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Jessica Irene Dunlap April 10, 2018

The Straight and the Bent: Edward Weston and Man Ray

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An abstract of
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of Emory University in partial fulfillment
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Bachelor of Arts with Honors

Art History

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Abstract

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This thesis considers the artistic practice and writings of two major modern photographers, Man Ray (1890-1976) and Edward Weston (1886-1958), between the years 1920 and 1940. It analyzes their different approaches to photography through the lens of philosopher Stanley Cavell's notion of skepticism (as defined in his essay "The Avoidance of Love"), which I argue is an important approach to the problematic status of photography as an art form. Analyzing the choice of specific photographic techniques used by the two photographers, their writings, and the writings by Stanley Cavell and theorist Rosalind Krauss, I conclude that Man Ray's work displays an active desire to establish a dialogue with the viewer and to overcome the threat of skeptical isolation. Weston's photographs, by contrast, are characterized by an intense concentration on intricate details, and aim to show viewers that the world is more complex than they know; thus, his photography resonates with Krauss's skeptical view that "representation must always remain suspect," for there is always more to reality than meets the eye in representation.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Emory University Art History Department and Honors Coordinator Linda Merrill for their help in this endeavor. Most importantly, I would like to thank my friends and family for their enthusiastic support throughout, my committee members, Lisa Lee and John Lysaker for their thoughtful reading of my thesis, as well as my advisor, Todd Cronan, for valuable insights and guidance and critical readings of drafts.

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Between 1920 and 1940 one of the dominant issues in photographic practice was the increasingly problematic status of the indexical nature of photographs; that is, more than any other artistic medium, photographs constituted a record of their subjects, or referents. This indexical quality, the natural relation of the photograph to its referent, seemed to call into question the legitimacy of photographs as original works of art. Two influential accounts of photography in this period of its artistic canonization emerge with the works of Edward Weston (1886-1958) and Man Ray (1890-1976), who took opposing attitudes in their efforts to establish photography's status as an art form. Weston practiced *straight* photography, a technique that involved the controversial notion of "previsualization," which emphasized the photographers' creative actions before the release of the shutter and excluded manipulation from both the process of development and printing (this was more an ideal than reality). In fact, Weston limited manipulation to making the work consistent with the image he had previsualized. Straight photography is also characterized by the sharp focus of the image, a quality Weston used to "extend vision" and reveal features that would normally go unnoticed. "The camera sees more than the eye, so why not make use of it!" said Weston, "I shall let no chance pass to record interesting abstractions, but I feel definite in my belief that the approach to photography is through realism—[a] most difficult approach."[1] However, this expanded perception, by a kind of paradox, frequently resulted in an increased abstraction of the referent.[2] On the other hand, Man Ray carefully composed his photographs and experimented with an array of manipulative

[1] Nancy Newhall, ed., *The Daybooks of Edward Weston* (New York: Aperture, 1990), 118, 55.
[2] This contradicts what Weston believed and what Ansel Adams expressed in his review, entitled "Photography," for the exhibit of 150 of Weston's photographs at the De Young Museum in San Francisco. Adams writes that "in a strict sense photography can never be *abstract*, for the camera is not capable of synthetic integration. This basic limitation is indeed a fortunate one, in that it strengthens the incontrovertible realism of the lens." Contrarily, the realism presented by Weston's photographs is only convincing as far as what the viewer can see, not beyond. From Ansel Adams, "Photography," in *Edward Weston: Omnibus*, ed. Beaumont Newhall and Amy Conger (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith Books, 1984), 46.

techniques including, editing, enlargement, reduction, superimposition, solarization and his own invention[3] "rayography." For Man Ray these manipulations were part of the compositional process, often producing effects which enforce a significant interference between the viewer and the referent. In Man Ray's words, "every time man rises up in the moral order it is through creating…. [A] photographer is not restricted only to the role of copyist. He is a marvelous explorer of those aspects that our retinas will never record and that every day inflict such cruel contradictions on those who idolize visions of what is known."[4] To illustrate the difference in their approaches I will compare five works by Man Ray called, *Solarization (Nude)*, *Rayograph*, *Boulevard de Raspail, Paris*, *Untitled*, and *Anatomies* with five of Weston's titled, *Nude*, *Shell*, *New York*, *Pepper No. 14*, and *La Teresina*.

Solarization (Nude), taken in 1929, is one example of how Man Ray used solarization to deny the viewer full access to the referent. This technique consists in the partial or complete reversal in tonality of the recorded image due to intense or prolonged exposure during the development process. The result in *Solarization*, is of a nude which, rather than perfectly portraying reality, resembles a charcoal drawing. The net-black contour of the woman delineates the contrapposto pose of the model within the frame, and creates a visual effect which diminishes, or delays access to the explicitly referential nature of the image. Its sharpness enhances the contrast with the nearly transparent gray shadows that reveal the undulous, three-dimensional surface of her sensual body, and flattens the referent, giving it a cartoon-like appearance. In this way the viewer, who is perhaps first lured in by a photographic reproduction

[3] Although Man Ray pioneered the technique of rayography and coined the term "rayograph," he was not the first to discover the photogram.
[4] *Man Ray Writings on Art*, ed. Jennifer Mundy (Los Angeles, CA: Getty Publications, 2016), 88; hereafter cited in the text.

of a seemingly familiar, three-dimensional world, is forced to process the image more carefully, indeed *slowly*, in order to interpret it.

The woman's hips, at the lower edge of the photograph, are one of the few sides of the body not delineated by a net black mark, and ground the image in three-dimensional space, leaving the viewer to imagine the rest of her body. Close inspection of the photograph reveals other portions of her body which lack contours such as her hair and the inside of her arm abutting her face. Where the arm gracefully wraps around the woman's head, framing it and shielding her left eye from the viewer, the subtle alternation of clearly marked and missing contours help establish depth and mystery in the otherwise flattened image. This focuses the viewer's attention on the face, the emotional center of the photograph, with the most densely concentrated alternation of light and dark gray tones. However, the viewer is denied an immediate connection with the referent, for although the woman is exposed and her gaze is suggestive, Man Ray establishes a distance, with her face withdrawn behind her arm and layers of shading. The image also withdraws other parts of her body. Indeed, the woman's right arm extends out of the frame to cover, we may imagine, her pubic area. With expedients, such as these, Man Ray controls the viewer's perception of the figure: by not revealing her completely, creating a sustained tension between access and denial and, ultimately, playing with the viewer's imagination. The flattened image, achieved with solarization, and the partially hidden face, lock the viewer's attention on the surface of the photograph, blocking full access to the referent, all the while embracing the transparency between a photograph and reality.

Now consider Weston's *Nude* from 1927. Similar to Man Ray's *Solarization (Nude)*, the subject is a naked woman and the photograph is characterized by the sharp contour of her body. However, *Nude* differs from *Solarization* and demonstrates Weston's desire to bring the viewer

into utmost proximity with the referent, so they may not only *see* it, but *know* it. He once wrote, "the camera controlled by wisdom goes beyond obvious, statistical recording,—subliming things *seen* into things *known*."[5] Indeed, he believed that the art of photography was in portraying subjects in such exquisite detail that they are revealed to the viewer and become *known*. *Nude* only presents the woman from below her breasts to her feet; this deprives the viewer access to the subject's face and brings an extraordinary focus on the forms of the lower body. The woman is squatting, balancing on her flexed toes and left knee. Her buttocks rests on the back of her raised heels and her folded right leg hides most of the left, highlighting the form of her thigh and the weight borne by her toes. By observing the position of her body, the viewer is brought to reflect on the impressive thickness of the woman's flank, hips, and thigh in comparison with the slim shins and feet supporting her. The way in which the body parts are related draw the viewer's attention to the visible tension in the woman's muscles. The torso gently twists towards the viewer and is highly sensualized by the stretch which delineates the woman's soft abdomen, as well as the curve of her lower back. The viewer's gaze is then guided down to the figure's round buttocks and thigh. Although the skin and illumination are more uniform than in the rest of the body, there are shadows marking the depressions and elevations of her muscles. These details do more than characterize the body; they give it life and energy. One can almost feel the physical strain in her whole body, all the way down to her feet with visible bulging veins.

As in *Solarization*, the dark contour around the figure in *Nude* distinguishes it from the background. However, this does not flatten the image, and does not remove the "physicality" of the referent; perhaps because in *Nude* the referent is solidly grounded via the three contact points on the ground, which clearly bring that part of the image towards the viewer's space. In fact, the

[5] Edward Weston, "Statement," in *Weston: On Photography*, ed. Peter C. Bunnell (Peregrine Smith Books, 1983), 70.

dark outline guides the viewers' gaze *around* each feature of the body and brings their attention to each twist, bend, and stretch present. The way in which the toes of the left foot are spread like a fan communicates precision and vibrancy, and makes it seem as if the woman is ready to spring up any moment. Close analysis allows the viewer to come to understand the mechanics of this lower body. However, Weston brings the viewer so close to the subject that the spatial orientation of the whole body is lost and the form, despite its gravity and definition, remains *abstract* and lacks a distinct emotional charge. The viewer may feel that rather than knowing the figure, they are seeing a *Gestalt*, a kind of flattened image of a body, that renders it strange, despite (or because of) its intimacy.

Consider now, Man Ray's *Rayograph*, one of many with that title. Here too, he denies full access to the referent in the attempt to engage the viewers by heightening their sensation of a desire to know and to see, even though that effort comes to no clear result. The term rayograph, is a play on words; it could mean written with rays of light, as well as written by (Man) Ray. Obtaining images without a camera and working "directly with light itself" (78) was thrilling for Man Ray. He felt that "the subjects were never so near to life itself…and never so completely translated to the medium" (79). Man Ray explored different effects in rayography by using objects of various degrees of transparency and opacity and placing them at different distances from the photographic paper. In this way, he was able to overcome the "interference" he felt the camera created between him and his subjects (175).

Man Ray's *Rayograph*, taken in 1923, records a composition made up of an unraveled roll of film, possibly a rubber band, and one or two other unidentifiable objects. Although the form of the roll of film is immediately recognizable, the inverted color scheme in the image is puzzling. Its transparent quality created lighter gradations in areas where layers of film were

overlapping, while in others, where it curled away from the paper, it allowed more light to penetrate, creating varying shades of grey and black. These alternating shades give the illusion of depth and shuttle the viewer's gaze in and out in the attempt to perceive the folds of the film in the bright white facets on the flat surface of the photograph. Man Ray's ability to vary how much light reached the paper at every location of the rayograph, resembles the way a painter decides which, and how much, paint to use. Just as paint may be applied to the canvas in varying thicknesses, the gradations of black and white in the rayograph create the illusion of advancing and receding into the surface of the image which, after all, is completely contained within the flat surface of the photograph.

In *Rayograph*, just as in *Solarization*, Man Ray clearly indicates his manipulative presence as a mediator between the referent and the viewer. In *Rayograph*, one indication is the "eye," the dark circle created by the rolled-up portion of film, which is suggestive of a well in the flat surface of the image and resembles the searching lens of a camera. This dark "eye" tips the balance of the composition and unsettles the viewer because, although it does not show Ray's reflection, it is a reminder of Ray's presence, as if Ray were hovering over the film, adjusting its position, and regulating the light exposure. Curiously enough, *Rayograph* resembles *Self-Portrait with Camera* (1931) in composition. In fact, if one were to crop *Self-Portrait with Camera*, as shown in **Figure 4a**, *Rayograph* might be conceived as an abstract detail drawn from it, specifically the camera and what is visible of Man Ray's face. *Rayograph* challenges the idea that photography simply records reality and, ultimately, supports the photographer as a creator and not simply the operator of a machine (70). While Man Ray's presence is implied and the resemblance with his *Self-Portrait with Camera* is striking, *Rayograph* only shows the physical nature of the film; the images chemically impressed on it remain blurred and difficult to

decipher. In other words, the image presents the viewer with an unlikely representation of a roll of film and invites inspection, but a connection between the work and the viewer is scuttled by the viewer's inability to perceive the referent as it would appear in reality.

