

Arthur Sawyers is a free-lance photographer living in Chicago where he has been working since 1966. His photographs have been published in many periodicals including Chicago Magazine, Discovery, Kiwanis Magazine, and Avant-garde. An exhibition of his work has been shown at the Bruton Parish Rectory, Colonial Williamsburg, Williamsburg, Virginia, and in 1964 there was a one-man show at the Tacoma Art Museum in Tacoma, Washington. He is represented in the travelling exhibition, People in Illinois, organized by the Illinois Arts Council in 1967, and photographs by him were included in the exhibition of young American photographers held last winter at Purdue University. His work was also shown at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts in an exhibition of significant young photographers who had had their first showings at The Art Institute of Chicago. Prints by him are in the permanent collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art and The Art Institute of Chicago. In November of this year a photographic essay in color on six Chicago artists will appear in Chicago Magazine.

Although he was born in Washington, D. C. in December 1939, his home was in Middleburg, Virginia, where he spent his early childhood. Later his family lived in various cities of the United States, but during his sophomore year in high school he returned to Middleburg. For a time his success and popularity as a basketball player seemed to indicate a future career as a professional athlete. In Middleburg his grandfather owned a camera store and a long time enthusiasm for photography finally determined the choice of his life work. After high school he lived for a short time in Houston, Texas, then attended Shepherd College in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. Afterwards he came to Skokie, Illinois, and in Chicago worked for the Hedrich-Blessing studio for three and a half years. In 1963 he married Linda Carr of Louisville, Kentucky, and soon after was called to the United States Army to spend two years in the Signal Corps. When he returned from service he went to work as staff photographer in Colonial Williamsburg, Williamsburg, Virginia, where he remained for one year during which he also performed with success in a theatrical company. In 1966 he returned to Chicago to begin work as a free-lance photographer.

The most striking characteristic of the photographs of Arthur Sawyers is his expression of the felicity of light. With him the presentation of light comes as much from a natural affection for it as from extensive practical experience. He realizes it is the photographer's most valuable property, just as time is for the composer of music and the film director. His care and concern for transporting its original quality from his negatives to his prints frees them of that murkiness and dulness which flatten so many excellent images by others. Even when solid black appears it still suggests depth, space, and possible detail, and is not a futile area of darkened emulsion. Thus his photographs offer illusions of evanescent, fleeting changeability which bring light and life close and reveal them to another eye. The atmosphere, season, time of day, geographic situation, and spirit of each scene are quietly and happily caught in perpetuity that is never dead and petrified.

But, better than all this, his photographs return us to pleasures and advantages of the spirit which are now too often neglected or forgotten. When fear, criticism, dread, and happenings have been repeated until we expect them constantly and live in them, as if they were the natural tenor of existence, these pictures direct us towards a new realism. It is as if the photographer had turned away from the harrassments and involvements of conscience of daily living and with the knowledge gained from them, offered us a world of far different possibilities. The truths stated by his photographs cannot be denied, for their substance is that of ordinary existence, but it is recorded eloquently by mutations of light which rest our vision and work surprising transformations.

Regarded as a whole, his prints have an estimable consistency. Their qualities prove they are neither the rejection of facts nor the reiteration of

outworn optimism. Capability and experience quietly assimilated together form one of their strongest ingredients. The photographer shows us the world as we too might see it and convinces us it does exist in the terms of his beliefs and images. He does not borrow from his contemporaries or steal from masters of the past; if he uses the same subject matter, the unconsciousness of his choice is apparent and the character with which it is enlivened is his. He does not force your attention. You may enter his compositions again and again - and this should be done - to acquire the rewards of their excellence and sincerity. They show the superiority of experience over sensation and attach themselves to memory. They are not the products of schools or master teachers nor examples of the cult of ugliness so fashionable nowadays because it makes attracting attention so easy. They integrate design as an auxiliary - yet vital - element, and do not convert it into a startling headline to compel your notice and admiration. People in them are human beings and there is subtle penetration of their ambiguities and possibilities. Intricate detail is reduced to simplicity. All this is accomplished because unaffected judgment and unpretentious, ~~careless~~ technique have drawn these many characteristics together and formed an esthetic entirety.