The new department of photography

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The Museum of Modern Art’s exhibition history—from our founding in 1929 to the present—is available online. It includes exhibition catalogues, primary documents, installation views, and an index of participating artists.
STIEGLITZ:
NEW YORK—NIGHT, 1931

THE NEW DEPARTMENT OF PHOTOGRAPHY

The Bulletin of
THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

2 · VOLUME VIII · DEC.-JAN. 1940-41
Photography is deeply indebted to Alfred Stieglitz— for his courageous pioneering and experimentation, for his untiring struggle to have it recognized as a medium of artistic expression, for his impact on more than a generation of workers and his uncompromising demands on them to achieve the finest quality of craftsmanship and perception, and for his influence on the taste and discernment of the public. He more than anyone else has summed up with the camera his experiences and feelings about life.

At the inception of this Department, we are happy to acknowledge his outstanding contributions to Photography.

D. H. McA.

COMMITTEE ON PHOTOGRAPHY

David H. McAlpin, Chairman
Ansel Adams, Vice-Chairman
John E. Abbott
Alfred H. Barr, Jr.
Dr. Walter Clark
Archibald MacLeish
Laurance S. Rockefeller
James Thrall Soby
Beaumont Newhall, Curator
The New Department of Photography

Eleven years ago, when the Museum of Modern Art was founded, the arts of painting and sculpture were its principal concern. Gradually other departments were formed: Architecture in 1933, to which was added Industrial Art; then the Film Library in 1935 and now Photography.

One of the most vigorous and popular arts of our time, photography has long been recognized by the Museum. Several important exhibitions have been organized: notably, in 1932, "Murals by American Painters and Photographers;" in 1937, the large retrospective show "Photography 1839–1937;" in 1938, "American Photographs by Walker Evans," and in 1940, "War Comes to the People, A Story Written with the Lens by Therese Bonney." Under the auspices of the Library, a collection of photographs has been founded and a reference library of photographic material established.

The success of these enterprises has led the Trustees to create a Department of Photography. A Committee has been formed under the Chairmanship of David H. McAlpin; Beaumont Newhall, the Museum’s Librarian, has been appointed Curator.

By exhibitions both in the Museum and throughout the country, by increasing in size and scope the photograph collection and reference library, by publications and lectures, it is hoped that the Department will serve as a center for those artists who have chosen photography as their medium, and will bring before the public work which, in the opinion of the Curator and the Committee, represents the best of the present and the past.

ALFRED H. BARR, JR., Director of the Museum

Photography, although now entering its second century, is a relatively recent development in the world’s history. Its technical achievements have been rapid and amazing. Yet most of us take for granted that it has always been possible to make snapshots at will. Few appreciate the remarkable success obtained by the early workers in recording so well what they saw with the cumbersome equipment available at the time.

The history of painting, sculpture and the other arts has been studied, discussed and analyzed exhaustively and is widely accessible to all. By reason of the perishable nature of plates, films and prints, original photographic material is scarce. Much of it has disappeared. What remains is scattered, its whereabouts almost unknown. Too little has been done to assemble, correlate and appraise what is still extant and make it generally available for study and comparison.

It seems timely and logical that more systematic attention should be devoted to photography, to orient our judgment by a greater knowledge and understanding of its history and development, both technical and esthetic. We hope, through the Museum’s collection, in its exhibitions and by publications, to help evaluate what has been achieved and what is now being done.

In this introductory exhibition we aim to draw attention to some of the significant examples of photography as a medium of artistic interpretation, thereby to stimulate and sharpen our imagination and perceptions, and to encourage photographers to express simply, sincerely and effectively some of the qualities of their experiences and of the world about us.

DAVID H. McALPIN, Chairman
Program of the Department

Photography, entering upon its second century, faces a crossroads. Remarkable technical advances have enormously increased its scope. Never before has it been possible to make pictures so easily, so readily and so quickly. Thousands of photographs are published every day in newspapers, in magazines and in books; hundreds of thousands more never appear in reproduction. The manufacture of cameras and photographic materials has grown to be one of the country’s greatest industries. The taking of pictures is a universal hobby: some eight thousand camera clubs in the United States alone have been formed by enthusiastic amateurs. With almost everybody using a camera, photography has become truly an art of the people, practiced by millions.