As if to mock this inability to perceive the photograph as reality, the twisted roll of film treading off the paper in the top right corner of the photograph reminds the viewer of the infinite number of mechanical reproductions which are possibly obtained by repeating and manipulating the printing process. However, if one looks more closely at the individual frames in the film, faces, houses, and landscapes are visible, and one can even spot traces of the same scene repeated in several frames. In fact, the different frames of the film are a testament to the work done to overcome the automatic mechanism of the camera, which Man Ray described as a "contraceptive" (175). He meant that it prevented him from consummating with reality or discovering his subject the way in which he wished. These frames contain all the trial and error shots which he took to obtain a photograph which best conveys his knowledge of the referent while embracing the contraceptive, or intermediary, aspect of the camera (a feature that runs against its more fundamental indexical character). In fact, not satisfied with the heroic number of images taken, Man Ray deemed it necessary to further manipulate his subjects by photographing the film of negatives and presenting the viewer with proof of all the potential images he could print. The segmentation of the roll of film highlights the innumerable ways in which Man Ray could communicate with the viewer. In this respect, *Rayograph* might reflect Man Ray's "continuing task,"[6] of asserting himself and his responsibility for *all* of the aspects that comprise a work.

[6] Stanley Cavell, "Being Odd, Getting Even," in *In Quest of the Ordinary: Lines of Skepticism and Romanticism* (University of Chicago Press, 1994), 104.

As a counterpart to *Rayograph*, now consider Weston's *Shell*, taken in 1927. *Shell* is the photograph of the cross section of a nautilus shell, intensely lit against a black ground. First, the viewer is struck by the high contrast between the white inner portion of the shell and the pitch-black background engulfing it. Unlike *Rayograph*, which is characterized by a strong sense of depth and tones of different densities, the stark contrast in *Shell* reduces the illusion of depth and makes the image resemble a two-dimensional collage. Only if one focuses exclusively on the lightest portion of the large chamber, then there is an illusion of depth; however, the instant one perceives the white border around the shell the illusion dissolves. Although Weston attempted to bring the details of the shell closer to the viewer, the flattening of the image and the estranging background create a new environment for the shell with which the viewer is not familiar.

The intense contrast of the shell against its background, as well as the sharp quality of the image, invite the viewer to examine the interior of the shell. The shell is divided in half, so that the inner structure is visible and the viewer observes the spiral of seemingly innumerable chambers generated over millennia. The spiral organization of the interior segments of the shell, draws the viewer to the center of the shell, and as the eyes travel from one chamber to the next, the different markings in each become apparent. The viewer is initially intrigued; some chambers have more speckles than others and the ones on the left side are darker than the rest. However, the dark center of the spiral is balanced by the brightness of the larger, most external chamber; as a result, the image does not have a center, or "eye," comparable to the one in *Rayograph*. The four chambers in the center of the spiral are intact, uniform and, as a result, are inaccessible. Therefore, the slight nuances of the surface begin to fade, and each chamber seems perfectly similar and in proportion to the others. The repetition of chambers in the shell does not convey the same idea of persistence, perhaps even struggle, conveyed by the numerous film frames in

Rayograph. The rayograph organizes elements of disorder and human interference into themes and displays an incessant, ongoing artistic effort to produce the work. On the other hand, *Shell* represents the geometric complexity[7] of the exoskeleton of a mollusk, an organism of prehistoric ancestry, an existence that precedes humans and, more suggestively, might vastly outlive them.

Through the comparisons of *Solarization* and *Nude*, and *Rayograph* and *Shell*, we have seen the different strategies used and the effects achieved by Man Ray and Weston in their attempts to come to terms with the transparent nature of the photographic process. Through a range of technical and formal manipulations in *Solarization* and *Rayograph*, Man Ray teases viewers—prevents their consummation with reality—by inhibiting full access to the referent. The interference created by his manipulations was intended to prolong the experience of the photograph, forcing the viewer to acknowledge the difference, or "separateness,"[8] between the photograph and reality; this inhibition of access to the referent creates a channel for communication, sometimes even intimacy between the artist and the viewer. Man Ray was recognized as an innovative photographer and much attention has been directed to the techniques he used in his creative process. However, only those more curious, who credited his work for "[illuminating] the serious, even intellectual side of the moment," and for contributing to modern art with an "[inclination] towards contemplative, even philosophical problems,"[9] understood that for Man Ray it was the idea motivating the works that was more important than the works

[7] *Shell* vividly presents a glimpse into a world unto itself; the geometric complexity of the exoskeleton of a mollusk conveys anything but "basic and simple" documentary photography, as Ansel Adams calls it in his "Review of *The Art of Edward Weston*" (50). In fact, it is precisely the hidden complexity of the shell which both draws the viewer in and repels the viewer simultaneously.

[8] Stanley Cavell, "The Avoidance of Love," in *Must We Mean What We Say?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 312.

[9] Carl Belz, "Man Ray and New York Dada," *Art Journal* 23: 3 (Spring 1964): 213.

themselves (6). For although Man Ray was unconcerned with what others thought of his works, he was not indifferent.[10]

On the other hand, Weston's intense concentration on intricate details aims to show that the world is not as viewers commonly know it to be. The many sharply rendered details and nuances revealed in the close-ups of the forms presented in *Nude* and *Shell*, may perhaps initially intrigue and surprise viewers. However, this intrigue only momentarily and superficially "extends vision," before leaving the viewers feeling unfamiliar with the world captured in the photographs and, therefore, dubious of their knowledge of the world. This interpretation is contrary to accounts, such as the one by his contemporary, Ansel Adams, who believed that Weston's genius laid in his perception and frank acceptance of the simple, essential, living form.[11] In addition, Clement Greenberg's differing observation that Weston's camera defines everything in the same way and that he concentrated too much on the medium and not enough on the subject matter,[12] does not address the fact that even such concentration on the photographic medium fails to establish communication with viewers. The fundamental distinction between Weston and Man Ray is that the former thematizes the difference between the photograph and reality, while the latter obliges viewers to *acknowledge* it. In so doing, Man Ray invites the viewer to engage with the referent as well as the ideas it inspires, while Weston precludes such an engagement between the work and the viewer. These fundamentally different ways of communicating establish different relationships between the artists and their audiences.

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[10] In fact, Man Ray's tomb in the Montparnasse Cemetery in Paris, France, has an inscription which reads, "Unconcerned but not indifferent."

[11] Adams, "Photography," 46.

[12] As Greenberg puts it, Weston has "succumbed to a combination of the sharp focus, infallible exposure and unselective atmosphere of California—which differentiates between neither man and beast, nor tree and stone. His camera defines everything, but it defines everything in the same way—and an excess of detailed definition ends by making everything look as though it were made of the same substance, no matter how varied the surfaces." From Clement Greenberg, "The Camera's Glass Eye," in *Edward Weston: Omnibus*, ed. Beaumont Newhall and Amy Conger (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith Books, 1984), 88-89.

A good lens through which to examine this in the work of Man Ray and Weston is through the notion of skepticism, and more specifically the outcomes of a skeptical or non-skeptical approach as applied to photography. To that end I will draw from two texts on skepticism that are most salient in this regard; these are philosopher Stanley Cavell's "The Avoidance of Love" and theorist Rosalind Krauss' "The Photographic Condition of Surrealism." In "The Avoidance of Love," Cavell (1926-) provides a useful framework of skepticism. The essay is a close reading of Shakespeare's *King Lear*, and although that subject is not of concern here, the issues Cavell raises are pertinent to the following analysis. Cavell writes that a skeptical approach is incompatible with communication and the creation of relationships between people, in this case, between the artist and the viewer. Cavell goes on to propose that the only way in which we can have meaningful relationships is by attempting to overcome skepticism,[13] in other words, by striving to establish desires common with those around us. On the other hand, Krauss (1941-) is a dominant voice in photographic discourse and is a canonical figure in studies of Man Ray's surrealist work. In "The Photographic Condition of Surrealism," Krauss sets out to establish the ontological conditions of surrealist photography. She argues that surrealist photographers "exploited the viewer's perception of the photograph's identity with what it depicts in order to re-conceive reality as representation."[14] She concludes that this re-conception of reality is indexical through its manipulation of the photograph to create symbols. Although Krauss makes her argument for (Man Ray's) surrealist photography, I believe it is better suited to Weston's practice of straight photography. In addition, although she does not use the term, I will characterize the photography she describes as indexical in nature as having been produced with a

[13] "what skepticism suggests is that since we cannot know the world exists, its presentness to us cannot be a function of knowing. The world is to be *accepted*; as the presentness of other minds is not to be known, but acknowledged." From Cavell, "The Avoidance of Love," 298.
[14] Steven Harris, "Surrealism and Photography," *History of Photography* 29: 4 (2005), 383-385.

skeptical outlook. I do not mean to suggest that Cavell and Krauss were, or are, explicitly in communication; however, their texts serve as useful frameworks.

In my analysis of the comparisons between Man Ray and Weston's photographs, I argue that Man Ray often displays an active attempt to overcome what might be called "skepticism," producing works of art which promote communication with the viewer. Cavell argues that the only way humans can avoid the consequences of a skeptical outlook on the world is to *acknowledge* "separateness" and that doing so is a precondition for dialogue and relationships.[15] As seen in *Solarization* and *Rayograph*, through the acknowledgement of difference, and ultimately finitude (the limited scope of common human experience) as Cavell puts it in "The Avoidance of Love," Man Ray attempts to overcome skepticism. On the other hand, Weston maintains a more skeptical approach, and as a result produces photographs, such as with *Nude* and *Shell*, which rather than establishing communication, unilaterally present vivid "statements" about what reality looks like. Rather than exemplifying Cavell's belief that skepticism can be overcome, this is more in line with Krauss' belief that "representation must always remain suspect because it is never anything but a copy, a re-creation in another form."[16] She argues that the recognition of the difference between the photograph and reality, which she calls "doubling," renders the referent opaque and inaccessible denying communication in this most seemingly transparent medium.

Man Ray, it should be clear, does not reject skepticism,[17] but avoids taking it as his primary approach and subject in his works:

> In this age, like all ages, when the problem of the perpetuation of a race or class and the destruction of its enemies, is the all-absorbing motive of civilized society, it seems

[15] Cavell, "The Avoidance of Love," 263.
[16] Krauss, "The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism," 10.
[17] In "The Avoidance of Love" Cavell does not reject skepticism, and instead elaborates on the importance of attempting to overcome skepticism on pages 296-300 of *Must We Mean What We Say?*.

> irrelevant and wasteful still to create works whose only aspirations are individual human emotion and desire. The attitude seems to be that one may be permitted a return to the idyllic occupations only after meriting this return by solving the more vital problems of existence. Still, we know that the incapacity of race or class to improve itself is as great as its incapacity to learn from previous errors in history. All progress results from an intense individual desire to improve the immediate present, from an all-conscious sense of material insufficiency. In this exalted state, material action imposes itself and takes the form of revolution in one form or another. Race and class, like styles, then become irrelevant, while the emotion of the human individual becomes universal. For what can be more binding amongst beings than the discovery of a common desire? (117)

In this excerpt of his essay, "The Age of Light,"[18] Man Ray outlines the problems afflicting all of modern art during a time in which it felt like humanity had become disillusioned by the idea that the most vital problems could be solved with technology and by following norms, essentially putting human emotions and relations aside. However, in his writing Man Ray calls attention to the fact that common human desire and emotion, and the communication of such things amongst individuals, create the most powerful bonds and should in fact be central to societies' progression. As shown, in part, by *Solarization* and *Rayograph*, Man Ray resists both the pressure to show photographs which deliver prepackaged emotions and the pressure to conform to the "all-absorbing motive of civilized society" (117). Instead, he believes that it is individual expression that drives progress when that expression finds and achieves mutual and universal acknowledgement. When acknowledgement is present, communication can occur and skepticism may be overcome. Through his photographs including optical illusions and technical manipulations, Man Ray wants to challenge the viewer, all the while claiming responsibility for his ideas, at the risk of being rejected if his own "desires" are not shared by the viewer. Man Ray demonstrates a stronger wish than Weston to reveal his individuality in his photographs.

