

**#57 January 2021 Cameraderie**  
**László Moholy-Nagy (1895-1946)**



I don't quite know how to approach László Moholy-Nagy, because, according to the Wikipedia article, photography was not central to his artistic endeavors:

The art critic Peter Schjeldahl [the head art critic for The New Yorker] called him “relentlessly experimental” because of his pioneering work in painting, drawing, photography, collage, sculpture, film, theater, and writing.

I am moved to report on Moholy-Nagy because of what I said last month in my article on Beaumont Newhall (#56, Nov. 2020), quoting from Wikipedia: “In 1940, Newhall became the first curator of MoMA’s photography department and decisively began collecting for the Museum, starting with the work of László Moholy-Nagy.”

Here is the link to the Wikipedia article on Moholy-Nagy:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L%C3%A1szl%C3%B3\\_Moholy-Nagy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L%C3%A1szl%C3%B3_Moholy-Nagy)

Here are some quotes from the Wikipedia article:

In 1923, Moholy-Nagy was invited by Walter Gropius to teach at the Bauhaus in Weimar, Germany. He took over Johannes Itten's role co-teaching the Bauhaus foundation course with Josef Albers, and also replaced Paul Klee as Head of the Metal Workshop. This effectively marked the end of the school's expressionistic leanings and moved it closer towards its original aims as a school of design and

industrial integration. The Bauhaus became known for the versatility of its artists, and Moholy-Nagy was no exception. Throughout his career, he became proficient and innovative in the fields of photography, typography, sculpture, painting, printmaking, film-making, and industrial design.

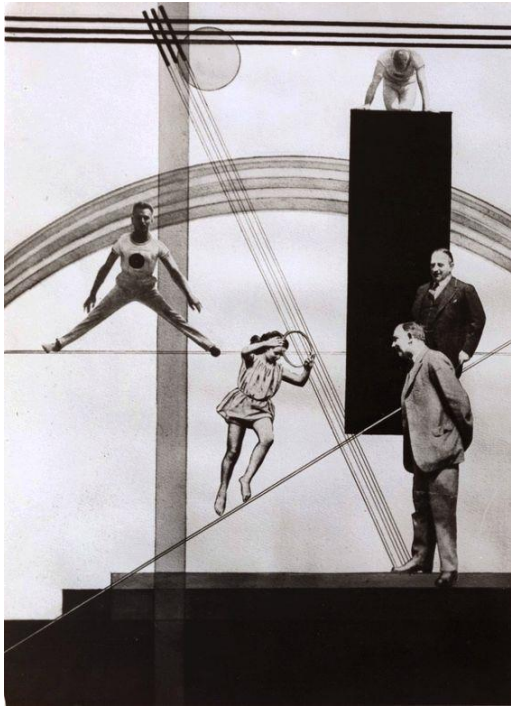
One of his main focuses was photography; starting in 1922, he had been initially guided by the technical expertise of his first wife and collaborator Lucia Moholy. In his books *Malerei, Photographie, Film* and *The New Vision, from Material to Architecture* (1932), he coined the term *Neues Sehen* (New Vision) for his belief that the camera could create a whole new way of seeing the outside world that the human eye could not. This theory encapsulated his approach to his art and teaching.

Moholy-Nagy was the first interwar artist to suggest the use of scientific equipment such as the telescope, microscope, and radiography in the making of art. With Lucia, he experimented with the photogram; the process of exposing light-sensitive paper with objects laid upon it. His teaching practice covered a diverse range of media, including painting, sculpture, photography, photomontage, and metalworking.

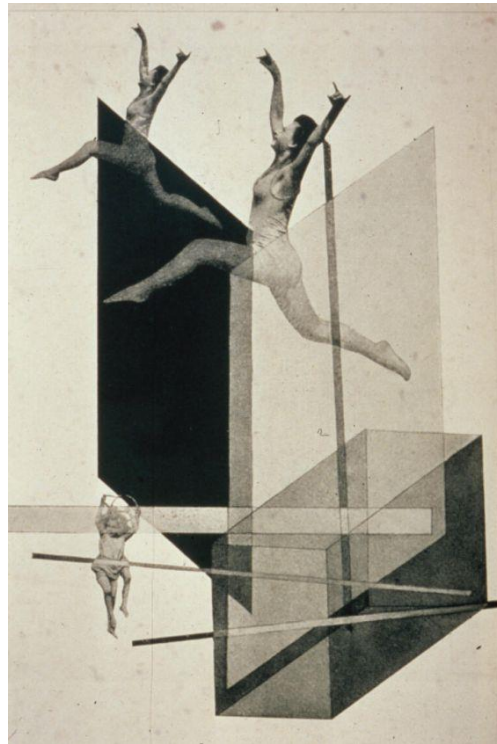
You can see many of his works of art and photography simply by Googling his name and selecting "images."

Below, I have shown mostly his photographic work, but the first group of images shows how he integrated photographs into works of art.