Yet there is a danger in this amazing growth. Through the very facility of the medium its quality may become submerged. From the prodigious output of the last hundred years relatively few great pictures have survived—pictures which are a personal expression of their makers’ emotions, pictures which have made use of the inherent characteristics of the medium of photography. These living photographs are, in the fullest meaning of the term, works of art. They give us a new vision of the world, they interpret reality, they help us to evaluate the past and the present.

The newly founded Department of Photography is a center where this type of photography can be seen and studied. It is not possible to define in words photographic standards. Every age must find its own. To make pronouncements, prophecies or too conclusive summations opens the doors to academicism. Just as to judge good literature it is necessary to read many books, so to judge photography it is necessary to see, under the most favorable conditions, the best work that can be assembled. By this means solutions of different problems can be contrasted and compared, the relationship of technique to visualization can be grasped, the work of today can be compared to the work of the past.

Practical steps have already been taken. A collection of seven hundred original prints can now be seen on application in the library reading room. These prints, supplemented by others borrowed for the occasion, will be presented in various regularly planned exhibitions of which the first is described and cataloged in this booklet. Many of the exhibitions will not be limited to the New York showing but will be available to camera clubs, schools, colleges and museums outside the city by the Museum’s Department of Circulating Exhibitions. Every effort will be made to have small, intimate exhibitions always on view at the Museum so that, besides the permanent collection, the student will always find something of photographic value in the building.

Already photographic books form an important section of the library. Special emphasis has been laid on picture books many of which reproduce prints in the collection and form, therefore, basic material for the study of methods of reproduction. A few standard technical handbooks will be kept constantly up-to-date, obsolete editions being replaced by newer ones. Also in the library are magazines, from a set of Camera Work to current titles; these have been indexed for quick reference. Catalogs of exhibitions, information from manufacturers, lantern slides are on file. A samples bureau is proposed: the results of new techniques and materials as tested by competent and impartial photographers may be studied. The Department will act as
a clearing house for information on technical matters where they have a bearing on practical esthetic results, such as inquiring into the permanence of prints and mounting boards. Publications, following the pattern of the Museum’s books, *Photography, A Short Critical History* and *American Photographs* by Walker Evans, are planned. Lectures and conferences on photography will be offered.

In short, the Department of Photography will function as focal center where the esthetic problems of photography can be evaluated, where the artist who has chosen the camera as his medium can find guidance by example and encouragement and where the vast amateur public can study both the classics and the most recent and significant developments of photography.

Beaumont Newhall

The Exhibition: Sixty Photographs

This exhibition is intended not to define but to suggest the possibilities of photographic vision. As its title implies, the choice has been an arbitrary one, and is not all-inclusive. Certain omissions have been deliberate: color photography is not represented, nor is commercial, scientific and advertising work. These and other exclusions have not been intended as criticism. This is but the first of a series of exhibitions.

The sixty photographs indicate various individual approaches to the medium. These represent, without regard to chronology, a range of vision from objective, almost literal, interpretation of fact to abstract creation of form by the cameraless shadowgraph. Subject matter of varied types can be found; one worker’s solution of a problem can be compared or contrasted with another’s. Aspects of the vision of different ages can be grasped. There are several printing methods included: the now obsolete calotype, albumen and platinum processes; direct photogravures, palladio-types, as well as the more usual chloride and bromide developing out papers. In choosing the prints no technical norm has been imposed beyond the desire to present the clearest and fullest realization of each worker’s vision.

The exhibition progresses from portraiture to informal studies of people in relation to things, including photographs which comment upon social problems or simply reflect the daily life of people. These together with several architectural subjects, suggest that one of the most prominent characteristics of photography is its ability to evoke an epoch by preserving a moment in the passage of time. Nature is to be seen from broad landscape to close detail. In some of the prints interest in the discovery of form is uppermost, even to the exclusion of reality. A group which might be called lyric or poetic has been isolated in the exhibition; in these an intensely personal vision of beauty has been realized. These various approaches are, of course, often combined in interesting ways. Each of the prints is an individual expression, but all of them are common in their clear evidence of an understanding of the qualities, limitations and possibilities of photography.