Yet another manifestation of the difference between Man Ray's and Weston's approach to photography, can be seen by looking at Man Ray's *Boulevard de Raspail, Paris*, taken in

[18] "The Age of Light" is the introduction to Man Ray's book, *Photographs by Man Ray 1920 Paris 1934*.

1930. It is certainly an example of the way in which Man Ray imposes his own idea on the viewer, and is especially useful to compare to Weston's *New York*, as it highlights how the concept of verticality becomes a *symbol* of skepticism for Man Ray. The following comparison, will show how skepticism is present through Weston's embrace of symmetry and verticality, whereas Man Ray rejects these pictorial compositional elements in his effort to overcome skepticism.

Boulevard de Raspail, Paris, is the photograph of what remains of a stone building presumably on Boulevard de Raspail in Paris. The shot, taken standing on the street at the lower right corner of the building's façade, portrays it at an angle and reveals that the only thing still standing is the façade; the supporting structure behind the façade, the rest of the building which once embraced the façade, no longer exists. The immediate response to the photograph is to wonder what happened, then to wish that the view of the building might be more direct, in order to better grasp the details of the façade. The broken edge of the façade is at an angle with the right edge of the frame, so that the bottom of the frame eclipses the lower part of the façade and obliquely intersects the horizontal line formed by the lower stone cornice on the façade. The dark contours of the façade make it ominous, as if the heavy structure could collapse any time. The viewer's eyes are guided from the bottom right corner of the photograph along the broken, dark right edge of the façade which reveals its building blocks, as well as five iron rods, of different lengths, which jut out, piercing the white clouds in the background. However, at the top of the image, there is a break in the clouds, which diminishes the contrast between the building and the sky, allowing for some relief from the feeling of oppression conveyed both by the weighty architectural structure and by the white, cloudy sky which seems to press the image towards the ground. For an instant, the viewer's eyes rest on the empty sky and, notice a few leaves from a

nearby tree visible in the upper left side of the photograph. But this relief from the weightiness of the photograph is not enough to hold the viewer's attention, as the eye is quickly drawn back to the dark cornice of the façade, which guides the viewer's gaze to the bottom left corner of the photograph. The edge of the cornice is rounded, suggesting that the building wraps around the corner and continues beyond the frame.

A feeling of vertigo and disorientation accompanies this scene of destruction which is accentuated by the roughly twenty-degree angle at which the edge of the façade is with respect to the right side of the photograph. An optical illusion is generated by this particular perspective which suggests that the viewer is looking at the façade as if standing on its broken edge looking over its front. Although physically impossible, this sensation is critical to the viewer's emotional response to the ruin because it heightens the visual sensation of peril. This perspective flattens the details on the façade (the balconies and the depth of the round windows) and, combined with the whiteness of the sky, almost extinguishes their three-dimensionality. This flattened rendering of the three-dimensional world is tenuously rescued by the high contrast of the photograph and the bit of sky and cluster of leaves, visible in the top left corner. It may seem peculiar that Man Ray turns this façade almost into a horizontal object, yet it is in line with his views:

> From the Eiffel Tower to skyscrapers in New York the vertical line is a spasmodic illusion deriving from the spirit of a completely powerless and despairing gothic aspiration. […] It is sufficient to look at the wisest animals to see that, to move, they always adopt the horizontal and comfortably aerodynamic position. The bicycle, was the first invention by man intended to compensate for the vertical straightening of the human race. That is why, after all, it is necessary to count on movement and not on matter to indicate the line of construction and travel. (110)

Here, Man Ray expresses his differences with societies' general notion of progression as being a vertical movement, and states that human progress comes from a horizontal movement forward. His idea of horizontal movement, could in fact be a metaphor for the exchange of ideas between two people, who in sharing their thought and revealing themselves, stand as equals. An example

in which the exchange of ideas is unsuccessful, is perhaps provided in Cavell's interpretation of *King Lear*, where King Lear's attempt to retain his superior, powerful status (a distinctly vertical relationship to others) is what prevents him from being able to truthfully admit his love for his daughter, and is ultimately what leads to the tragic series of events. Therefore, taking Man Ray's notion of horizontal movement, to be a metaphor for the engagement in communication between two people leads to an interesting interpretation of *Boulevard de Raspail*.

Verticality is an inherent property of buildings, yet, in *Boulevard de Raspail*, Man Ray frustrates this basic quality of uprightness. He invites the viewer to travel forward, along the edge of the façade, purposefully at an angle, both to capture the viewer's interest and to warn of the dangers that may be encountered along the way, symbolized, for example, by the protruding iron rods. The visual pathway, along the broken edge of the façade, may be a metaphor for the challenges of communication, and Man Ray emphasizes it to induce the viewer to acknowledge the existence of differences. The denial of verticality of the façade, created by the illusion that the photographer was standing on its broken edge, together with the sense of destruction given by the ruin, may very well illustrate Man Ray's belief that by presenting a fragmented view of a building he encourages the viewer to think critically. The missing building behind the façade may symbolize the intellectual and emotional superficiality of present society, and, therefore, the lack of meaningful communication.

Man Ray challenges the viewer to engage with *Boulevard de Raspail*, in accordance with many of his writings where he repeats that the importance of a work of art is not the technique used to achieve it (6). He believes the importance lies in the artist's experience while creating the work of art, as well as in the connection that the final work establishes with the viewer. Man Ray states over and over his firm belief in the supremacy of the mind over matter and emphasizes the

exchange of ideas, rather than the achievement of material results; “the pioneer knows that his survival depends on the content of his work, and on the personality expressed through it—on the quality of arousing interest…. [One] must always start with a personal idea and then find the technical means with which to translate it. We are too preoccupied with special effects which are nothing in themselves” (165, 95). With *Boulevard de Raspail*, he breaks with the conventional notion of a building as the stratification of many floors. Instead, a façade in ruin, presented in such a way that it resembles a path along a perilous and uneven wall, forces the viewer out of the world they are familiar with, introducing uneasiness capable of inspiring the basis for an intellectual connection.

On the other hand, Edward Weston’s *New York*, taken in 1941, might embody the very thing that May Ray rejected when he wrote, “From the Eiffel Tower to skyscrapers in New York the vertical line is a spasmodic illusion deriving from the spirit of a completely powerless and despairing gothic aspiration” (110). The photograph is a view of the New York Rockefeller Center, seen from a high vantage point. The spires of St. Patrick’s Cathedral are visible on the lower left in front of the smallest Rockefeller Center skyscraper. The small skyscraper and its companion to the right, the International Building, are oriented perpendicular to each other, and given the orientation, resemble a double door, open towards the viewer. This leaves just enough space for the viewer to see a bit of the city beyond. Weston has positioned his camera so that the series of stepped verticals and aluminum spandrels, decorating the outside of the International Building, align perfectly with those decorating the RCA building behind it, and at first glance the two buildings appear as one. However, a closer look reveals that there are actually two separate structures, one in front of the other; the tallest building, or RCA, is mostly hidden by the International Building, and only the top of the former is visible. On the left, lies that smallest

Rockefeller Center building in front of which the tall spires of St. Patrick's Cathedral are visible. However, the tops of these spires are so thin, in comparison with the surrounding limestone architecture, that they vanish in the vertical pattern of the small Rockefeller Center building behind them. In addition, two features of the photograph which further emphasize the verticality of the Rockefeller Center Buildings are these: the series of lower structures at the bottom of the photograph, which create a wide base for the buildings, and the low-lying buildings visible in the distance, at the center of the image.

Although the Rockefeller Center is seen from a diagonal perspective with respect to its plaza, and two sides of each building are visible, the stepped verticals and aluminum spandrels create a grid which flattens its architecture. In addition, the scale of the skyscrapers, with respect to the rest of the urban landscape, is so large that they act as panels and conceal other buildings, further enhancing the flatness of their appearance. Confronted by this uniformity, the viewer begins to look more closely at the details. The Rockefeller Center buildings are made of limestone and their exteriors are characterized by a grid composed of vertical limestone flutes, alternated with window fillets, and aluminum spandrels. Each limestone flute is composed of limestone blocks which are visible in the photograph and create a sort of shimmering pattern of shades of grey. In fact, this repetitive grid pattern of limestone blocks creates a background against which St. Patrick's Cathedral camouflages, and becomes barely visible despite the rich Neo-Gothic style of its spires. The tapering conical shape of the spires catches the viewer's eye because it breaks the thin grid pattern of the smallest Rockefeller building behind them, and their tall, slim arched, bay windows accentuate the verticality in the photograph. The composition of the photograph has a grid-like quality, visible both in the structure of the buildings as well as in the way in which the buildings are in relation to one another. While the high definition quality of

the image is such that each window is visible, the grid pattern, emphasizing the verticality of the architecture, dominates the viewer's perception such that the minute details do not hold the viewer's attention for long.

Although Weston was not an abstract photographer, he may have found the same fascination with the concept of the grid, as did abstract artists of the time. "Waves of abstract artists ['discovered'] the grid; part of its structure one could say is that in its revelatory character it is always a new, a unique discovery."[19] They saw the regular pattern of the grid as the origin of all representation, and a starting point for an original act, in Weston's case the act of "extending" the viewer's vision and knowledge. Weston always searched for details and wished to bring these out to people through the eye of his camera. In *New York*, one can see that the grid is the ultimate pattern to enhance detail, and Weston artfully employs it to highlight the individual blocks of limestone used for the exterior of the buildings and which seem to shimmer like sequins, as well as the series of stepped verticals on the two side sides of each building. However, *New York* fails to bring forth the details, so important to Weston, and instead nests them within the pattern. Thus, *New York* results in showing how mimetic the repetitive, vertical pattern can be. Indeed, like in *Shell*, the fine details uncovered by the lens are lost because of the overwhelming amount of information they contain. Therefore, Weston's use of the grid context fails to lead to discovery of new information and pushes the viewer back out of the photograph as it were.

Boulevard de Raspail and *New York* also reflect the way in which Man Ray and Weston dealt with the controversial issue of automatism in photography. In "World Viewed: Reflections On the Ontology of Film," Cavell claims that because of the automatism inherent to

[19] Rosalind Krauss, "The Originality of the Avant-Garde: A Postmodernist Repetition," *October* 18 (Autumn 1981): 8.

photography, this medium overcomes subjectivity, in a way painting could never, simply by being the result of causal interactions between light, the physical object, the lens and the film, which exclude the human agent.[20] This characteristic is not only a threat to the status of photography as an art, but also implies that there is not much the photographer can do to convey personal experiences which engage the viewer. In *New York*, Weston exploits the extended eye of the camera and accepts its automatic nature. In doing so, he surrenders to the desire of viewing the world rather than participating in it directly. The visible textures and patterns of the buildings and the city, enhance the architecture and initially seem to reveal something about the city, not otherwise detectable; however, neither Weston nor the viewer are asked to actively engage in interpreting the city. The photographer's call to intellectually interrogate the photograph and explore one's own subconscious, that is present in *Boulevard de Raspail*, is absent in *New York*. Although certainly the lighting, angle, and exposure time are Weston's choices, he does fundamentally use the automatism of the camera to bring a myriad of details to the viewer's attention that confounds the viewer instead of connecting the viewer and the referent. Showing how the similar architecture of the Rockefeller Center buildings may mislead the mind to think that two nearby buildings are, instead, one, only highlights the power of optical illusions. Weston's fascination with the camera is precisely its ability to capture a subject as previsualized by the photographer, without much intervention on the image produced by the camera. This ultimately satisfies the human obsession with the ability to realistically reproduce the world, create an index of it.

According to Krauss, this automatism, is what overrides the photographer's attempt at producing an original work. In her words, "in increasing the ways in which the world can be

[20] Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 23.

present to vision, the camera mediates that presence, gets between the viewer and the world, shapes reality according to its terms. Thus, what supplements and enlarges human vision also supplants the viewer himself; the camera is the aid who comes to usurp."[21] This is visible in Weston's work. The focus is so heavily centered on the subject of the photograph, as opposed to the effect it produces through its presentation, that his authorial presence in the image is dominated by the essence of the referent, which, in the case of *New York*, is the height and regular alternation of the vertical elements in the view. Although the top of the RCA and the base of most buildings in the picture are not visible, the image does not leave the viewer wondering and nothing is left to the imagination.