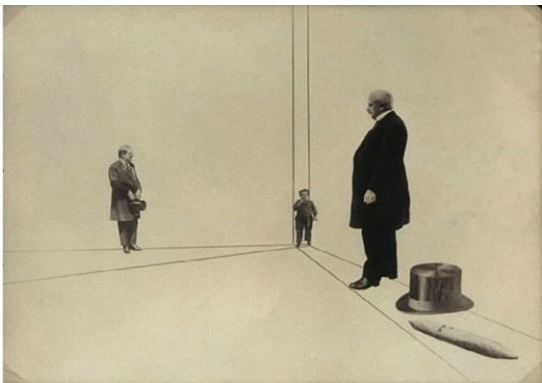
The Benevolent Gentleman



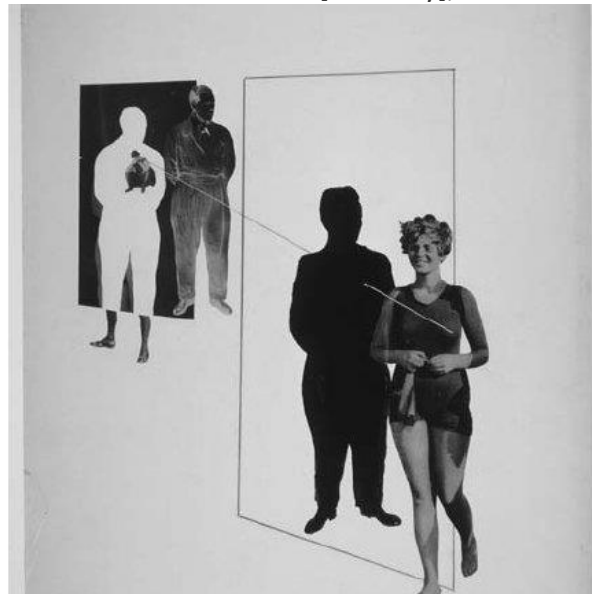
Human Mechanics



Unsere Grossen [our big ones], 1927

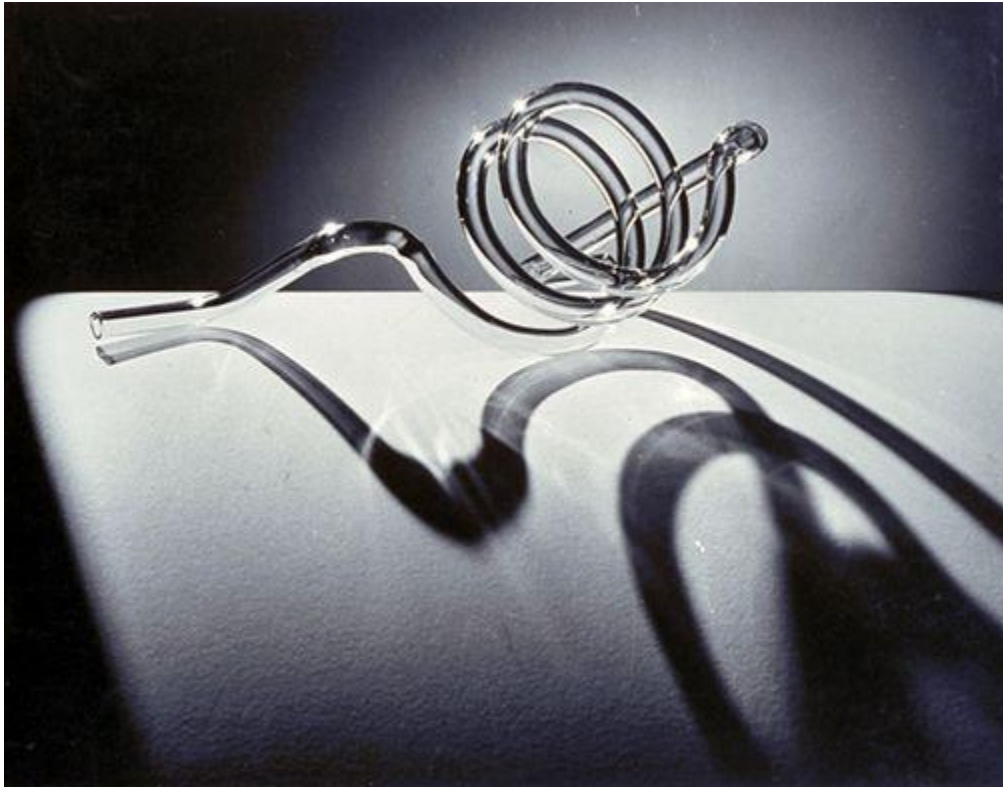


Eifersucht [Jealousy], 1925



These four images show samples of Moholy-Nagy's use of photography in mixed media art.

Title and date unknown



This looks like a difficult subject to light.

From the Los Angeles County Museum of Art exhibit: *Moholy-Nagy: Future Present*, Feb 12–Jun 18, 2017



This is a sample of Moholy-Nagy's photogram work. I wonder what he used for the linear elements.

7 A.M. (New Year's Morning) ca. 1930



Title Unknown, 1925-1928



La Canebière Street, Marseilles – View Through the Balcony Grille, 1928  
Eton. Eleves watching cricket from the pavilion on Agar's Plough, c. 1930



These four images experiment with point of view. Moholy-Nagy has done extensive work on point of view photography. In addition to these “above” images, he has a number of “below” images.

The top left image is in the collection of the Met in NYC, and its website commentary says this: “A less sophisticated artist would not have seen that a picture could be hung on such a minimal scaffold of small incidents, traces, and shadows, precisely related.” I think this shows how his skill as an artist affects his sense of composition in his photographs.

The top right image introduces an element of mystery in what would otherwise be a mundane scene. The bottom left image looks down through a lacework iron balcony railing. The bottom right image is a study in shadows.