The exhibition has been organized by Beaumont Newhall and Ansel Adams.
Check List

Except where otherwise noted, the photographs are chloride or bromide prints.

An asterisk before a catalog number indicates that the photograph is reproduced.

ABBOTT, Berenice
1. Rockefeller Center, 1932
   Given anonymously

ADAMS, Ansel
2. Early California Gravestone, 1934
   Lent anonymously
3. Leaves, 1935
   Lent anonymously
4. Autumn, Yosemite, 1939
   Gift of Albert M. Bender

ATGET, Eugene (ca. 1856-1927)
5. Paris Street, 1910
6. Nasturtiums
7. Street Musicians
8. Tree Roots
   Nos. 5–8 printed by Berenice Abbott, 1940, from original negatives in her collection. Given anonymously

BERNHARD, Ruth
9. Puddle, 1939
   Given anonymously

BRADY, Matthew B. (1823–96)
10. Ruins of Richmond, 1865
   Albumen print
   Given anonymously

CARTIER-BRESSON, Henri
11. Unemployed
   Lent by Willard Van Dyke
12. Children Playing in Ruins
   Lent by James Thrall Soby

EMERSON, P. H. (1856–1936)
14. A Rushy Shore, 1886
   Platinum print, from the book "Life and Landscape on the Norfolk Broads," by P. H. Emerson and T. F. Goodall
   Given anonymously

EVANS, Walker
15. American Legionnaire, 1936
   Courtesy Farm Security Administration
16. Negro Church, South Carolina, 1936
   Lent by Willard Van Dyke
17. Interior
   Lent by Willard Van Dyke

GENTHE, Dr. Arnold
18. The San Francisco Fire, 1906
   Print by Ansel Adams, courtesy of Dr. Genthe

HILL, David Octavius (1802–70) and Adamson, Robert (1821–48)
19. Rev. Henshaw Jones
20. Lady Eastlake and her Mother, Mrs. Rigby
21. St. Andrews, Scotland
22. The Spindle Rock
   Nos. 19–22, calotypes
   Lent by Dr. Heinrich Schwarz

LANGE, Dorothea
23. Pea Picker Family, California, 1936
   Gift of Albert M. Bender

LE SECQ, Henry (1818–82)
24. Stair Tower, Chartres, 1852
   Print by Edward Steichen, 1937, from the original calotype negative; courtesy Victor Barthélémy
LEVITT, Helen
25. Children, 1940
Given anonymously

Model, Lisette
26. French Street Scene
Given anonymously

Moholy-Nagy, L.
27. Ascona, 1926
Given anonymously
*28. From Radio Tower, Berlin, 1928
Lent by the photographer

News Photographs
29. Republic Steel Riot, 1937
Gift of Pictures, Inc.
30. Construction of the Triborough Bridge, New York, 1936
Gift of N. Y. Times Wide-World Photos

Norman, Dorothy
31. Portrait of Alfred Stieglitz, 1934
Lent by the photographer

O'Sullivan, T. H. (died 1882)
32. Ancient Ruins in the Cañon de Chelle, New Mexico, 1873
Albumen print
Given anonymously
33. Inscription Rock, New Mexico, 1873
Albumen print
Given anonymously

Porter, Eliot F.
34. Sound Sleep
Lent by An American Place, New York

Ray, Man
35. Portrait of Arnold Schoenberg
36. Rayograph, 1922
*37. Rayograph, 1923
Nos. 35-37, gifts of James Thrall Soby

Rodakiewicz, Henwar
38. Photograph
Lent by Miss Georgia O'Keeffe

Scheeler, Charles
39. White Barn, 1915
Lent by the photographer
40. Ford Plant, 1927
Gift of Lincoln Kirstein

Stackpole, Peter
41. Construction of the Golden Gate Bridge, 1935
Lent by the photographer

