

LUCIEN CLERGUE

Lucien Clergue's photographic accomplishments are so numerous and varied that almost any listing of them would be incomplete. Only this spring his work has been shown in four different one-man exhibitions: at the Galerie de France in Paris, the Städtische Kunsthalle in Düsseldorf, Germany, the Kunsthalle, Bern, Switzerland, and the present selection at the Art Institute of Chicago, the first presentation of his photographs in Chicago. Today he is the most original and independent of French photographers and his fame is international.

He was born in 1934 in Arles and continues to live there. When he was ten years old his home was destroyed during the August 1944 bombardments, an experience from which his mother never recovered and which resulted in her death several years later. In 1954, while working in an office and devoting his Sundays to photography, he became known to Jean Renoir who had come to Arles to direct a production of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar. The encouragement of the great director intensified his ardor for photography. His first published work was a series of photographs for Nus de la mer (1956), illustrating poems by Paul Eluard. It was from this time he has had the friendship of Picasso who designed covers for his books, and of Jean Cocteau who contributed prefaces to them.

By 1960 he had devoted himself entirely to photography. He had discovered the Arles swamp, and that remarkable part of France, the Camargue region with the Rhone River, the salt marshes, the corn and rice fields, the cowboys, the breeding of bulls, and the rice farms. This area appears again and again in Lucien Clergue's imagery, alternating with his fleeting - and unforgettable - perceptions of subjects as disparate as a nude in water or the classic and tragic ceremonies of the bullring.

His published work consists of eleven books and portfolios, the most recent being El Cordobés (1965) devoted to Spain's great bullfighter and popular hero, and Née de la vague (1968), a collection of nudes. Since 1960 there have been twenty-seven exhibitions of his work. He has made two long documentary motion pictures, one on Picasso and the other on the flamenco guitarist and singer, Manitas de Plata. There have been, also, ten shorter films. His photographic murals decorate the University of Freiburg im Breisgau, The Investor Funding Corporation (New York), the Chase National Bank (Staten Island), Crédit Agricole (Arles), the railway station of the Société nationale des Chemins de fer français (Grenoble). Examples of his work are owned by many European museums, and in America he is represented in the permanent collections of The Museum of Modern Art (New York), The Art Institute of Chicago, The Smithsonian Institution, The John Ringling Museum (Sarasota, Florida), and The Provincetown Art Museum (Provincetown, Massachusetts). During the last year he began printing on polished aluminum plates, a method with which he has achieved brilliant results, and at the present time he is preparing photographic illustrations for Amers, a book of poems by Saint-John Perse.

His photographs are printed in editions of twenty copies which are signed and numbered on the reverse of each print.