
Created during a period when photographic experimentation involved manipulation of light instead of pixels, this single volume provides complete documentation of the cameraless photographs made by the Hungarian-born artist László Moholy-Nagy (1895–1946). Most widely known for his tenure at the Bauhaus, Moholy-Nagy, like most instructors from the school, was prolific in a number of forms despite this being the first catalogue raisonné for any element of his oeuvre. Inspired by the confluence of art and technology both in his writings and art-making, he worked with photograms throughout the course of his artistic production from 1922 to 1943, making this an effective prism for consideration of his entire body of work.

When the eventual editors of this volume first began research on this aspect of Moholy-Nagy's oeuvre in 1990, only 250 of the included 420 works were known. As a catalogue, the majority of the content which follows the two detailed yet concise essays introducing the material is composed of object listings. Sections are ordered chronologically and illustrate the evolution of the artist's production, with uniquely important divisions collecting early pre-Bauhaus works and those late works made during his time in Chicago. Each listing includes the typical information strings of provenance, exhibition history, bibliographic citations, and technical data, as well as reproductions. The images are faithful to the coloration of the original and most are in shades of black, white, and gray, with some exceptions being comparative illustrations and works developed with brown paper. Spliced between sections are short sidebar-style essays that provide relief from the stream of objects and encourage straight-through reading.

In Hattula Moholy-Nagy's foreword, the artist's daughter addresses the importance of catalogues raisonnés by arguing that the comprehensiveness of the medium provides art historical research with both a summary point and a broad evolutionary understanding. While this value statement should keep the academic community interested, John Russell's call to readers of The New York Times brought the format to the general community: "The catalogue raisonné can be one of the noblest works of man. Through it, and better than in almost any other way, we can study a work of a great artist in its every detail. It has in it something of biography, something of the detective story, something of the laboratory and something of ecstasy" (Dec. 16, 1984; p. H33). This volume is especially recommended for academic libraries and photography-related collections, with its success in maintaining accessibility also making it relevant for general art collections.

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