The same cannot be said for *Boulevard de Raspail* where the world seems to be rotated ninety degrees (from vertical to horizontal). In looking at this image, Cavell's argument on the automatism of photography fails to acknowledge the photographer's hand in setting up the composition of the shot, as well as Man Ray's ultimate generation of the perception of an alternative, non-indexical world. Much of Man Ray's photography is characterized by a clear effort to convey his own ideas, a characteristic which results in the modification of the referent's true appearance. For example, solarized photographs have an inverted color scheme and often granular texture. Especially modernist artists during those years believed that, "only an art can define its media. A modernist art, investigating its own physical basis, searching out its own conditions of existence, rediscovers the fact that its existence as an art is not physically assured."[22] Thus, simply being able to take photographs did not ensure the creation of art. Man Ray studied photography for years in order to master it and learn how to work around the automatism of the camera, which he referred to as a "contraceptive" quality. *Boulevard de*

[21] Rosalind Krauss, "The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism," *October* 19 (Winter 1981): 32-33.
[22] Cavell, *The World Viewed*, 107.

Raspail results from the evident attempt to produce a photograph infused with and controlled by Man Ray's view of the subject.

Perhaps, something which helped Man Ray achieve this authorial mark in photography was his belief that spatial concentration and instantaneity of a work were crucial; "just as the lens sacrifices actual space to focus all of that space upon the plate, so the artist must condense the time and space elements to create life's equivalent. This leads this medium to a static condition implying the unity of time and space, that is, a concrete form of two dimensions, which is comprehensible from one point of view in an instant of time" (37). Aside from defending the two-dimensional nature of mediums such as painting and photography, Man Ray highlights the importance of the distillation of space and time that has to occur for not only a photograph to capture its subject, but for the idea of the work to be delivered to the viewer. In other words, the synthesis of an experience is necessary for the image to produce an effect which instantaneously impacts, or even surprises, the viewer. To achieve this effect, in *Solarization*, *Rayograph* and *Boulevard de Raspail*, Man Ray employs different techniques to create a focus which attracts the viewer: the face of the woman as highlighted by the alternation of missing and dark contours created through solarization in *Solarization*; the rich tones which highlight the center of the unrolled film spiral in *Rayograph;* and the horizontal appearance of the façade in *Boulevard de Raspail*. In comparing these works with Weston's, one can see that while Man Ray frees himself from the automatism of the camera, Weston remains subject to it.

In his search to express unique experiences, Man Ray transmits his thoughts and ideas through his works, freeing them, so that they may become the experience of others and the experience may be shared. *Untitled*, taken in 1931, is a good example of such an approach. It is the image of three globe thistle blossoms and was included in the first section of Man Ray's

book, *Photographs by Man Ray 1920 Paris 1934*. The book was divided into five sections, each prefaced with texts, the first written by Man Ray, and the following by four fellow artists. In his introduction, "The Age of Light," Man Ray writes, "It is in the spirit of an experience and not of experiment that the following autobiographical images are presented. Seized in moments of visual detachment during periods of emotional contact, these images are oxidized residues, fixed by light and chemical elements, of living organisms" (117). Here, Man Ray contrasts vision and emotion and clarifies something which is easily overlooked, considering his wide use of different techniques, that is that he viewed all of his published works as expressions, or rather, "residuals", of personal experiences, not as experiments. His experimenting with different photographic techniques is, for him, just a means to convey his experiences. This is an approach opposite to previsualization where to conceive the final image there is visual indulgence, rather than visual detachment. It is easy to mistake *Untitled* as the result of an experiment with lighting, composition and solarization, but what differentiates it from being a mere experiment is the clear effort to convey an experience of the subject; it is in this way that Man Ray's individuality emerges and speaks to the audience.

In *Untitled*, Man Ray only included the blossoms and a few centimeters of their long, thin stems in the frame, leaving the rest of the subject to the viewer's imagination as he often does. The illumination coming from the left emphasizes the spherical shape and spikey petals of the blossoms. The geometrically simple structure of the flowers, with heads of hair-like petals, a few leaves and the long stem is anthropomorphic: each blossom looks like a head, the leaves like arms, or perhaps tiny wings, and the stem like a body. The spikey petals and tiny shriveled-looking leaves give a humorous twist to the anthropomorphic suggestion. The spatial arrangement of the three flowers, the way in which the different blossoms are positioned and

illuminated, and the way in which their stems curve, as if they were human chests, resembles a group of people having a conversation. Here again, Man Ray skillfully employs some of his tricks: the denial of the complete referent and the enhanced contrast against a flat, uniform background, something which extracts the subject from its natural spatial and temporal context. Solarization, helps enhance the contrast and achieve a three-dimensionality which further highlights the anthropomorphic character of the flower composition. In fact, *Untitled* is an example of how, through such technical manipulations, a photograph takes on a life of its own and is conveyed as an experience.[23] It is precisely the transcendental moment in which the subject of the photograph transforms into something else in the viewer's imagination, which Man Ray called a moment of visual detachment from reality and believed to be at the basis of both an artistic experience for the viewer and a unique, emotional communication between viewer and artist. This result could be seen as the realization of what the avantgarde viewed as the "new beginning", or "rebirth," that should stem from a work of art, and thus from the author as the "origin,"[24] or potential source, for new life. Suggestive, is the fact that Man Ray does not title the work with the name of the flowers, but instead, leaves it as "Untitled" so as not to limit the viewer's experience of the photograph by telling the viewers what they should see.

For Weston there was no visual detachment. In fact, he was firm in his belief that the photographer should not impose his interpretation of the subject on the photograph,

> "Self expression" is usually an egotistical approach, a willful distortion, resulting in over or understatement. […] *Fortunately,* it is difficult to see too personally with the very impersonal lens-eye: through it one is prone to approach nature with desire to learn from, rather than impose upon, so that a photograph, done in this spirit is not an interpretation, a biased opinion of what nature *should be,* but a *revelation,*—an absolute, impersonal recognition of the *significance of facts*.[25]

[23] Krauss, "The Originality of the Avant-Garde," 5.
[24] Krauss, "The Originality of the Avant-Garde," 6-7.
[25] Weston, "Statement," 70.

Weston viewed photography as a tool to learn about the world and to expose what is not usually noticed. He did not believe in its use to create alternate, individual expressions and interpretations of the world. While Man Ray created new images and disseminated ideas in people's minds, Weston was fascinated by the details of his surroundings and wanted to expose and share what was only visible through the "extended eye" of the camera. Weston's writings testify to the fact that nature was one of his most valuable inspirations and that he wanted to share his admiration for it with his audience; looking at a coastal landscape he wrote:

> The coast was on a grand scale: mountainous cliffs thrust buttresses far out into the ocean, anchored safely for an eternity: against the rising sun, their black solidity accentuated by rising mists and sunlit water, the ensemble was tremendous. But I lack words, I am inarticulate, anything I might write down would sound trivial as 'ain't nature grand.' I hope the one negative made from this point will, in a small way, record my feelings.[26]

Weston aims to capture with his camera, and its "extended vision," the immense beauty and wonder found in nature, both in scenes such as the one described above, and in simple everyday objects, such as the pepper portrayed in *Pepper No. 14*, taken in 1929. This photograph best exemplifies Weston's practice of previsualization and shows the extents to which he went in order to realistically capture a particular, "previsualized" perspective of the pepper. The photograph was likely printed without modification, for although Weston was a good printer and could edit photographs, he did not like the idea of printing from an imperfect negative.[27,28] Indeed, he believed the most difficult, yet correct, approach to photography was realism.[29] *Pepper No. 14* presents the pepper straight on and centered in the photographic frame; the

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[26] Newhall, *The Daybooks, Part I, Mexico*, 111.
[27] Newhall, *The Daybooks, Part I, Mexico*, 65.
[28] Weston's printing process was very specific and to abide by it he needed to previsualize his shot and get it the way he wanted to avoid having to make any unwanted and unexpected changes. As described by Ansel Adams, Weston followed these guidelines, "8 x 10 for landscape, 4 x 5 for portraits, no enlargers, no retouching (in the usual sense), no dark-room manipulations, pyro for negatives, amidol for prints, no toning, no artificial lighting, no exotic techniques, etc" (Adams, "Edward Weston," 120).
[29] Newhall, *The Daybooks, Part I, Mexico*, 55.

lighting of the photograph is such that every convolution and curve of the pepper is manifested. Clearly, on the most basic level, the photograph is a faithful copy of reality. Weston emphasizes this with the title of the photograph which not only labels its subject, stressing its true nature, but even informs the viewer of its numerical placement in Weston's series of pepper studies. This commitment to realism and the revelation of the "truth" or "true nature" of his subjects was the essence of Weston's research (and a quality which would later lead Krauss to call his straight photography a mere copy of reality, or indexical).[30]

Surprisingly, the undulations, scars and folds of the skin of the pepper as well as the high contrast of the photograph, give an anthropomorphic look to the bell pepper. Rather than seeing a pepper, one may at first see a large person, or the embrace between two, or three, people; in fact, without seeing the title of the photograph, it may take a few seconds before the viewer realizes what the real object of the photograph is. In addition, Weston uses the same expedient as Man Ray's and sets the bell pepper against a featureless, dark background to remove the vegetable from its natural context, say a kitchen or a plant, and emphasize its peculiar shape; this is also what facilitates the viewer's imagination and the establishment of relations with the form of other familiar objects, or animals. However, Weston reveals the true nature of the referent upfront with the title of his photograph. In addition, he does not make the referent partially inaccessible as Man Ray does, but portrays it in its entirety, so that once the viewer does see the subject as a pepper it is difficult to see the abstract anthropomorphic form as vividly. Rather than giving life to the pepper through an interpretation or experience of his, Weston wants to exhibit the life he believes is already in the pepper, the essence of the pepper, its "pepperness."[31] For

[30] Krauss, "The Originality of the Avant-Garde," 17.
[31] Estelle Jussim, "Quintessences: Edward Weston's Search for Meaning" in *EW 100: Centennial Essays in Honor of Edward Weston*, ed. Peter C. Bunnell and David Featherstone (Carmel, CA: Friends of Photography, 1986), 57.

Weston, the artistic character of photography derives from the possibility to reveal what might go unnoticed. Rather than introducing or imposing an idea, Weston simply wants to show what he has discovered by close inspection, an approach that does not seek a dialogue with the audience.

In line with his belief that a photograph of nature should be a "*revelation*,—an absolute, impersonal recognition of the *significance of facts*,"[32] Weston did an entire photographic series of peppers, which included, *Pepper No. 30* and *Pepper No. 35*. Similarly, to *Pepper No. 14*, the shaded undulations of the peppers in these other photographs also reveal their "essence" and the different anthropomorphic forms "hidden" within them. One may think that this defeats Weston's goal to present the "significance of facts." However, the expressive forms revealed in the peppers are simply a characteristic that is brought out by the sharp focus on the lineaments and patterns of the peppers and which defines their "pepperness;"[33] Weston's photographic study of peppers simply shows the viewer that there are innumerable ways of representing peppers that bring out their "pepperness." Anthropomorphism is clearly a theme in common with *Untitled*. However, there is a fundamental difference between Man Ray and Weston's photographs. In *Pepper No. 14*, and the rest of the pepper series, visual indulgence makes the viewers dependent on Weston's ability to reveal the curious features of the peppers. Because the viewer sees through Weston's eyes, his photographs can never become the viewer's own experience. In addition, by showing the infinite ways in which the pepper skin may fold to resemble the human form, Weston insinuates the idea that one will never truly known a pepper.

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[32] Weston, "Statement," 70.

[33] Adams argues that there is an "essential relation in the form and structure of all natural objects. The very complexity of the natural world obviously implies coincidence of form and function through our imagination." Thus, although *Pepper No. 14* may suggest anthropomorphic forms, it is not necessarily intentional on Weston's part in his effort to convey absolute realism (Adams, "Photography," 47).

