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The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	Newhall	II.6

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Date 30 April 1943

To:
From:

**THE ORIGINAL
ROMEIKE
PRESS CLIPPINGS**

220 W. 19th St., NEW YORK 11, N.Y.
Tel. CHelsea 3-8860

Circ. (D 208,918) (Sat. 153,736)

This Clipping From
NEW YORK, N.Y.
POST

Re: creation of office of

12 May 1943

"Director of Photography"

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Photography

By John Adam Knight

To:
From:
Nancy:
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Continuing its admirable policy of exhibiting all types of photography for comparison and study, the Museum of Modern Art Photography Center, 9 W. 54th St., is currently showing pictures by six "new workers," to quote from the official announcement.

Some of the work in this show is pretty good, and at least one of the groups (that of Adrian Siegel) is excellent. But all the exhibitors start with two strikes on them because of the extravagant catalogue notes of the museum. Written in that type of gushy mysticism usually associated with the English B essays of adolescent schools girls, these notes cause the bewildered visitor to search the pictures in vain for qualities not to be found in this world of realities. As a result, he goes away disappointed—through no fault of the exhibitor.

Data in Blank Verse

One man, for example, spent many earnest minutes trying to

find in Morris Engel's good genre pictures, the things that caused the catalogue compiler to write: "His blacks and whites ripple across the photographs. His people, seen with warmth and humor, move in deep spaces often sharply split with melancholy perspectives."

Yeh, and little lambsie divey. Of another exhibitor the notes say: "(Her) intuition is psychic, electric." Of still another: "Warm and feminine, she seems to hold close in her hands these lyric symbols of experience."

I am afraid that someone at the museum is sheltering an Elbert Hubbard Scrapbook fixation. But if you are not frightened away by cloying comments, you will find some interesting pictures in the show.

Adrian Siegel, a member of the Philadelphia Orchestra, uses a Leica to make candid pictures of

conductors, soloists and fellow musicians during rehearsals. His action pictures of Toscanini, Walter, Rachmaninoff and Kreisler are the best I have seen.

I also liked Morris Engel's group, although I have seen many better pictures by the same photographer in print.

Walter Rosenblum's exhibits left me unmoved. I could discover in them no evidence of a talent for photography.

John Candelario is represented by two or three of the excellent New Mexico pictures already familiar through publication, and by several others doctored up to the point of artificiality. It was a sad day for him when he discovered red filters.

Dorothy Norman's share in the exposition constitutes an essay in dilettantism, and falls, therefore, outside the province of criticism.

Best.

should steadily build.

In the opinion of both Mr Morgan and myself, this is not a propitious time to launch an ambitious financial campaign. If he accepts the position, he and I shall do our best to carry out a program designed to stimulate interest in photography and in the Museum's activities, but we feel that the real miracles cannot be expected to occur until after the war.

Fact that they've... convenience of a darkroom. Then, too, we hope to have all kinds of gatherings, parties, lectures, demonstrations, which may be somewhat difficult to manage within the Museum. And, as Alfred pointed out, there's the traffic problem.

Love to you both,

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THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Date 30 April 1943

To: Mr Soby

Re: creation of office of

From: Mrs Newhall

12 May 1943

"Director of Photography"

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Date May 3, 1944

To: Mrs. Newhall

Re: enclosed clipping

From: Mr. Soby

Nancy: I send you the enclosed in the friendliest possible spirit, but I send it nevertheless because I think Knight, though much too harsh, has a point in objecting to labels which interpret works of art in emotional terms. It seems to me that as a Museum we are committed to a certain detachment - I don't mean coldness - and that labels should be more restrained and factual than some of your have been. I think, to continue with this frankness, that you're trying to write the observer into a mood and that in doing so the prose sometimes gets too heavily weighted, whereas in your straight stuff - the section on overlapping categories in the 15th anniv. forword, it come out strong and clear. I'd like to talk to you about this, but being *I hope* more precise on paper than in the flesh, I wanted to get this off first. Best.

should steadily build.

