

FINDING AID FOR THE

MORTENSEN/DUNHAM COLLECTION AG 43

Center for Creative Photography
University of Arizona
Tucson, AZ 85721-0103

For further information about the archives at the Center for Creative Photography, please contact the Archivist: phone 530-621-6273; fax 520-621-9444

DESCRIPTION

Papers, publications, and photographs, ca. 1930 -1964, of William Mortensen (1897 - 1965), photographer, teacher, and writer, as collected by his assistant George Dunham. The bulk of the collection consists of published monographs and tearsheets, Mortensen's manuscripts on the aesthetics and the techniques of photography, and his work prints of figure and landscape studies. 3.2 linear feet.

PROVENANCE

Purchased from the heirs of George Dunham through the Alta Bookstore, Laguna Beach, California, in 1980.

PROCESSING NOTE

Processed September 1984 by Roger Myers. Electronic version prepared by Amy Rule, June 1998.

RELATED MATERIALS

See also AG 147, the William Mortensen Archive, and AG 170, the Grey Silva Collection.

RESTRICTIONS

Copyright for Mortensen's photographs and writings is held by Deborah Irmas. For additional information, consult the archivist.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Please consult “William Mortensen: A Revival,” *The Archive* 33 (1998) for extensive biographical information including a chronology, bibliography, and essays about his life and career.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The strength and bulk of this collection resides in 37 typescript manuscripts of published and unpublished articles and monographs, some with handwritten annotations or corrections, written by Mortensen between 1933 and 1950. From the early 1930s until the end of the 1940s, Mortensen, with the aid of his model, friend, and editor George Dunham, produced numerous articles and books on photography. Eight published monograph titles are represented in this collection. These books span his writing career from his first book, *Projection Control* (1934), to the third edition of *How to Pose a Model* (1956).

The collection also includes approximately fifty magazine articles that Mortensen published from 1933 to 1948 in such journals as *Camera Craft* and *Popular Photography*. These articles reveal his personal, technical, and critical considerations on portraiture, the printing of negatives, pictorialism, the bromoil process, and other contemporary concerns. Several of these articles were later expanded into books. Some of the articles contain handwritten annotations.

Correspondence is represented in the collection with 46 letters, mostly incoming, from the editors and publishers of *Camera Craft*, *Popular Photography*, Morgan and Morgan, and Simon and Schuster. There are also a few miscellaneous letters about the bromoil process and other technical problems discussed in Mortensen's books. George Dunham, acting as Mortensen's assistant, handled some of this correspondence.

The collection also includes miscellaneous printed items such as calling cards, catalogs, and pamphlets describing the Mortensen School of Photography. There is also a series of illustrations done by Mortensen in the early 1930s for the Milk Commission of Los Angeles County. Clippings of Mortensen's monthly advertisements and illustrations regarding his publications and school, as well as reviews by others of his published works are included. Four rare pamphlets, published in 1954 in a series titled *Mortensen System*, outline his approach to the negative, texture screen and model.

While fine prints are not part of this collection, 149 work prints are included. The majority of these are gelatin silver prints of various sizes, mostly untitled and undated, consisting of landscapes, figure studies, and portraits. These prints were probably done between 1935 and 1955; some of them were used to illustrate his publications.

This collection contains no records of business activities in Hollywood or Laguna Beach, his personal life and daily activities, exhibitions, or experimental photographic processes.

ARRANGEMENT

This collection has been designated Archive Group (AG) 43 and has been arranged according the following outline:

- Correspondence, 1935-65
- Manuscripts, ca.1933-65
- Printed materials, ca.1930-60
- Monographs, 1934-56
- Periodicals, 1933-48
- Pamphlets, ca.1937-54
- Photographs, ca.1935-55

INVENTORY

CORRESPONDENCE, 1935-65

Arrangement: Alphabetical, by correspondent
Quantity: 7 folders

AG43:1/1 General, 1935-65

- 2 *Camera Craft*, 1936-57
- 3 Dunham, George, ca.1935-65
- 4 Morgan and Morgan, 1962
- 5 *Popular Photography*, 1937
- 6 Simon and Schuster, 1936-59
- 7 Stuart, Charles, 1959