Steichen, Edward
42. J. Pierpont Morgan, 1903
Photogravure from Camera Work, Steichen Supplement, 1906.
Gift of A. Conger Goodyear

Stieglitz, Alfred
43. The Terminal, New York, 1892
Photogravure
Lent by An American Place, New York
44. The Hand of Man, 1902
Photogravure
Lent by An American Place
45. The Flatiron, 1902
Photogravure
Lent by An American Place
46. The Steerage, 1907
Photogravure, from Camera Work, No. 36, 1911
Lent anonymously
47. Hands and Thimble—Georgia O'Keeffe, 1920
Palladium print
Lent anonymously
48. Lake George, 1924
Lent anonymously
*49. New York—Night, 1931
Lent anonymously
50. The Dead Poplars, Lake George, 1924
Lent anonymously

Strand, Paul
51. Toadstool—Maine, 1928
Platinum print
Lent by Mrs. Charles J. Liebman
52. New Mexico, 1931
Platinum print
Lent by Jacob Strand
53. Photograph—New York, 1915
Photogravure from Camera Work, Nos. 49–50, 1917
Gift of Edward M. Warburg

Swank, Luke
54. Doormat
Gift of the photographer

Weston, Brett
55. San Francisco Bay, 1938
Gift of Albert M. Bender

Weston, Edward
56. Lettuce Ranch, Salinas Valley, Calif., 1934
Gift of Merle Armitage
57. Death Valley, 1938
Lent anonymously
58. Melting Ice on Creek, Arizona, 1938
Lent anonymously
*59. Tide Pool—Point Lobos, 1938
Lent anonymously

White, Clarence H. (1871–1925)
60. The Orchard, 1902
Palladium print
Lent by Mrs. Clarence H. White
CARTIER-BRESSON: Children Playing in Ruins
Atget: Street Musicians
LANGE: Pea Picker Family, California, 1936
RAY: Rayograph, 1923

12
Moholy-Nagy: From the Radio Tower, Berlin, 1928
Museum Notes:

EXHIBITION: Indian Art of the United States (Jan. 22 through March): Comprehensive exhibition from prehistoric times to the present day, arranged by René d'Harnoncourt, General Manager of the Indian Arts and Crafts Board, U. S. Department of the Interior, with the collaboration of Frederic Douglas, Curator of Indian Art at the Denver Art Museum.

PUBLICATION: Indian Art of the United States, by René d'Harnoncourt and Frederic Douglas. 200 pages; 150 plates of which 16 are in full color; cloth, $3.00; sent free to members (Jan. 22).

ART WEEK: Exhibition of American Color Prints Under $10: During Art Week the Museum sold 48 silk screen prints from its show. Total sales for New York City during the week: 150 items.

CIRCULATING EXHIBITIONS: Four new shows are being offered for circulation after January 1: Paul Klee Memorial Exhibition, 60 paintings. Loren MacIver, 25 paintings. War Comes to the People, 200 photographs by Therese Bonney, now on view at the Museum. The American Dance, photographs, prints, paintings, programs of the past 100 years.

Address requests for exhibitions to Miss Elodie Courter, Museum of Modern Art.

EDUCATIONAL PROJECT: We Like Modern Art, an exhibition arranged by a jury of students from High Schools in the Educational Project, will open in the Young People's Gallery on the third floor on December 27. This day has been designated as Young People's Day in the Museum. The exhibition will illustrate the qualities in modern art which particularly appeal to High School students.

MEMBERS: Teas: Since last January, when the privilege of holding special tea parties for ten or more people in the penthouse was extended to members, 1,500 people have been the guests of members. Members wishing to arrange for teas may call Mrs. Charles P. Barry at the Museum, Circle 5-8900.

Additional Membership Card: All members of the Museum are entitled to an additional membership card in the name of husband or wife. Members wishing to take advantage of this privilege may write or call Miss Helen Peterson at the Museum.