In the opinion of both Mr Morgan and myself, this is not a propitious time to launch an ambitious financial campaign. If he accepts the position, he and I shall do our best to carry out a program designed to stimulate interest in photography and in the Museum's activities, but we feel that the real miracles cannot be expected to occur until after the war.

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Love to you both.

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THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Date 30 April 1948

To: Mr Soby

Re: creation of office of

From: Mrs Newhall

~~"Director of Photography"~~

Jim: I understand that Willard Morgan, if he submits a satisfactory report on the future program of this department, is to be offered a position as Director of Photography. Beau and I have known Mr Morgan for years and he has become one of our dearest friends. We respect his abilities and I wish to say that personally I'm delighted at the prospect of having him at the Museum. I believe that we can work well and closely together. In this I feel that I am also speaking for Beau.

However, the situation needs clarification. As Alfred explained it to me in January, the idea is to institute a dual control similar to the positions he and Dick hold in respect to the Museum or that Dick and Iris hold in the Film Library. Beau (or I, until his return) remains Curator, in full charge of acquisitions and exhibitions and responsible for the quality and standing of the Department's work. The Director is responsible for the financial contacts of the Department and for such projects as he may deem desirable to attract or promote these interests.

If this is a correct understanding of the proposal, then the following general principles should be instituted:

1. The Curator and Director should receive equal salaries.
2. The Curatorial budgets for expenses and exhibitions should be enlarged in keeping with the aims of the Department as a whole.

In addition, the following difficulties should be cleared up:

3. On Beaumont's return, he should be allowed, if he wishes, to become Curator on a fulltime basis.
4. The title of Acting Curator, which I assumed due to a mistake, should be approved and my salary materialized raised.

I have already given Mr Morgan access to all Beau's plans and reports and suggested that his report be submitted in these three parts:

1. An estimate of the immediate situation and what can actually be accomplished by the Department during the war.
2. Plans to be put into effect as soon as the war is over.
3. The ideal constitution and functions of the Department, toward which the above should steadily build.

In the opinion of both Mr Morgan and myself, this is not a propitious time to launch an ambitious financial campaign. If he accepts the position, he and I shall do our best to carry out a program designed to stimulate interest in photography and in the Museum's activities, but we feel that the real miracles cannot be expected to occur until after the war.

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Love to you both.

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copy to Mr. Selig

12 May 1943

Dear Dave,

Alfred, Jim, and I had a long talk on the whole photography project this morning. Alfred agrees with you about moving across the street; he feels that the public associates the Museum with the building and that your comment "Why should photography be pushed around?" would arise and do harm to our professed belief that photography is here on the same level as any other art. Then he of course prefers that the interdepartmental intimacy in working together should continue and that the Museum should be staff-contained. Also he feels that our "isolation" would probably last for four or five years, since the new building can hardly be expected to materialize sooner. And it is true that staying within the Museum has a pleasant feeling of normal growth about it.

Jim, Here Morgan, and I are of course willing to agree completely and happily. Our objections to making use of available space are these: using the present study room for Here's office, keeping mine as is, and opening the Print Room as proposed will still leave us slightly cramped. Here's report, of which you should get a copy tomorrow, contains wonderful projects for broadening the contacts of the Department and attracting many interests we've never seriously gone after before. This report, by the way, was purposely limited to the interior workings of the Department and not its exhibitions and publications, and is Here's estimate of what can be done immediately, under existing conditions. The housing of the material related to these projects is certainly going to require space.

As you remember, the Print Room was also to house the Print collection, the posters, and certain dance materials, which is useful to the Museum and confusing for the public. Perhaps we should insist on the Print Room being a Photography room only, though from the Museum's viewpoint we could certainly insure that the other things were properly housed and shown.

