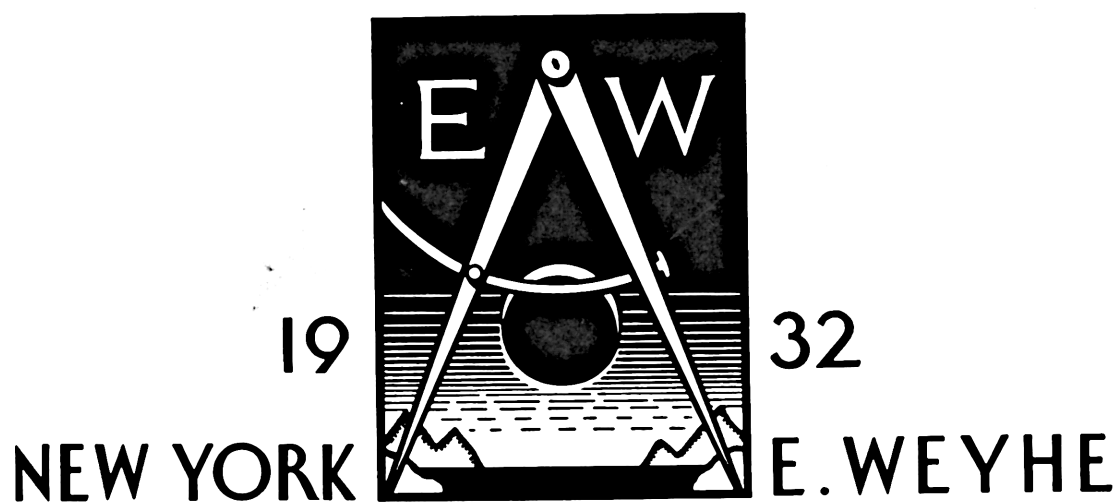


EDWARD WESTON



The Art of
EDWARD WESTON

by Merle Armitage

Foreword by Charles Sheeler

Appreciation by Lincoln Steffens

Prophecy by Arthur Millier

Estimate by Jean Charlot

A Statement

by **Edward Weston**

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Printed in the United States of America

With kindest regards to Zohmah Day
Lynette R. Kittle

To Zohmah
- con muchos recuerdos -
Edward - 1933-4

This signature is added by
Merle Armitage
with regards to
Zohmah Day

An Estimate and a Tribute to Weston from a Painter

P *By* JEAN CHARLOT

ITY the man who needs explanations to enjoy the art of Edward Weston. But aside from its integral value, his work suggests far-reaching connotations before which it may be fruitful to pause. * * Photography, by definition, is a most objective medium. By affirmation, Edward Weston makes it more so. To survey chronologically his "oeuvre" is to witness a purposeful and heroic shelling away of subjective addenda, of all the trimming that, to the average observer, transmutes a photograph into a work of art. * * In his earliest work the lyrical qualities strive to express themselves against the logic of the camera. He idealises objects through "flou" effects or spider webs of shadows much as a French chef will induce a fish to look like a chicken and taste nearly as it looks. Those trickeries soon discarded, Weston tried to retain a well-earned right to unusual photographic angles, subtle space compositions and sophisticated framings. Without such pride-feeders, it seems that an artist's personality would cease to be. But his destiny was to strip himself still further. In his present work, the last vestiges of self-obsessions have disappeared. In the concrete, implacable way which is its own privilege, the camera records whichever it is, rock, plant or wood, that Weston innocently squares right in the

middle of the plate. * * Unpalatable as the fact may be to most of his colleagues, it is evident that the increased effacement of the man behind his work has resulted in a deepening and a heightening of its aesthetic contents. With the humbleness born of conviction, the artist distracts our attention from himself as a spectacle, shifts it to nature as a spectacle. No need to digest, enlighten nature, given that his work is strong enough to enlighten the onlooker as to nature's meaning and beauty. The search for a super-objectivity produces an art which accomplishes the inner aim of great art. It makes us commune with the artist's clairvoyance in the minute of creation. * * This untimely application of the apologue of the man who found himself by losing himself clashes with this epoch of artistic theorizing. People now profess that objective vision and subjective understanding are incompatible, that the former is trash compared to the latter. But are they not Siamese twins to whom, in the realm of plastic art, separation brings death? * * Man cannot speak but of himself. However objective the aim, he will describe not the objects, only his own sensuous contact with them. The more tenaciously the painter clings to binocular vision, the more clearly will he state, as does Vermeer, that the human optic is more perfect a means of emotion than a means of cognizance. The camera, too, gives us not the object, but a sign for it written in terms of light and shade, indeed, often at odds with the experience gathered through touch, smell, mental knowledge or even an average human eye. * * As to the supposed hierarchy between the inner and outer world, let us remember that the only possible commerce of plastic arts

is in the realm of the visible, deals with physical bodies. In the concise wording of Poussin, "There is no painting without solid---There is no solid without light." Which does not mean that art must be despiritualized. The very fact of the visibility of the outer world is proof that it has laws, rhythms and phrases to which, both being attuned to the same diapason, the laws, rhythms and phrases of our spiritual world do answer. To describe physical biological phenomena, erosion, growth, etc., is to refer by image to similar happenings in our mental self. Thus is description apt to move us deeply. * * Like very few, indeed, has Weston understood these things. More exactly, as artists---at least in the heat of creation---do not think, Weston has lived these things. The more objective he strives to be, the more inner chords he strikes, and in so doing, points to the means of liberation away from the current and exasperating creed. Why not copy nature as best we may, so that our work, once again explicitly related to the whole, will cease to be a freakish thing to become as wholesome and beneficial to man as food?