Films: January 6—March 30:

FORTY YEARS OF AMERICAN FILM COMEDY Part II
Daily at 4 o'clock, Sundays at 2 and 4 o'clock

1. The Thin Man, 1934, directed by W. S. Van Dyke, with William Powell and Myrna Loy. (Loew's) Jan. 6, 17, 28; Feb. 8, 19; Mar. 2, 13, 24

2. What! No Beer? 1933, directed by Edward Sedgwick, with Buster Keaton and Jimmy Durante. (Loew's) Jan. 7, 18, 29; Feb. 9, 20; Mar. 3, 14, 25

3. Bombshell, 1933, directed by Victor Fleming, with Jean Harlow, Lee Tracy, Frank Morgan, Franchot Tone. (Loew's) Jan. 8, 19, 30; Feb. 10, 21; Mar. 4, 15, 26

4. Million Dollar Legs, 1932, directed by Edward Cline, with Jack Oakie, W. C. Fields, Andy Clyde, Lyda Roberti, Ben Turpin, Hugh Herbert. (Paramount Pictures) Jan. 9, 20, 31; Feb. 11, 22; Mar. 5, 16, 27

5. Trouble in Paradise, 1932, directed by Ernst Lubitsch, with Miriam Hopkins, Kay Francis, Herbert Marshall, Charles Ruggles, Edward Everett Horton. (Paramount Pictures) Jan. 10, 21; Feb. 1, 12, 23; Mar. 6, 17, 28

6. Hands up, 1926, directed by Clarence Badger, with Raymond Griffith, Miriam Nixon, Montague Love. (Paramount Pictures)

7. Dream of a Rarebit Fiend, 1906, directed and photographed by Edwin S. Porter. (Edison Co.) High and Dizzy, 1920, produced and directed by Hal Roach, with Harold Lloyd and Mildred Davis. (Hal Roach-Loew's) Jan. 21, 12; Feb. 2, 3, 14, 24; Mar. 7, 18, 29

8. Charlie Chaplin: Four Essanay Comedies, 1915: A NIGHT AT THE SHOW; WORK; A NIGHT OUT; carmen (reels 4 and 5 only) Jan. 14, 25; Feb. 5, 16, 27; Mar. 10, 21