Certain cherished projects, due to lack of space, will be curtailed or deferred several more years. My particular pet is an experimental gallery where all kinds of impromptu, informal shows would go up--the kind of thing that stimulates and interests all photographers: things we've turned up working on shows, new work by unknown or established photographers, new techniques and equipment, challenging stuff from the Collection, new ways of exhibiting, and so on--what we all talk about, in fact, and which would encourage photographers to drop in to see what we're up to now (as they already do to some extent) and so regard us as their center. There's just no space for this in the Museum at present, and in the proposed Print Room there'd be only two short walls. Then a concrete vault, thermostatically controlled, for storing negatives and the most valuable prints, is certainly desirable. And a really good darkroom is another thing we should have. The one downstairs needs drastic revision--nothing less than tearing it down and beginning again from scratch; also, the proper maintenance of it really requires that other workers, such as the Film Library, Sunami, etc. be excluded, and the fact that they've crept into it proves that the Museum as a whole needs the convenience of a darkroom. Then, too, we hope to have all kinds of gatherings, parties, lectures, demonstrations, which may be somewhat difficult to manage within the Museum. And, as Alfred pointed out, there's the traffic problem.

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Many people have said they're rather fight their way into the Pentagon than into the study room. Special tickets might lessen their difficulties but not the elevator problem, whereas, with a special building all their own as it were, and informal entrance, I feel they'd feel more at home.

In other words, what we gain by moving across the street is informality, space, accessibility, and a clear distinction between photography and the library, prints, posters, etc. What we lose is intimate contact with the rest of the Museum, inspite of mailroom pickups and a direct wire to the central exchange, and certain other physical advantages, such as easy transportation and care of the Collection within the building and the reservoir of aid in the staff backround services. There has, by the way, been no intention of pushing us out; instead, there's real desire to aid us and give us what we need.

People are excited by this new prospect; the time is at the tide. If we refuse to cooperate now, we'll languish under a certain resentment. We've asked the Museum to back photography; they're all steamed up to do it. And there's absolutely NO hint of lowering quality or letting in undesirable elements or of abandoning any of the principles we've fought for. Beau, Ancel, and I established certain contacts, fine ones, which due to lack of cash, time, and personnel, we haven't been able to broaden and solidify as we wanted to. We started a lot of things designed to bring the Department in close contact with many groups; all this emphatically needs pushing. Through attracting a wide public adherence and a vital interest in what we're trying to do, we hope to also attract subsidies to aid us and make our projects as self-supporting as possible. Here is certainly the man to help; his whole background and record proves it.

Probably not all his projects and mine can be backed now; I hope certain of our old dreams, like encouraging photographers in special projects and demonstrating new approaches, technical-esthetic, and lantern-slide prepared lectures, and so on will be realized. There isn't a thing in it I'd like to leave out. This is a preliminary report; Alfred wants more emphasis on the part the Curator plays and especially his research, and other things.

The comparison of Model and Hogarth is excellent, I think. Her attitude towards photography is quite European; it doesn't bother me. Since she does have an eye we can always creep up on her technique and help her broaden her approach. Her personal difficulties do bother me; Barbara Morgan suspects she enjoys them, but maybe I'm naive. Photographers do have a hard lot when they're sincere. I'm very sorry if I let you in for anything, and the same is true of Paul. He has been so darned swell these past few months---cooperative to the nth degree. The letter he wrote Alfred in response to thanks for his gift is a fine tribute to what we're trying to do. He used to be difficult and inhuman; he's quite different now and is one of my best helpers and advisors. All his by way of comment on him as a person. As to his South American project, I am not able to estimate the difficulties in getting him there; is the art section of the Coordinator's Office about to fold, as reported? I do think what he'd turn out would be beautiful and sympathetic, and, I suspect, a lot less stilted than his earlier work. And I'm eager to see it. As to his political beliefs, my impression is that what he wants is the better world we all want, with freedom and justice for all. But I don't know, actually; I've never bothered to find out. All I'd like to see is his getting active again, whether in S.A. or right here. If you want me to convey any message to him, I'd be happy to do so.

Love to you both.

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cc: Mr. Abbott

Mr. Barringer David Neelkin

Mrs. Newhall ✓

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May 13, 1943

placed on the front of the house. The section of the Museum's library dealing with photography would be transferred over there.