SELECTED INDEX TO CORRESPONDENCE

Camera Craft, 1936-57

Davis, B.G., *see Popular Photography*
Dunham, George, ca.1935-65

Morgan, Willard D., *see Morgan and Morgan*
Morgan and Morgan, 1962

Popular Photography, 1937

Simon, Richard L., *see Simon and Schuster*
Simon and Schuster, 1936-59

Stuart, Charles, 1959

Young, George Allen, *see Camera Craft*

MANUSCRIPTS, 1933-60

Arrangement: Alphabetical, by title

Quantity: 1.5 linear feet

- AG43:1/8 Fragments, ca. 1933-50
 9 *The Abrasion Tone Process*, 1938
 10 *The American Camera Neurosis*, ca. 1933-50
 11 *An Analysis of the Picture Mind*, ca. 1933-50
 12 Biographical essay, untitled, ca. 1946-65
 13 Brochure on correspondence course; some biographical information, ca. 1933-65
 14 *Bromoil Prerequisites*, 1937
 15 *The Bromoil Transfer: Factors in Inking*, 1936
 16 *The Circle of Confusion: Focal Length in Portraiture*, 1936
- AG43:1/17 *Colour in Photography*, 1938
 18-22 *The Command to Look*, 1937
 23-25 *Composition*, 1960
 26 On composition: untitled, ca. 1960
 27 *Costume Elements*, ca. 1935
 28 *Developing Theory*, ca. 1933-50
 29 *The Function of the Model*, ca. 1936
 30 On the history of photography: untitled, ca. 1946
 31 *I Am the Picture*, ca. 1933-50
 32 *Let's Be Candid about the Candid Camera*, 1938
 33 *Micro-Organisms*, ca. 1933-50
- AG43:2/1-8 *The Model*, 1936
 10 *The Modern Predicament*, ca. 1933-50
 11-16 *Monsters and Madonnas*, 1936
 17 Mortensen School of Photography, correspondence course. Lesson 1: Negative Quality, n.d.
 18 Mortensen School of Photography: untitled, ca. 1962
 19 *Mortensen Texture Process*, press announcements, ca. 1934
 20 *Notes on the Miniature Camera*, 1934
 21-24 *Outdoor Portraiture*, ca. 1940
 25 *The Perfect Negative*, 1937
 26 *Photography and Tradition*, ca. 1937
- AG43:3/1-4 *Pictorial Lighting*, ca. 1935
 5-8 *Pictorial Lighting*, 1947
 9 *Pictorial Make Up*, 1935
 10 *Portraiture and the Basic Light*, ca. 1935

- 11 *Projection Control*, ca. 1934-42
- 12 *Projection Control in Portraiture*, ca. 1937
- 13 *Theory of Negative Exposure and Control*, ca.1937
- 14 *Trial by Jury*, 1936
- 15-17 *Venus and Vulcan: An Essay on Creative Pictorialism*, 1934
- 18 *We Are the Pictures or Heels and Heroes*, ca.1933-50
- 19-20 *The World of Stereo*, ca. 1935

PRINTED MATERIALS, ca. 1930-60

Arrangement: By record type

Quantity: Fraction of a linear foot

- AG43:3/21 Calling cards, ca. 1940
- 22 Catalogs, ca. 1930-50s
- 23 Clippings, ca. 1930-60
- 24 Illustrations, Milk Commission, ca. 1932
- 25 Teaching aids, ca. 1935

MONOGRAPHS, 1934-56

Arrangement: Alphabetical, by title

Quantity: 0.5 linear feet

- AG43:4 *The Command to Look*, 1937
- Flash in Modern Photography*, 2nd ed., 1947
- Flash in Modern Photography*, 3rd ed., 1950 [annotations]
- How to Pose the Model*, 3rd ed., 1956
- The Model*, 1st ed., 1937 [annotations]
- Monsters and Madonnas*, 1936 [annotations]
- Outdoor Portraiture*, 1940 [annotations]
- Pictorial Lighting*, 1st ed., 7th printing, 1943 [2 copies]
- Pictorial Lighting*, 1st ed., 8th printing, 1944 [page cuts]
- Pictorial Lighting*, 2nd ed., 1947 [annotations]
- Print Finishing*, 1st ed., 4th printing, 1945 [annotations]
- Projection Control*, 2nd ed., 1934 [annotations]

