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Modernist Photography: Selections from the Daniel Cowin Collection



Henryk Hermanowicz
Woman with Closed Eyes, 1937
Gelatin silver print

On view from
September 16 through
November 27, 2005

Media Preview
September 15, 2005
9:30 - 11am

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On view at the International Center of Photography (1133 Avenue of the Americas at 43rd Street) from September 16 through November 27, 2005, *Modernist Photography: Selections from the Daniel Cowin Collection* includes sixty-six fascinating examples of modernist photography of the 1920s and 1930s, chosen from the more than 1,200 images comprising the Daniel Cowin Collection.

This exhibition reexamines the classic period of twentieth-century photography, using new critical approaches to consider five recurrent visual themes during the years 1915 to 1945. These themes, which cut across such stylistic movements as Pictorialism, Surrealism, and the New Vision, include the transformation of objects, experimental images of the body, visions of the city, the industrialization of the countryside, and experimental directions in poster design and typography. This thematic approach fosters new perspectives on such key photographers as Berenice Abbott, Brassai, Walker Evans, Raoul Hausmann, Dorothea Lange, Gordon Parks, and Man Ray, and emphasizes the interactions between European and American practitioners.

Daniel Cowin was a trustee of the International Center of Photography from 1987 until his death in 1992. A banker by profession, he began his involvement with ICP in 1983. Although he was a passionate and tireless collector of everything from folk art to Renaissance furniture to nineteenth-century American painting, Cowin had a special love and keen admiration for photography. He possessed a sharp eye and a distinctive instinct, which attracted him to sophisticated and sometimes unusual images. Drawn to subjects and photographers that he felt to be overlooked and undervalued, his subsequent collecting often proved to be far ahead of his time. In 1990, Daniel Cowin donated a remarkable collection of more than 3,000 photographs, which documented African-American life from the mid-nineteenth century through the 1950s. A selection of these images will be exhibited at the museum during the winter of 2005-06.

Modernist Photography has been organized by ICP curator Christopher Phillips and Assistant Curator Vanessa Rocco, who have also edited the 120-page catalogue for the exhibition. This publication marks the commencement of a new ICP publication series, conceived in collaboration with Steidl Verlag, which will bring wider notice to specific areas within the rich and diverse ICP permanent collection of more than 100,000 photographs.

This exhibition was organized by the International Center of Photography and made possible with the generosity of Mrs. Daniel Cowin.