Weston believed that artistic photographs should not create illusions, but, instead, capture the "quintessence"[34] of the subject. Indeed, *Pepper No. 14* is a very expressive image. However, following Krauss' line of thought, the compulsive precision and clarity in Weston's photographs may be said to undermine his creative expression.[35] For this reason, the "quintessence" or, in this case, "pepperness," revealed by Weston in his pepper series may be cited as an example of the characteristics which Krauss calls the "authorial mark of emotion," a "frantic [attempt] to reconstitute" [36] the aesthetic original. Although the degree to which each pepper becomes familiar to the viewer is uncertain, there is no doubt that the works of Nature in each of Weston's peppers inspires interest and, even, admiration; feelings very different from those normally elicited by a pepper in its normal domestic or agricultural context. It is this kind of different emotion which Krauss believes was often used by modern artists to claim that their works constituted art, even though they might not display originality. Furthermore, in the same way in which Krauss criticizes Rodin's *The Three Shades*, crowning the work, *The Gates of Hell*,[37] she would maybe find that Weston's pepper studies, are an instance of repetitive work and only further contradict the claim of status as art. In fact, Krauss would argue that it would be impossible to determine which of Weston's peppers is the original photograph, conveying the original experience lived by Weston when he first discovered the anthropomorphic figures hidden in the folds of the pepper skin.

The comparisons above underscore how the modernists' rejection of tradition, drove Man Ray and Edward Weston to further explore the medium of photography as a means to discover instances in which it could be art. For Man Ray, this led to the production of works that are bold

[34] Jussim, "Quintessences," 57.
[35] Krauss, "The Originality of the Avant-Garde," 17.
[36] Krauss, "The Originality of the Avant-Garde," 41.
[37] Krauss, "The Originality of the Avant-Garde," 3-5.

statements of anti-conformism and which not only convey the artists experience, but have the potential to become the viewer's own experience. Contrarily, Weston's pepper series, all shot in a similar format, leave no space for imagination between the photograph and reality. Thus, the viewer is forced to experience the essence of the peppers through Weston's eyes. In the following comparison of *Anatomies* and *La Teresina*, the distinction between Man Ray's and Weston's attitudes towards the photographic medium and society is sharpened by considering the ways in which technique, acknowledgement, automatism, and life of the work come together to create an artistic claim.

Man Ray's *Anatomies*, taken between 1929 and 1930, portrays the underside of the extended neck of a woman, Lee Miller, against a jet-black background. The original gelatin silver print (**Figure 12a**) was made with a larger field of view that included Lee Miller's chest, seen from a low angle, as she is tilting her head backwards; however, Man Ray cropped it so that the photograph has a shocking effect and the referent is not immediately recognizable. The sitter's trachea partially blocks the light and distinguishes, lengthwise, the shadowy left side of the long neck from the right side. The top of the neck is rimmed by the pointy lower jaw. In his cropping of the field of view, Man Ray removed the setting for the body shown. This bracing abstraction altered the nature of the photograph from one of simple reproduction to one where the referent is obscured. As in *Rayograph*, the intensely dark background has an estranging effect which removes context and interferes with immediately recognizing the referent. Man Ray's objective was not to awaken memories, but to stimulate the imagination of the viewer to delve into either subconscious or new desires. The composition is asymmetrical, something which perhaps contributes to a disconsonant reaction in the viewer. For example, only the left clavicle is visible. Furthermore, the slight left angle at which the neck is photographed enhances the

muscular strain visible under the tight skin. Although exposed, the neck occupies most of the frame and has a powerful presence full of energy and life. In this respect, it differs substantially from another rendition of Miller's neck, *Lee Miller's Neck* from 1930. Here, the difference in perspective and the inclusion of her head are sufficient to make her neck look extremely vulnerable, as if it could be snapped at the merest gesture.

Anatomies exemplifies how cropping and enlargement play a critical role in creating unnerving optical illusions. While at first glance, the original (uncropped) photograph appears to be a cross, or a headless pair of female shoulders, in *Anatomies* the feminine neck loses its gender and "morphs" into a phallic emblem. One could argue that the image attempts to eroticize Miller's neck by showing its "maximum plasticity."[38] However, it takes the viewer's mind further, where the sensual image of the delicate, exposed female neck alternates with the image of a forceful phallus. Man Ray has derailed the viewer's conformist mind towards unconventional, if not exactly outrageous thoughts. Rather than "timid and apologetic"[39] he asserts that "this apparent violation [of expression] is preferable to the monstrous habits condoned by etiquette and estheticism" (118). *Anatomies* is a bold and clear expression of Man Ray's view of the role of the artist: to shake viewers out of their habits of perception. Through concentration, emphasis and stark immediacy, he expresses this estranging view most forcefully.

By focusing on the unusual perspective of Miller's extended neck, Man Ray ensures that the image spurs the viewer's imagination and triggers the surfacing of subconscious thoughts and desires. This is significant, because it surprises the viewer and appeals on a subconscious level in a way that philosopher Espen Hammer, speaking in another context, once described, "images have to not only speak to the viewer but for the viewer—[expressing] yearnings and temptations

[38] Mason Klein, *Alias Man Ray: The Art of Reinvention* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 89.
[39] Cavell, "Being Odd, Getting Even," 105.

the viewer has felt."[40] In fact, Man Ray reveals his own thoughts and himself to the viewer hoping, as he wrote in "The Age of Light," that the stimulus of transgressive thoughts may unearth shared desires, and create an unforeseen connections. *Anatomies* expresses more than a sexual desire, through the optical illusion of the phallus, contrasted with the vulnerable extended neck, Man Ray declares himself to the viewer by asserting male dominance; the viewer is then free to reject or accept and further elaborate on this idea. In fact, since one cannot prevent experiencing the optical illusion orchestrated by Man Ray, one has to follow Man Ray's train of thought. Then, depending on each individual's tendency to be persuaded by such provocative thoughts, he or she may decide to reject the idea. Man Ray did not expect communication to occur with everyone; instead, he believed it is only possible to communicate with one or two people at the time (6). However, Man Ray clearly made a conscious effort to overcome barriers of communication created by etiquette and ethics (118). It is then the viewer's responsibility to approach these works with an open mind, or as Man Ray says, with eyes untainted or restricted by tradition (119).

Yet, as Cavell proposes, a different way to analyze the rapport between the artist and the viewer is through the idea of estrangement, "an important part of what the onset of modernism in the arts means is that the condition of mutual estrangement has been generalized to become an intrinsic feature of what art calls for and represents."[41] Therefore, in presenting his idea in *Anatomies*, Man Ray mutually estranges the photograph and the viewer, such that the viewer is asked to view the work with different eyes. "Unless one is able to adopt a specific expressive attitude to the seen, manifest in a range of techniques and behavioral patterns, the artwork simply

[40] Espen Hammer, *Stanley Cavell: Skepticism, Subjectivity, and the Ordinary* (London: Polity, 2002), 31.
[41] Hammer, *Stanley Cavell*, 97.

will not speak: there would be nothing to respond to."[42] *Anatomies*, not only creates a disturbing optical illusion, but it is one which requires the viewer to loosen the hold of social norms which normally guide behavior. Estranging the image, and entertaining the viewer for longer than usual, so that communication may occur, works only if the viewer is willing to accept Man Ray's work; if, instead, the viewer rejects it because of its sexual politics, then communication fails due to the viewer's unwillingness to engage in the ideas Man Ray proposes.

Weston's *La Teresina*, taken in 1933, also shows a woman with her neck extended and exposed, but the effect differs markedly from Man Ray's *Anatomies*. The photograph includes the subject from the shoulders up to the head and hair. The woman does not face the camera, but looks up towards the top left corner of the frame. The composition is symmetrical: the light background at the top left is balanced by the woman's dark dress in the lower right corner, and there is nearly two-fold rotational symmetry about the diagonal from the top left corner of the photograph to the bottom right. Teresina's extended neck occupies the center of the image and the protruding throat attracts the viewer's attention. As in *Anatomies*, the skin is tightly drawn across her neck and chin, and the contrast and sharp quality of the photograph are so high that small goosebumps are visible. The shadows map out the underlying muscles and veins and mark the outlines of the throat and jawbones, which are in the recognizable context of a woman's body. The dark shadows and strained features of the neck make it look strong, but the bent posture introduces a sense of vulnerability and detracts from that impression. In fact, the viewer is led to search the woman's expression for clues about her emotional state. Her lips, nose, closed eyes, and eyebrows are all visible from below, foreshortened by the angled perspective which makes it difficult to determine her mood. There is no visible grimace, and one cannot

[42] Hammer, *Stanley Cavell*, 96.

understand whether the woman has her head thrust back in desolation, fatigue, or relaxation. Is she sighing, or is she enjoying the sunshine, or a cool breeze against her face?

It is important to notice the similarities between *La Teresina* and *Anatomies*. In *La Teresina* too, the lower jaw and chin, at the end of the stretched neck, have an arrow-like appearance, accentuated even further by the outline of the nose around the nostrils; here too, there is an element of sensuality, yet *Anatomies* is erotic, while *La Teresina* is not. Unlike Man Ray's disturbing *Anatomies*, *La Teresina* solicits empathy, and familiarity; for this viewer, she does not provoke unnerving thoughts. The way the light is cast, amplifies the contrast between Teresina's skin, hair, and dress and highlights textures with which the viewer is familiar. The viewer can easily imagine the different tactile sensations of these three different features, and her emotional condition, whether of misery, peace or enjoyment, is one which the viewer can share. Thus, a connection is established between the viewer and the referent based on the viewer's presumed understanding of Teresina. The viewer is made to feel even more present to the real Teresina because of the loop on the bow of Teresina's blouse, which seems to be there so that one can hook a finger through it and pull Teresina closer. This bow is a clever detail which beckons the viewer into the same space as the referent. While Man Ray constantly tries to unnerve the viewer and withhold something of the referent, Weston induces familiarity. He does not stray from conventions and openly allows the viewer to indulge in the details of the sitter and her setting. But does one really get to know Teresina? Is she sighing, or is she enjoying the sunshine, or a cool breeze?

In comparing *Anatomies* and *La Teresina*, the viewer notices that while Man Ray unapologetically presents his thoughts to the viewer, Weston is more passive, limiting himself to a kind of external description which he hopes will speak for itself. Indeed, Weston's *La Teresina*

does evoke empathy, but does not convey an idea unique to Weston. Instead, Man Ray, both prolongs the viewer's intrigue by creating an inaccessibility to the referent, and tries to communicate an idea, which allows him to establish a dialogue between the work and the viewer. *Anatomies* in particular, strongly conveys Man Ray's presence and assertion of himself as a living, as well as thinking, individual.[43] This is done through his control of the viewer's initial experience of the photograph which demonstrates Man Ray's "thinking" as a performance actively enacting his "I." In such a performance, Man Ray turns a neck into a phallus, and provokes uneasiness in the viewer, who does not expect the forceful surprise. The viewer may likely also feel shame for the thoughts and desires aroused by *Anatomies* largely due to the stigma surrounding sex. We might say, that Man Ray is setting an example for the viewer: if I am not ashamed, why should you be?

The question of shame brought up by *Anatomies*, could be said to be caused by Man Ray's enactment of his "I," otherwise described by Cavell in his analysis of Descartes' Cogito argument, as elaborated by Emerson in his essay "Self-Reliance." The elaborated Cogito argument states that to distinguish one's existence independent of the masses, one needs to continuously, and actively claim one's thoughts. Since, the Cogito argument results from "taking the claim 'I think' as the basis" and establishes that "I exist only while, or if *and only if*, I think,"[44] one actively claims one's thoughts by making the decision to pronounce them. In *Anatomies*, rather than concealing his thoughts, Man Ray enacts Emerson's proposed therapy of becoming "ashamed of our shame,"[45] as Cavell puts it, of refusing rules and taboos imposed by society. Through this enacting of the "I," and by rejecting shame, Man Ray makes a clear

[43] Cavell, "Being Odd, Getting Even," 99.
[44] Cavell, "Being Odd, Getting Even," 100.
[45] Cavell, "Being Odd, Getting Even," 106.

overture to communicate with the viewer and expresses his desire to overcome skepticism. In other words, although Man Ray's photographs are only residues of his experiences, as he calls them, they make him "unforgettably visible"[46] and are tangible Cogito statements that allow his audience to *know* him.[47] In doing so, Man Ray alters "what it is [he shows], which requires turning even more watchfully to what it is we [the audience] are conscious of, and altering our posture toward it."[48] Ultimately, the significance of this is that in photographs such as *Anatomies,* Man Ray asks viewers to try on his point of view. By truly revealing himself to the viewer, Man Ray encourages new conversation which strays from convention.