PERIODICALS, 1933-48

Arrangement: Alphabetical, by title of periodical, then chronologically

Quantity: 0.5 linear feet

Camera Craft

- AG43:5/1 "Projection Control," 40:11 (Nov. 1933), pp.445-6.
- 2 "Venus and Vulcan: An Essay on Creative Pictorialism: Interpretatons of Reality," 41:3 (Mar. 1934), pp. 103-10.
"Venus and Vulcan: Creative Pictorialism: An Essay on Creative Pictorialism: 2. Sources and Uses of Materials," 41:4 (Apr. 1934), pp. 153-62.
"VenusandVulcan:CreativePictorialism: 3. Selection and the Function of Control," 41:5, (May 1934), pp. 205-15.
"Venus and Vulcan: Creative Pictorialism: 4. Fallaciesof Pure Photography," 41:6, pp. 257-265.
"Venus and Vulcan: Creative Pictorialism: 5. A Manifesto and a Prophecy," 41:7 (July 1934), pp. 309-17.
"Notes on the Miniature Camera: About the Paper Negative," 41:9 (Sept. 1934), pp. 409-17.
- 3 "Notes on the Miniature Camera:3. Outdoor Portraiture," 42:1 (Jan. 1935), pp.2-12. [handwritten annotations]
"On American Snapshots: 4. Glorifying the American Snapshot," 42:2(Feb. 1935), pp.65-73. [handwritten annoatations]
"Pictorial Make Up," 42:5 (May 1935), pp. 210-19. [handwritten annotatons]
"Pictorial Make Up," 42:6 (June 1935), pp. 264-71.
- 4 "The Circle of Confusion: Focal Length in Portraiture," 43:3(Mar.1936), pp. 104-12. [handwritten annotations]
"Muddy Waters," 43:4 (Apr. 1936). [1 black-and-white reproduction]
"Home Made Mortensen Lighting Equipment," by V. Pokorny, 43:5 (May 1936), pp. 219-22.
"Our Book Shelves," 43:6 (June 1936), p. 309. [review of *Monsters and Madonnas*]
"Trial by Jury," 43:12 (Dec. 1936) pp. 566-74.
- 5 "The Six Phases of Control: The Outline of a System," 44:3 (Mar. 1937) pp. 106-15.
"The Perfect Negative," 44:5 (May 1937), pp. 206-11.
"Bromoil Prerequisites," 44:8 (Aug. 1937), pp. 359-68.
- 6 "Let's Be Candid About the Candid Camera," 45:1 (Jan. 1938), pp. 2-8.
"Color in Photography," 45:5 (May 1938), pp. 200-7.
- 7 "Portraiture: Surface and Substance," 47:8 Aug. 1940), pp.385-91.
"A Discipline for Portraiture," 47:9 (Sept. 1948), pp. 430-6.
"Portrait Procedure: Pt. 1," 47:12 (Dec. 1940), pp. 585-93.
- 8 "Make Up for Portraiture: 1. General Mechanics," 48:5 (May 1941), pp. 224-35.
"The Seven Shapes: 2. Corrective Uses of Make-up," 48:6 (June 1941), pp. 278-85.
"The Cart and the Horse: The Ditherings of an Unregenerate Romantic," 48:12 (Dec. 1941), pp. 723-7.

Central Camera Company

- 9 "Portraiture and the Basic Light," ca.1935, pp. 73-7.

Digest and Review

- 10 "Let's Be Candid About the Candid Camera," 5:6 (Apr. 1938), pp. 38-40.
[condensed version]

International Photographer

- AG43:5/11 13:9 (Oct. 1941), p. 2. [reproductions only]
13:10 (Nov. 1941), p. 2. [reproductions only]

Minicam Photography

- 12 "A Folio of Color from William Mortensen," 8:4 (Jan. 1945), pp. 55-8.

