

The Museum of Modern Art

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

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STORIES BY DUANE MICHALS, an exhibition of evocative mime fables, in serial form and single pictures, by the New York photographer, will be on view from October 7 through December 6 in the Steichen Galleries of The Museum of Modern Art. According to William Burback, Curatorial Intern in the Department of Photography and supervisor of the exhibition, "The mysterious situations Michals invents are posed and theatrical. Yet, they are so common to the urban condition that we have the illusion of remembering scenes and events experienced for the first time."

The interplay between the fantastic or surreal and the ordinary is at the heart of Michals' pictures. A strong documentary strain runs through his early work and survives in his recent photographs. However, his people now exist more as representatives of the general human experience than as individuals; the situations and decisive moments are the photographer's inventions, the continuity they imply is illusory.

While the pictures are contrived, the technique is unobtrusive and straightforward, and the spectator is put directly in touch with the event portrayed. Many of the settings are simple, ordinary places. However, these places become mysterious because of the events which happen in them, while, according to Burback, "these pseudo events become fact because the photographs prove that what we know to be impossible happened." In the sequence "The Lost Shoe," a shoe is dropped on an empty street and catches fire. The image of the burning shoe suggests Magritte but whereas in a surrealist painting such inexplicable events remain imaginary, a photograph offers proof and invests the event with the actuality of reportage.

(more)

The show consists mainly of sequences of photographs of what appears to be an event, some surreal, such as "The Lost Shoe." Others are realistic, such as "The Senseless Act," a sequence in which a man ignites a trash-filled cardboard box which burns to the ground. In Michals' pictures such credible actions, neither motivated nor explained, become as strange yet as actual as the burning shoe.

Many of Michals' recent serial works appear in a new book of his photographs, Sequences, just published by Doubleday & Co.

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, New York 10019. Tel: (212) 956-7296 (7501).

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STORIES BY DUANE MICHALS

Wall Label

Duane Michals began taking photographs in 1958 when as a tourist he went to Russia with a borrowed camera. Those early pictures were observations of discovered people and places (a selection of them was reproduced in Contemporary Photographer, Spring 1964-65).

Michals recent photographs have become introspective and extend his interest in people and photographic reportage into more speculative areas. They are evocative mime fables in serial form and single pictures. The mysterious situations he invents are posed and theatrical. Yet, they are so common to the urban condition that we have the illusion of remembering scenes and events experienced for the first time. These pseudo events become fact because the photographs prove that we we know to be impossible happened.

William Burback

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STORIES BY DUANE MICHALS

October 7 through December 6, 1970

Checklist

1. Self Portrait As If I Were Dead. 1968 (70.865)
2. The Fallen Angel. 1969 (70.857.1-.8)
3. I Dreamt He Was Coming Down The Steps. 1967 (70.863)
4. 1970 (70.871)
5. The Birth Of Eve. 1969 (70.872.1-.6)
6. The Moments Before The Tragedy. 1969 (70.850.1-.5)
7. After Balthus. 1966 (70.861)
8. The Sad Farewell. 1969 (70.846.1-.7)
9. Chance Meeting. 1968 (70.867)
10. The Young Girl's Dream. 1970 (70.847.1-.5)
11. Death Comes To The Old Lady. 1969 (70.855.1-.5)
12. Chance Meeting. 1969 (70.856.1-.6)
13. 1968 (70.864)
14. From The Series - The Voyeur's Pleasure Becomes Pain. 1967 (70.860)
15. 1970 (70.869)
16. The Human Condition. 1969 (70.852.1-.6)
17. The Girl Is Hurt By A Letter. 1967 (70.844.1-.6)
18. A Memory Of My Grandmother. 1969 (70.841.1-.2)
19. The Dreamer. 1968 (70.859)
20. 1968 (70.862)
21. The Senseless Act. 1969 (70.848.1-.7)
22. Paradise Regained. 1969 (70.854.1-.6)
23. 1968 (70.870)
24. 1968 (70.866)
25. The Lost Shoe. 1969 (70.851.1-.6)
26. The Spirit Leaving The Body. 1968 (70.845.1-.7)
27. The Illusions Of The Photographer. 1970 (70.853.1-.9)
28. From The Series: For Balthus. 1969 (70.868)
29. The Illuminated Man. 1968 (70.858)