" (154.9 cm x 88.9 cm)  
Signed SNOW, lower left corner in black felt pen  
Lent by the Artist