

Edward Steichen and The Family of Man Exhibit Presentation by Gary Saretzky

Abstract

Photographer Edward Steichen (1879–1973) had distinguished careers, first as an art photographer, then as a fashion/portrait photographer before directing photography for the Naval Aviation Unit and then the entire Navy during World War II. In 1947, he joined the Museum of Modern Art (New York) as Director of Photography until 1962. Curated by Steichen, *The Family of Man* was a landmark MoMA exhibition of 503 photographs from 68 countries, on view from January 24 to May 8, 1955. It then toured the world for eight years to a record-breaking nine million visitors who assessed Steichen's humanist effort to promote world peace through a visual statement of what diverse people had in common, for example, love, laughter, and family life. The catalog for the exhibit, still in print, became the best selling photography book of all time and influenced many who never saw the original exhibit to become photographers. Not without controversy, *The Family of Man* continues to fascinate the general public, photographers, and photo historians.

Bio

Gary D. Saretzky, archivist, educator, and photographer, worked as an archivist for more than fifty years at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Educational Testing Service, and the Monmouth County Archives. Saretzky taught the history of photography at Mercer County Community College, 1977–2012, and served as coordinator of the Public History Internship Program for the Rutgers University History Department, 1994–2016. He has published more than 100 articles and reviews on the history of photography, photographic conservation, and other topics, including “*U.S. Camera: A Thomas J. Maloney Chronology*,” *The Photo Review* (2004), which documents the close working relationship of Maloney, the prominent photography book and magazine publisher, and Edward Steichen.