

For Immediate Release

Vancouver Art Gallery presents *Walker Evans: Depth of Field*

Exhibition offers the most comprehensive look at the artist's work ever mounted in Canada



Media is invited to a preview event on Thursday, October 27, 9:00am at the Vancouver Art Gallery (750 Hornby Street, Vancouver). John T. Hill, curator and executor of Evans' Estate, and Grant Arnold, Audain Curator of British Columbia Art, Vancouver Art Gallery, will be in attendance. Please RSVP to Debra Zhou (dzhou@vanartgallery.bc.ca)

October 20, 2016, Vancouver, BC – Vancouver Art Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of work by Walker Evans, a preeminent American photographer who shaped the history of twentieth-century photography. Opening on October 29, 2016, *Walker Evans: Depth of Field* features over 200 photographs from the 1920s to the 1970s, including the iconic images Evans made in the American South during the Great Depression—work that played a major role in solidifying the term we now refer to as documentary photography. This exhibition addresses the full arc of his career and is the most comprehensive look at Evans' work ever presented in Canada.

“The significance of Walker Evans in the establishment of photography as art can hardly be overemphasized. His work serves as the nexus for many strands of twentieth-century photography, and holds a special significance in Vancouver, a city that has become widely associated with conceptually rigorous photography over the past three decades. Evans' emphasis on the everyday and his historically inflected vision have been a model for generations of photographers and an important point of reference for Vancouver-based artists to this day. As an institution that is specialized in exhibiting and collecting photography, we are honoured to be a partner on this project, and we look forward to presenting this comprehensive exhibition to our audiences,” said Kathleen S. Bartels, Director of the Vancouver Art Gallery.

Born in St. Louis, Missouri, Evans initially aspired to become a writer. He studied literature for a year at Williams College in Massachusetts and spent time in Paris during the mid-1920s, where he encountered the work of a range of modern European photographers. After returning to the United States, Evans began to realize that the artistic material he was looking for was right in front of him, in the symbols and faceless architecture of the commercial world, the traces of everyday life found in cheap cafés and small-town streets and the widespread deprivations of the Great Depression. By the 1930s Evans had developed a singular approach to image making that drew upon a concise narrative structure associated with literature and placed him on the path of becoming one of the world's most important photographers. His precise and lyrical images of modern America in the making would frame the development of documentary photography in Europe and North America and serve as a significant point of orientation for numerous artists who came after him, including Diane Arbus, Bernd and Hilla Becher, Lee Friedlander, Robert Frank and Helen Levitt, among many others.

Organized chronologically, the retrospective begins with early work from the late 1920s, including some of Evans' lesser-known projects, such as the Brooklyn Bridge, The Crime of Cuba and Antebellum Architecture, which will be presented together for the first time as discrete photographic essays. The exhibition then moves forward in time to the indelible images Evans made for the Farm Security Administration during the Great Depression in the American South, the covert views he created in the subway system of New York in the late 1930s and early 1940s, the little-studied work he produced over his two decades as a staff photographer at *Fortune* magazine, to the often-overlooked Polaroid images Evans' made toward the end of his career.

The exhibition is curated by John T. Hill, a photographer, designer and writer with assistance from Grant Arnold, Audain Curator of British Columbia Art. Hill was the first director of graduate studies in photography at Yale University, where he became a friend and colleague of Walker Evans, and eventually became the executor of Evans' estate. He has published five books including *Walker Evans: First and Last*; *Walker Evans at Work*; *Walker Evans: Havana 1933*; *Walker Evans: The Hungry Eye*, awarded the Prix Nadar (Paris) and a Kraszna-Krausz Book Award (London); and *Walker Evans: Lyric Documentary*.

Accompanying the exhibition is a comprehensive and extensively illustrated publication that investigates the trans-Atlantic roots of Evans' practice and his development of a compellingly lyrical documentary style. The book examines in detail the complex development of Evans' oeuvre from his early street photography, to his iconic photographs of the Great Depression to his later embrace of colour photography. Over 400 pages, the hardcover publication features essays by John T. Hill, Heinz Liesbrock, Jerry L. Thompson, Alan Trachtenberg and Thomas Weski and features extensive illustrations ranging from the artist's earliest images taken with a vest pocket camera to his final Polaroid photographs of the 1970s.

Walker Evans: Depth of Field is organized by the Josef Albers Museum Quaddrat, Bottrop, Germany and the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, in collaboration with the Vancouver Art Gallery.

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Image credits:

(left) Walker Evans, *Roadside Sign near Birmingham, Alabama*, 1936, silver gelatin print, Private collection

(right) Walker Evans, *Cotton Tenant Farmer's Wife*, 1936, silver gelatin print, Private collection

-30-

IMAGES ARE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

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