I sympathize deeply with your feelings. May 13, 1943. The department from industrial departments in the House, and I would like you to know that in carrying out the expansion I had been completely conscious of the disadvantages, but have felt that they were outweighed by the advantages. Nothing can be done but I believe that using the space across the street would be the better choice for now. One of the things I am doing is to try to make the Photography Department's quarters for photography. As you know, people

Dear Dave: Thank you very much for your kind and enthusiastic letter about the proposed expansion of the Photography Department. Since writing to you I have talked to Morgan and Nancy together and I am more than ever convinced that the project will turn out well and harmoniously. A budget and report prepared by Morgan and Nancy came in yesterday. I sent it over to Dick this morning so that he could discuss it with Mr. Clark and Mrs. Levy. Only one copy was made since there was so little time, but additional copies will be available tomorrow and I will send you one at once with explanatory notes which Morgan wishes to have included. The proposed activity seems to me very fine and within the limits of the approach to photography already established by Beaumont and Nancy, though not in all respects carried out by them due to lack of funds and space. I think it a true one because the business and accounting staff cannot apparently be separated from the

Since the report will go out to you tomorrow there is little point in my going into it here. I would however like to mention the matter of proper quarters for the Photography Department. Since the expansion was first proposed Alfred Barr has felt strongly that the department should be kept within the building if at all possible, and I agree that this would be the proper solution under ideal considerations. The difficulty is that there simply is not enough space in the present building to house the personnel which will be required and to provide a general reference room and library where photographs can be looked at and studied. Even if the print room adjoining the department's present quarters were turned over to the department there would still not be room enough to do a decent job in my opinion (and Alfred, Morgan and Nancy will agree). If and when the Museum has a new wing the department would of course come back into the main building. In fact when I talked to Mr. Clark the other day about the possible expansion he spoke very enthusiastically about establishing very ample quarters for the department in the new wing. But for the present, if we are to start an active program, it seems to me that adequate space should be provided. The houses across the street could be made over to provide large offices and a very big and luxurious room for the reference purpose I have referred to above. Of course all photography exhibitions would be held in the main building. Moreover the gallery already set aside in the Permanent Collection on the third floor of this building would be retained for the display of photographs. A large sign announcing the Goodwin Houses as part of the Museum would be

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Lt. Commander David McAlpin

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May 13, 1943

placed on the front of the houses. The section of the Museum's Library dealing with photography would be transferred over there.

I sympathize deeply with your feelings about separating the department from curatorial departments in the Museum, and I would like you to know that in supporting the separation I had been completely conscious of the disadvantages, but have felt that they were outweighed by the advantages. Neither solution would be ideal but I believe that using the space across the street would be the better choice for now. One of the things which Morgan and Nancy want to do is to try to make the Photography Department a center for photographers. As you know, people coming into the main building must either pay admission or get a ticket from the desk to allow them access to the fourth floor. This could be eliminated in the Goodwin houses. I think too that there would be considerable publicity value of the right kind in expanding the Photography Department with a flourish, i.e. by announcing that it would occupy new and adequate quarters and would offer special services to the many people primarily interested in photography. It was precisely to avoid having photography pushed off in a corner, as it so often has been, that I have suggested moving across the street. I should add that I don't believe any space in the Museum other than the present room space which is very small, could be turned over to the department, and my whole stand in the matter was based on this assumption. I think it a true one because the business and accounting staff cannot apparently be separated from the main building due to the constant communication between various offices which is prerequisite of those offices' function.

I think I am right in saying that Morgan, Nancy and I all feel alike in this question. But I would like to have you know that we are all anxious to hear your opinion in further detail. Of course, no decision will be reached without consulting you.

Sorry to have to report on progress piece-meal but this past week has been an extraordinarily hectic one and I have not been able to do it all at one sitting.

Very best regards,

Sincerely,

Lieutenant Commander David McAlpin
Hotel Lafayette
16th & Eye Streets, N. W.
Washington, D. C.

JTD:mc

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question 6.

Special topic: "Photography."