Popular Photography

- 13 [Reproductions], ca. 1938.
- 14 "The Picture Is The Thing," by Wick Evans, (May 1938), pp. 13-4; 94-8.
"Mortensen Makes Up Girl as Tibetan Monk," (July 1938), pp. 50-1.
"How to Make Abrasion Tone-Prints, Pt.1," Aug. 1938), pp. 20-2; 90-1.
"How to Make Abrasion Tone-Prints, Pt. 2," Sept. 1938), pp. 20-1; 90-1.
"Abrasion-Tone for Pictorial Effect, Pt.3," (Oct. 1938), pp. 20-1; 70-3.
- 15 "Pictures I Hate," (Dec. 1940), pp. 28-9; 132; 134; 136; 138.
"First-Get a Good Subject," (Jan. 1941), pp. 20-1; 120-3.
"De-Personalize Your Pictures," (Feb. 1941), pp. 26-7; 95-7.
"Create Lasting Interest," (Mar. 1941), pp. 26-7; 114; 115.
"Keep It Simple," (Apr. 1941), pp. 26-7; 74; 76-7.
- 16 "What You Should Know About Good Prints: Pt. 1.," (Feb. 1943), pp. 22-3; 70-1.
"The Right Negative for Enlarging:Pt. 2," (Mar. 1943), pp. 22-3; 79-81.
"How to Get Good Print Quality:Pt. 3," (Apr. 1943), pp. 22-3; 90-2.
"Controlling Contrast for Better Prints:Pt 4," (May 1943), pp. 22-3; 84-85.
"Elementsof Photographic Composition: Pt.1," (Oct. 1943), pp. 19-21; 70-1.
"Elementsof PhotographicComposition: Pt. 2," (Nov. 1943), pp. 28-9; 92-3.
"Elements of PhotographicComposition:Pt. 3," (Dec. 1943), pp. 28-30; 88-90.
- 17 "Light at Work: Pt. 1," (Oct. 1944), pp. 22-5; 81.
"Light at Work: Pt. 2," (Nov. 1944), pp. 24-6; 100. "Light at Work: Pt. 3," (Dec. 1944), pp. 26-27; 91-4.
"The Paper Negative," (Nov. 1945), pp. 21-3; 108; 110; 112.
- AG43:5/18 "ThePaper Negative: Materials and Methods for Control," (Jan. 1946), pp. 34-7; 108; 110.
"The Paper Negative:A Test of Skill in Advanced Methods of Control, (Mar. 1946), pp.36-39; 108; 110; 112.
"A Project in Costuming," (Feb. 1948), pp. 49-51; 157-8.

PAMPHLETS, ca.1938-54

Arrangement: Alphabetical, by title

Quantity: 6 pamphlets

- AG43:5/19 *Gamma 'D': Atomic Fine Grain Developer*, ca.1945
 A Mortensen Library, ca.1938
 The Mortensen System, 1954
 The Paper Negative
 The Female Figure
 Know Your Negative
 The Texture Screen

PHOTOGRAPHS (work prints), 1935-55

Arrangement: By subject, mostly untitled and undated

Quantity: 1 linear foot (149 prints)

AG43:6 Landscape and architecture

AG43:7 Figurative studies and portraits

CORRESPONDENCE, ORIGINALS

Arrangement: Alphabetical, by correspondent

Quantity: 6 folders

- AG43:8/1 General, 1935-65
 2 *Camera Craft*, 1936-57
 3 Dunham, George, ca.1935-65
 4 Morgan and Morgan, 1962
 5 Simon and Schuster, 1936-59
 6 Stuart, Charles, 1959

MANUSCRIPTS, ORIGINALS

Arrangement: Alphabetical, by title

Quantity: 1.0 linear foot

- AG43:8/7 Fragments, ca.1933-50
 8 *An Analysis of the Picture Mind*, ca.1933-50

- 9 Brochure on correspondence course; some biographical information, ca.1933-65
- 10 *The Circle of Confusion: Focal Length in Portraiture*, 1936
- 11-13 *The Command to Look*, 1937
- 14-16 *Composition*, 1960
- 17 On composition, untitled, 1960
- 18 *The Function of the Model*, ca.1936
- 19-26 *The Model*, 1936
- 27 *The Modern Predicament*, ca.1933-50
- 29 *Monsters and Madonnas*, 1936

- AG43:9/1-2 *Monsters and Madonnas*, 1936
- 3 Mortensen School of Photography, correspondence course. Lesson 1: Negative Quality, n.d.
- 4 *Mortensen Texture Process*, press announcements, ca.1934
- 5 *Notes on the Miniature Camera*, 1934
- 6-9 *Outdoor Portraiture*, ca.1940
- 10 *The Perfect Negative*, 1937
- 11 *Photography and Tradition*, ca.1937
- 12-15 *Pictorial Lighting*, 1st ed., ca.1935
- 16-19 *Pictorial Lighting*, 2nd ed., 1947
- 20 *Pictorial Make Up*, 1935
- 21 *Portraiture and the Basic Light*, ca.1935
- 22 *Projection Control*, ca.1934-42
- 23 *Theory of Negative Exposure and Development*, ca.1937
- 24 *Projection Control in Portraiture*, ca.1937
- 25 *Trial by Jury*, 1936
- 26-28 *Venus and Vulcan: An Essay on Creative Pictorialism*, 1934
- 29 *We Are the Picture or Heels and Heroes*, ca.1933-50
- 30-31 *The World of Stereo*, ca.1935

[end of finding aid]