Weston's straight photography, his emphasis on revealing the "essential" nature of things as well as his obstinate attachment to the "as it is without manipulation"[49] approach, leads him to "dismiss his own thoughts"[50] and conceals him completely. In fact, he seems to hide behind the objects he photographs, revealing their essence, but never his, and always being conscious of which of his works would be appropriate to show and which not. *La Teresina* is an example of the way in which Weston is hiding behind his lens. While Man Ray is transgressive with his photography, Weston is not and uses it to document. In a way, he domesticates objects by portraying them with the utmost care for detail; however, the knowledge the viewer gains by this domestication is superficial. Krauss, for instance, might say that Weston's reliance on the camera as an extension of the eye overrides his vision and shapes reality according to its terms,[51] since it is only through the camera that Weston is able to immortalize Teresina (or inanimate objects) in those specific conditions of lighting and position. In fact, Krauss might conclude that his

[46] Cavell, "Being Odd, Getting Even," 115.
[47] In Emerson's words: "Do your work, and I shall know you."
[48] Cavell, "Being Odd, Getting Even," 115.
[49] Cavell, "Being Odd, Getting Even," 115.
[50] Cavell, "Being Odd, Getting Even," 115.
[51] Krauss, "The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism," 34.

photographs simply constitute new representations or signs with a medium of inherent indexical nature.[52]

Using skepticism as a lens through which to analyze Man Ray and Weston's photographic works, one notices a fundamental difference between them, even if, at first, they may appear similar. The comparison of *Solarization (Nude)* with *Nude* and *Rayograph* with *Shell*, demonstrates the two photographers' different attitudes towards their subjects. While Man Ray manipulates the photograph to render the subject partially inaccessible and stimulate the viewer's subconscious, Weston wants to expose as much of the subject as possible, hoping that a close rendering of it will illuminate the viewer on a small portion of the complex world we live in. Man Ray and Weston's goals lead them to use different photographic techniques and to engage the viewer in different ways. Man Ray extensively manipulated his photographs by experimenting widely with the development process in order to achieve varying types of texture, shading, form, and perspective. Weston did not and practiced previsualization to create works of straight photography. Through their uses of different techniques, Man Ray emphasizes the importance of *acknowledging* the difference between the photograph and reality, while Weston brings the viewer closer to the subject so the viewer may not only *see* it, but *know* it. Perhaps, *Boulevard de Raspail, Paris* and *New York* most clearly exemplify the photographers' opposing approaches, especially when observing how the two photographers confront the vertical nature and grid-like aspect of the buildings. Man Ray reduces the grid resemblance and minimizes the vertical quality of the façade by angling the perspective in an unusual way. As it turns out, verticality has a metaphoric meaning for Man Ray (110) as it represents society's misguided interest in material progress (the amounting of material things), as opposed to intellectual

[52] Krauss, "The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism," 34.

progress which is not always visible the way buildings are. In comparison, the still and impenetrable photograph *New York* shows an aerial view of the city that is different from the one most commonly accessible to people on the streets. It offers a new view of New York, that enhances its vertical skyline and brings out the fine grid-like details of its architecture; however, it is unsuccessful in communicating a novel, perhaps, intellectually stimulating way of looking at the world. Thus, the contrast between the way Man Ray and Weston present their subjects, dictates the way in which their works should be processed.

The difference between *Untitled* and *Pepper No. 14* may seem subtle, since they both highlight the anthropomorphic nature of objects from the natural world; however, the signature of their respective authors is detectable. Man Ray wrote that works like *Untitled* resulted from an experience of "visual detachment" (117). To convey it, he attempts to overcome the automatism of the camera, solarizes the negative and crops the photos, changing the appearance of the subject from reality. *Untitled* presents Man Ray's experience of the globe-thistle blossoms; by sharing his experience Man Ray puts it out there for other to experience and in doing so he acknowledges that others may have different experiences. On the other hand, *Pepper No. 14*, results from a visual indulgence in which Weston wants the viewer to see exactly the anthropomorphic forms, created by the folds of the skin of the pepper viewed in its entirety, in the same way in which he previsualized them through the lens of the camera. In other words, taking complete advantage of the automatism of phototgraphy, Weston does not leave room for a different interpretation and his work is the result of his attempt to show the viewer more of reality.[53]

[53] In his review entitled "Photography," Adams claims that Weston's "attachment to objects of nature rather than to the sophisticated subjects of modern life is in accord with his frankness and simplicity" (47). However, more than a frankness and simplicity, his photographs suggest a passive stance in making an artistic claim.

While the previous comparisons demonstrate how the adoption of different techniques create specific effects which convey different messages, *Anatomies* and *La Teresina* may be viewed as the quintessential demonstration of how Man Ray ultimately attempts to overcome skepticism, while Weston affirms it. By tricking the viewer with an optical illusion to present an idea, Man Ray's *Anatomies* is clearly more effective in establishing a dialogue with the viewer than Weston's *La Teresina*. Although Weston was recognized as one of the pioneers of straight photography, his sharply defined and detailed photographs do not effectively serve to communicate his individual expressive aims. In the end it seems that while Weston believed that the way to discover the complexities and unknowns of the world was through the lens of his camera, Man Ray believed that by creating photographs of his experiences of "visual detachment," he could open a window for our psyche; Man Ray's photographs do not always represent reality, but an idea upon which the viewer can build an individual experience.

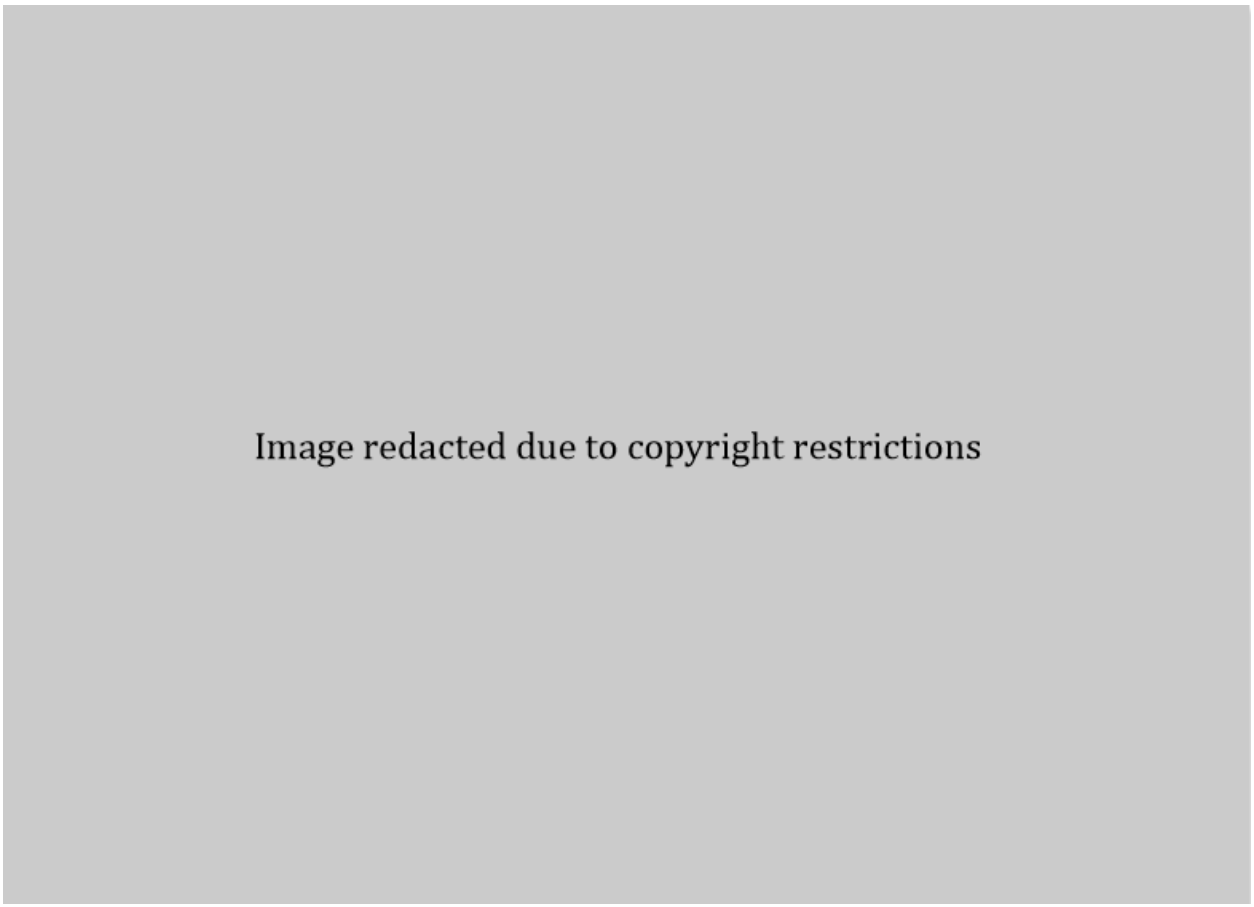

Figure 1 Man Ray, *Solarization (Nude)* or *Natasha*, 1929

Gelatin Silver Print
Dimensions: 11 3/8 x 8 1/4 in. (29 x 21 cm)
Image Source: The Museum of Modern Art

Image can be viewed online at:
https://www.moma.org/collection/works/46968?artist_id=3716&locale=en&page=1&sov_referrer=artist

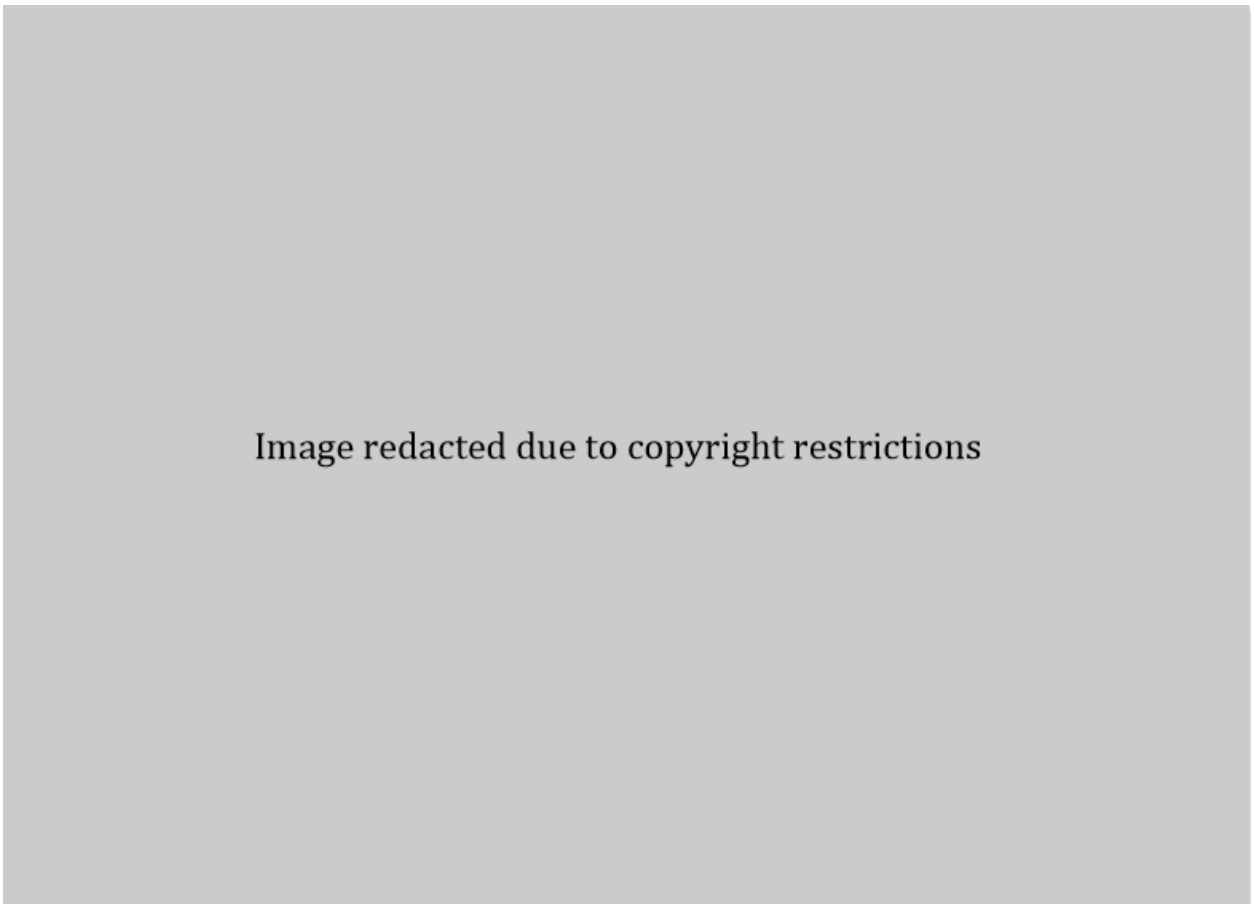

Figure 2 Edward Weston, *Nude* or *Knees*, 1927

Gelatin Silver Print
Dimensions: 7 1/8 x 8 1/4 in. (18 x 20.8 cm)
Image Source: PHILLIPS