Through its exhibition "Photography 1839-1937" held in New York from Mar. 17 through Apr. 19, 1937, and subsequently circulated throughout the country (see attached schedule), the Museum has brought to the attention of the lay public as well as photographers masterpieces of photography both old and new. The catalog, with a 90 p. introduction by Beaumont Newhall, Director of the Exhibition, was written to explain certain esthetic aspects of photography; it was illustrated with 90 plates of the most representative photographs in the exhibition. This book has met with a very kind reception both here and abroad; the first edition of 3000 is now practically exhausted.

In addition to this major exhibition, a comprehensive survey of American photography has been organized for the exhibition of American art to be held by the Museum during the spring and summer of this year in Paris. Slides of all the 60 photographs chosen for this exhibition are being made for distribution, with a written lecture, to museums, colleges and camera clubs.

Beaumont Newhall has been consulted for advice by many ^{consumers} as well as photographers since the exhibition of 1937 opened. He has lectured, by invitation, before the Members of the Museum, at the annual dinner of the Visual Arts Committee of the United Neighborhood Houses, at Dartmouth College, Harvard University, The Baltimore Friends of Art, the Pittsburgh Junior League, Phillips Academy, Andover, and the Pictorial Photographers of America. He has contributed articles on photography to the Magazine of Art, Parnassus, the Photographic Journal, and U. S. Camera 1937. He has been consulted by the following authors, whose books are forthcoming: Robert Taft ("Photography and the American Scene"), Willard Morgan ("Miniature Photography"), Professors Miles J. Martin and Julian E. Maek ("A College Textbook on Photography") and T. J. Maloney ("U. S. Camera");

The need for some central institution to correlate various photographic activities and to sponsor experiment and research along the esthetic side of

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Special topic: "Photography" (cont.)

photography has been voiced in letters to and conversations with photographers (Ansel Adams, Willard Van Dyke, Edward Weston, Dorothea Lange) as well as from two of the largest consumers of photography in New York, Mr. Alexy Brodovitch, art-editor of Harper's Bazaar, and Mr. Willard Morgan, contributions editor of Life.

It is hoped that a Department of Photography can be set up in the museum, which will comprise a collection of fine photographs, old and new, a library of photographic literature, a policy of small exhibitions, publications and lectures. This department should serve to correlate professional and amateur interests. The vast number of amateur photographers in this country are, in large measure, consumers as well as producers, and the museum hopes to assist them with this projected department.

The response with which the Museum's ventures into photography have met within the past twelve months offer encouragement for more intensive work in this field.

Also of note is a list of advanced students who have been published in B.N. The most extensive list is in my article "Books and Contacts etc." The lists in "Modern Publishers and Subjects to Illustrate," "Materials Art, Books and Periodicals," "Photography and the Museum," and "Museum of Modern Art" are less complete. A special study of the literature, which is the focus, contained a list of books and subjects of the great number of requests which have been by the library for a list of books to be published.

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question 14.

Scholarship in the history of art is furthered by the museum's library, as well as by its exhibitions and publications. The library already contains many important documents of the various movements of modern art which are not duplicated elsewhere in the city, and probably not in the country. It is planned to add to this collection continuously. In addition to books, periodicals and pamphlets, the library files include photographs of works of art, many of which have been received directly from the artists, and bear important autographic documentation. The slide collection is representative of the various aspects of modern art.

Due to the smallness of both quarters and staff, it has not been possible to open the library to students in general. Special and advanced students, however, who can prove to the librarian that they cannot pursue their researches in any of the other New York art libraries, have been admitted by appointment. When the museum is in its new quarters, students will be invited to consult the reference library, and provision is made for the accommodation of two scholars in private offices leading directly from the library stacks, where ready reference may be made to the collections.

Also of help to advanced scholars has been the publication of bibliographies. The most exhaustive list is in the catalog "Cubism and Abstract Art." The lists in "Modern Painters and Sculptors as Illustrators," "Fantastic Art, Dada and Surrealism," "Photography 1839-1937", and "Masters of Popular Painting" are less lengthy. A special number of the Bulletin, devoted to the library, contained a short reading list on modern art, compiled because of the great number of requests received by the library for a introductory bibliography.

B.N.