10. Charlie Chaplin: Four Mutual Comedies, 1917 (RKO Radio Picture, Inc.): THE IMMIGRANT; THE ADVENTURER; EASY STREET Jan. 16, 27; Feb. 7, 18; Mar. 1, 12, 23
**Cities in which the Museum of Modern Art Circulating Exhibitions will be shown during January and February, 1941**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Exhibition</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bloomington, Ill.</td>
<td>Bloomington Art Association</td>
<td>Alvar Aalto</td>
<td>Jan. 31-Feb. 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapel Hill, N. C.</td>
<td>University of North Carolina</td>
<td>Watercolors by Rainey Bennett</td>
<td>Jan. 5-Jan. 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbus, Mo.</td>
<td>Stephens College</td>
<td>Abstract Photography</td>
<td>Jan. 6-Jan. 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denton, Tex.</td>
<td>Texas State College for Women</td>
<td>van Gogh (color reproductions)</td>
<td>Jan. 28-Feb. 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durham, N. C.</td>
<td>Duke University</td>
<td>What is Modern Architecture?</td>
<td>Feb. 5-Feb. 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elgin, Ill.</td>
<td>Elgin Academy</td>
<td>An Analysis of Picasso's &quot;Seated Man&quot;</td>
<td>Feb. 4-Feb. 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Wayne, Ind.</td>
<td>Fort Wayne School of Art</td>
<td>George Grosz</td>
<td>Feb. 1-Feb. 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greensboro, N. C.</td>
<td>Woman's College of the University of North Carolina</td>
<td>Twenty 20th Century Paintings</td>
<td>Jan. 24-Feb. 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana, Pa.</td>
<td>State Teachers College</td>
<td>Masters of the School of Paris (prints)</td>
<td>Jan. 18-Jan. 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa City, Ia.</td>
<td>State University of Iowa</td>
<td>The Wooden House in America</td>
<td>Feb. 10-Feb. 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ithaca, N. Y.</td>
<td>Cornell University</td>
<td>Twelve French Painters</td>
<td>Feb. 5-Feb. 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lafayette, Ind.</td>
<td>Purdue University</td>
<td>Useful Objects by American Designers</td>
<td>Jan. 1-Mar. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakeville, Conn.</td>
<td>Hotelkiss School</td>
<td>Ballet: History, Art and Practice</td>
<td>Dec. 21-Jan. 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawrenceville, N. J.</td>
<td>Lawrenceville School</td>
<td>The Face of America</td>
<td>Jan. 27-Feb. 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles, Cal.</td>
<td>Standahl Galleries</td>
<td>George Grosz</td>
<td>Jan. 4-Jan. 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mills College, Calif.</td>
<td>Mills College</td>
<td>Modern American Houses</td>
<td>Jan. 6-Jan. 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milwaukee, Wis.</td>
<td>Milwaukee Art Institute</td>
<td>Useful Objects Under $10.00</td>
<td>Jan. 24-Feb. 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minneapolis, Minn.</td>
<td>University of Minnesota</td>
<td>Modern Mexican Art</td>
<td>Jan. 26-Feb. 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Britain, Conn.</td>
<td>New Britain Institute</td>
<td>Ancestral Sources of Modern Painting</td>
<td>Feb. 9-Feb. 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Orleans, La.</td>
<td>Isaac Delgado Museum of Art (under the auspices of the Picasso Exhibition Committee)</td>
<td>A Survey of the American Film</td>
<td>Dec. 29-Jan. 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Wilmington, Pa.</td>
<td>Westminster College</td>
<td>Housing: Recent Developments in Europe and America</td>
<td>Jan. 13-Jan. 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal, Ill.</td>
<td>Illinois State Normal University</td>
<td>The Face of America</td>
<td>Jan. 6-Jan. 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oberlin, Ohio</td>
<td>Oberlin College</td>
<td>Functions of the Camera</td>
<td>Feb. 3-Feb. 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olmsted, Mich.</td>
<td>Oliver College</td>
<td>Abstract Photography</td>
<td>Jan. 27-Feb. 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providence, R. I.</td>
<td>The Kaufmann Department Stores, Inc.</td>
<td>Abstract Photography</td>
<td>Feb. 16-Mar. 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rome, Ga.</td>
<td>Brown University</td>
<td>Popular Art of Mexico</td>
<td>Feb. 4-Feb. 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruston, La.</td>
<td>The Carlington School</td>
<td>Useful Objects Under $10.00</td>
<td>Feb. 17-Jan. 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saginaw, Mich.</td>
<td>Louisiana Polytechnic Institute</td>
<td>An Analysis of Picasso's &quot;Seated Man&quot;</td>
<td>Feb. 2-Jan. 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saratoga Springs, N. Y.</td>
<td>Junior League of Saginaw</td>
<td>Mystery and Sentiment</td>
<td>Jan. 19-Jan. 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Louis, Mo.</td>
<td>Skidmore College</td>
<td>Picasso: Forty Years of His Art</td>
<td>Dec. 19-Jan. 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seattle, Wash.</td>
<td>City Art Museum of St. Louis</td>
<td>The Making of a Contemporary Film</td>
<td>Jan. 6-Jan. 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shreveport, La.</td>
<td>Woman's Department Club</td>
<td>The American Scene</td>
<td>Feb. 26-Mar. 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tulsa, Okla.</td>
<td>Phillips Memorial Art Gallery</td>
<td>Twelve French Painters</td>
<td>Feb. 9-Feb. 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University, Ia.</td>
<td>Louisiana State University</td>
<td>The Artist as Reporter</td>
<td>Feb. 1-Jan. 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University, Va.</td>
<td>University of Virginia</td>
<td>Murals by Fortinari</td>
<td>Feb. 19-Feb. 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williamsburg, Va.</td>
<td>College of William and Mary</td>
<td>Functions of the Camera</td>
<td>Jan. 15-Jan. 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zanesville, Ohio</td>
<td>Art Institute of Zanesville</td>
<td>A History of the Modern Poster</td>
<td>Feb. 2-Jan. 22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Rural Central Schools**

(Under the auspices of the Community Arts Program of the Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, Utica, N. Y.)

- American Painting (color reproductions) Nov. 1-Apr. 1