

# The Museum of Modern Art

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## PROJECTS: PANAMA CANAL

### PHOTOGRAPHS BY ERNEST "RED" HALLEN

Photographs by Ernest "Red" Hallen of the construction and maintenance of the Panama Canal and of the life surrounding it will be on view at The Museum of Modern Art from August 9 through October 3. Selected and installed by Dennis Longwell, Assistant Curator of Photography, this exhibition of 161 slides, more than 60 prints, and 3 panoramic views of the Gatun Spillway excavations represents only a small portion of the more than 12,000 photographs of the Panama Canal made by Hallen in the thirty years between 1907, when he was appointed the Canal's official photographer, and his retirement in 1937. With the exception of the panoramic photographs (lent by George W. Goethals), all the works in the exhibition have been lent by the Library of the United States Military Academy, West Point.

The photographs in this exhibition concentrate on two contrasting aspects of the much larger total, the excavation of the Culebra Cut, an eight-mile channel winding through the continental divide at the Canal's center, and the construction of the Gatun Locks. Built in three sections, each 1000 feet long by 110 feet wide, the Gatun Locks raise an in-coming vessel 85 feet above the Atlantic Ocean to the surface of Gatun Lake. The ship then crosses the lake, moves through the Culebra Cut and two smaller lock installations to the Pacific Ocean almost 51 miles away. As Dennis Longwell notes, "The Panama Canal is by no means the simple trench the Suez Canal is. Rather it is a bridge of fresh water spanning the Panamanian isthmus."

"Hallen's photographs of the Canal are," Mr. Longwell writes, "extremely valuable documents. Seen as such, collectively and unburdened by the concept of masterpiece, they provide a strangely satisfying aesthetic experience. In their blunt, rough beauty they offer in abundance a gift unique to photographs: the magic that permits us to see again what has been hidden from our eyes--in this case by earth, water, and time."

(more)

Ernest Hallen was born in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1875. After his retirement in 1937, he and his wife Maude moved to Monterey Park, California, where he died in 1947.

This exhibition is the thirty-ninth in the Projects series, begun in May 1971. Projects has been made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. The Museum gratefully acknowledges the support of its exhibition program by the New York State Council on the Arts.

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Additional information available from Bruce Wolmer, Assistant, and Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53 St., New York, NY 10019. Phone: (212) 956-7295; 7501.

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