Image can be viewed online at: https://www.phillips.com/detail/EDWARD-WESTON/UK040113/29

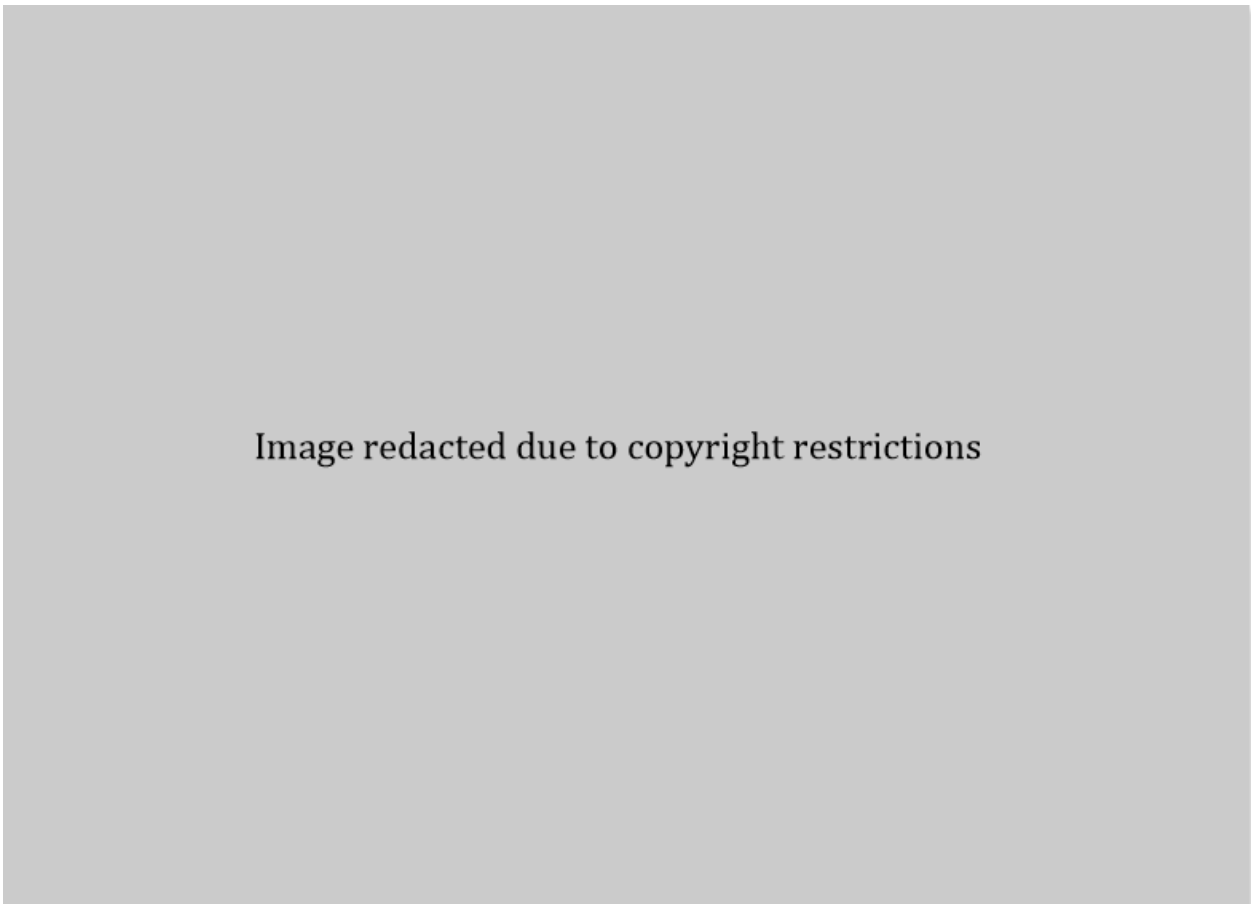

Figure 3 Man Ray, *Rayograph*, 1923

Gelatin Silver Print
Dimensions: 11 9/16 x 9 1/4 in. (29.4 x 23.5 cm)
Image Source: The Museum of Modern Art

Image can be viewed online at:
https://www.moma.org/collection/works/46483?artist_id=3716&locale=en&page=1&sov_referrer=artist

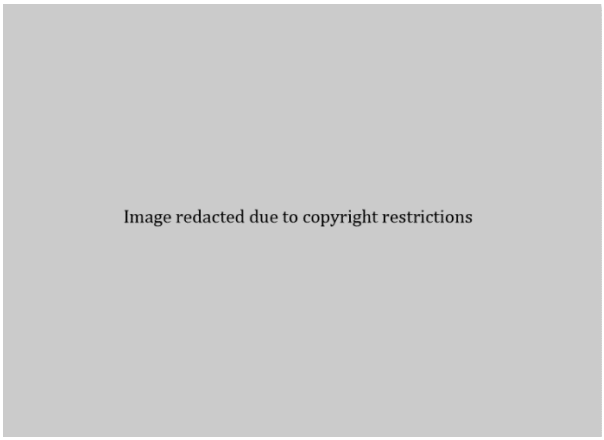

Figure 4 Man Ray, *Self-Portrait with Camera*, 1931

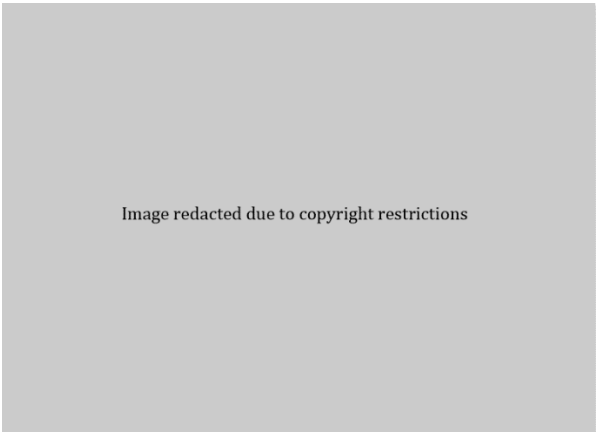

Figure 4a (crop) Man Ray, *Self-Portrait with Camera*, 1931

Gelatin Silver Print
Dimensions: 6 3/4 x 5 in. (17.1 x 12.7 cm)
Image Source: The Museum of Modern Art

Image can be viewed online at:
https://www.moma.org/collection/works/46309?artist_id=3716&locale=en&page=1&sov_referrer=artist

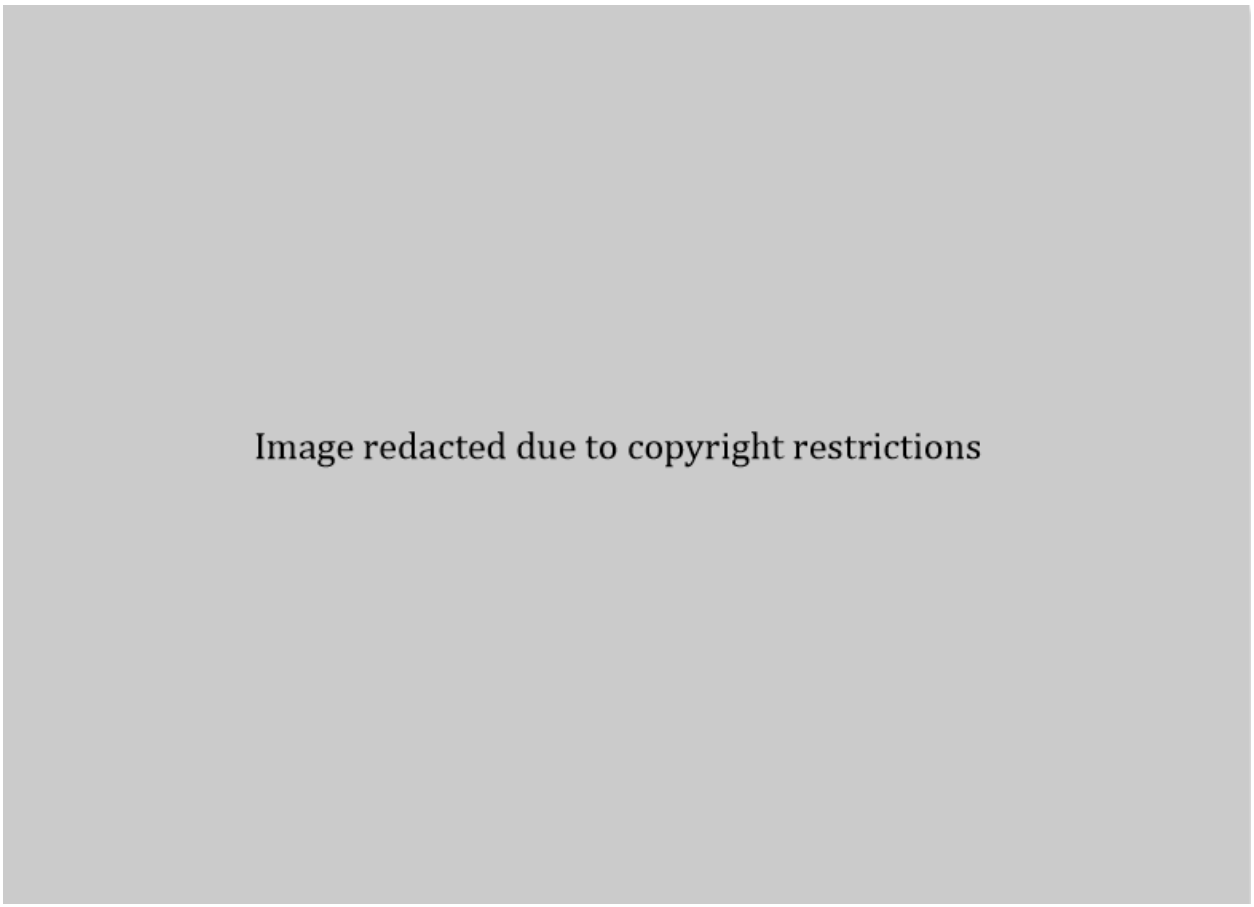

Figure 5 Edward Weston, *Shell*, 1927

Gelatin Silver Print
Dimensions: 9 x 7 1/4 in. (23 x 18.5 cm)
Image Source: PHILLIPS
©

Image can be viewed online at: https://www.phillips.com/detail/EDWARD-WESTON/UK040113/28

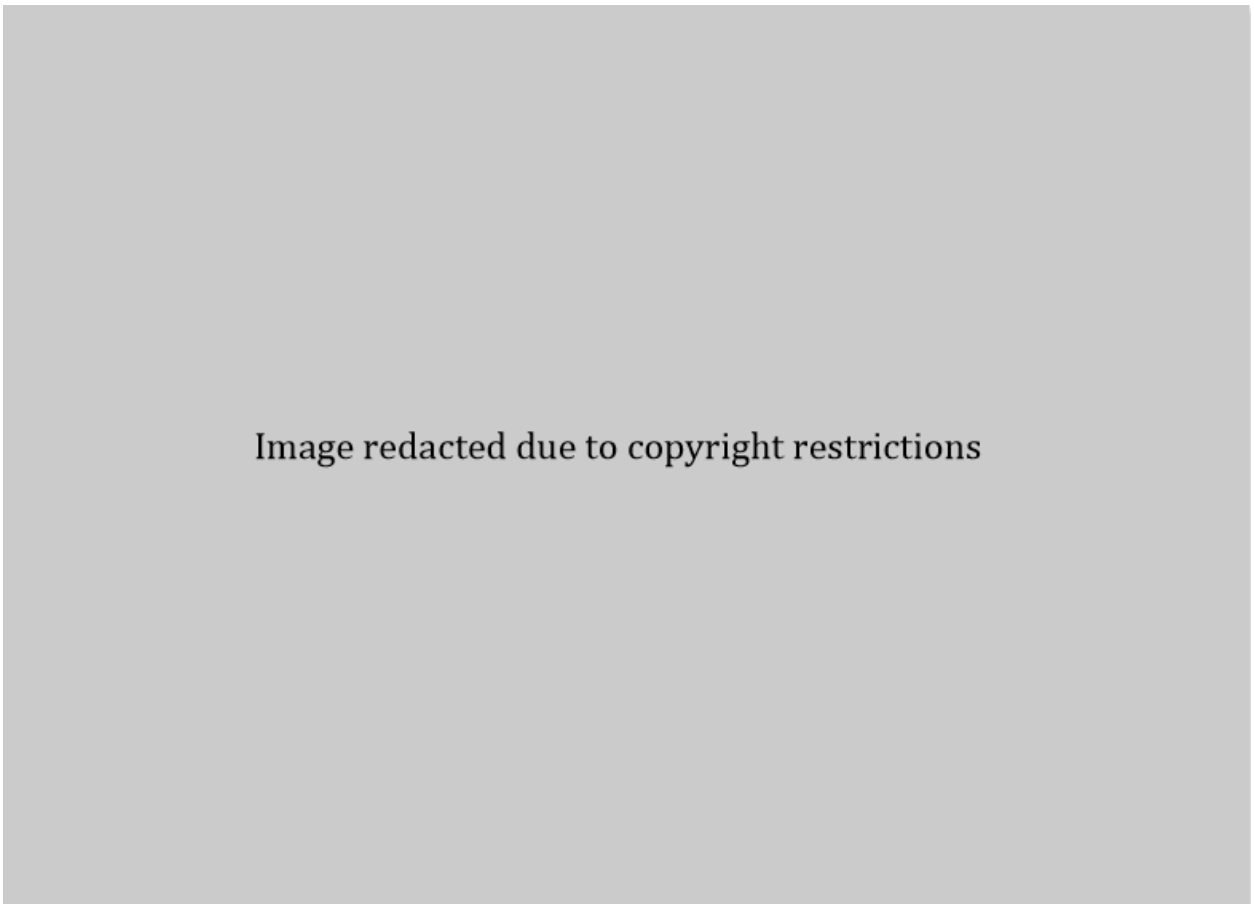

Figure 6 Man Ray, *Boulevard de Raspail, Paris*, 1930

Gelatin Silver Print
Dimensions: —
Image Source: Man Ray's *Photographs, 1920-1934, Paris* (Hartford, Connecticut: James Thrall Soby, 1934).
© —

Image can be viewed online at: https://theartstack.com/artist/man-ray/boulevard-de-raspail-pa

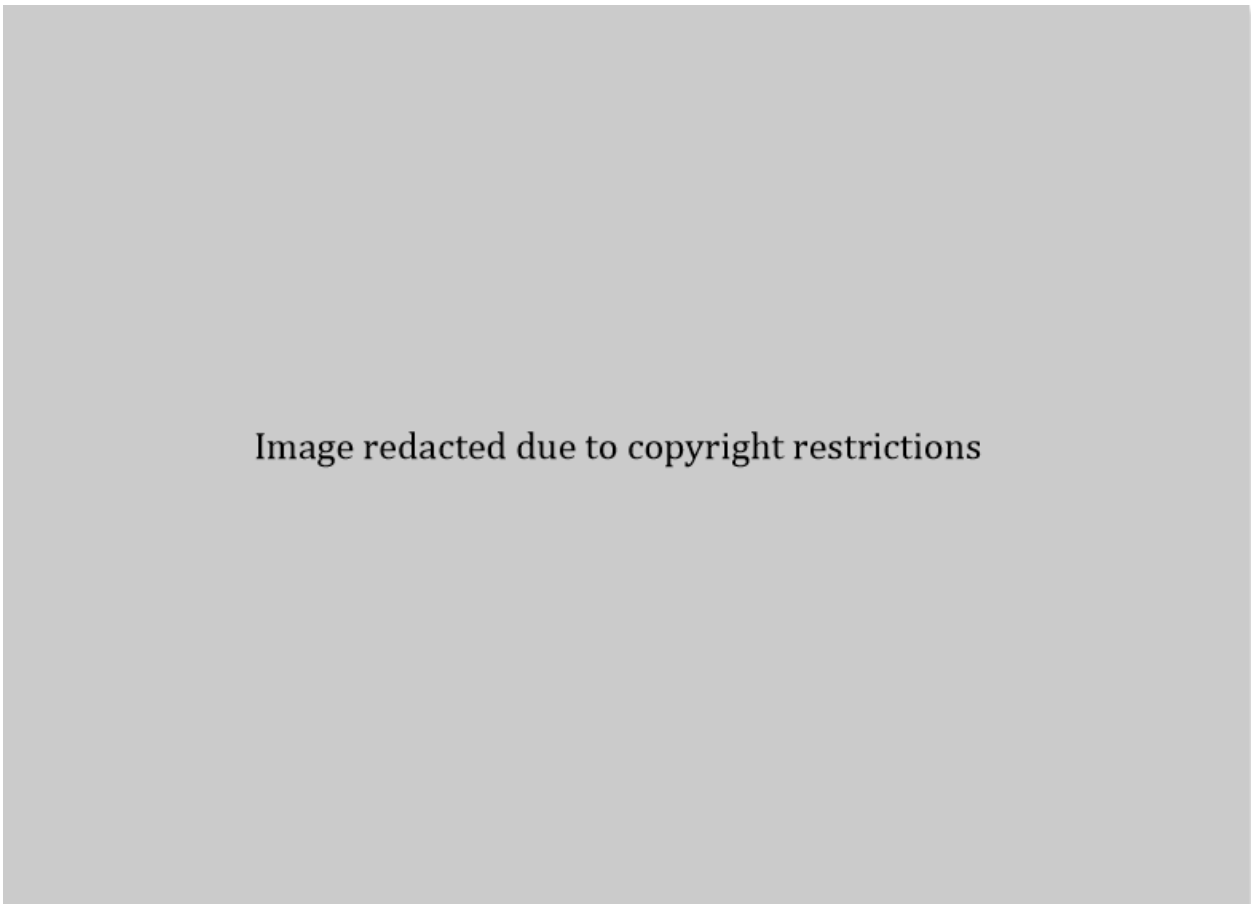

Figure 7 Edward Weston, *New York*, 1941

Gelatin Silver Print
Dimensions: 9 7/16 x 7 5/8 in. (24 x 19.3 cm)
Image Source: ARTSTOR

Image can be viewed online at:
http://library.artstor.org.proxy.library.emory.edu/#/asset/AWSS35953_35953_38006747

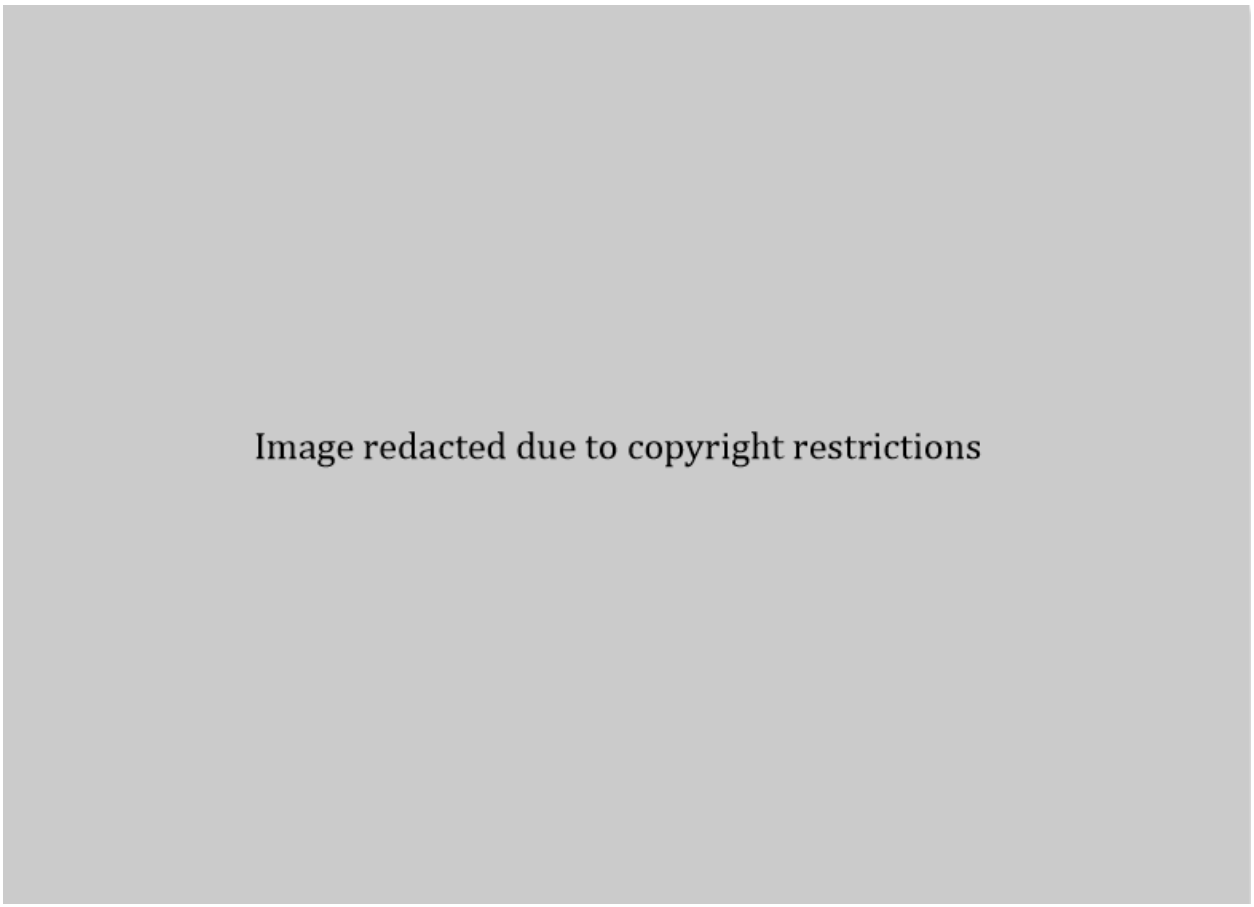

Figure 8 Man Ray, *Untitled*, 1931

Gelatin Silver Print
Dimensions: 11 3/8 x 8 13/16 in. (28.9 x 22.4 cm)
Image Source: The Museum of Modern Art

Image can be viewed online at:
https://www.moma.org/collection/works/47671?artist_id=3716&locale=en&page=1&sov_referrer=artist (note that it is not the solarized print used in this thesis)

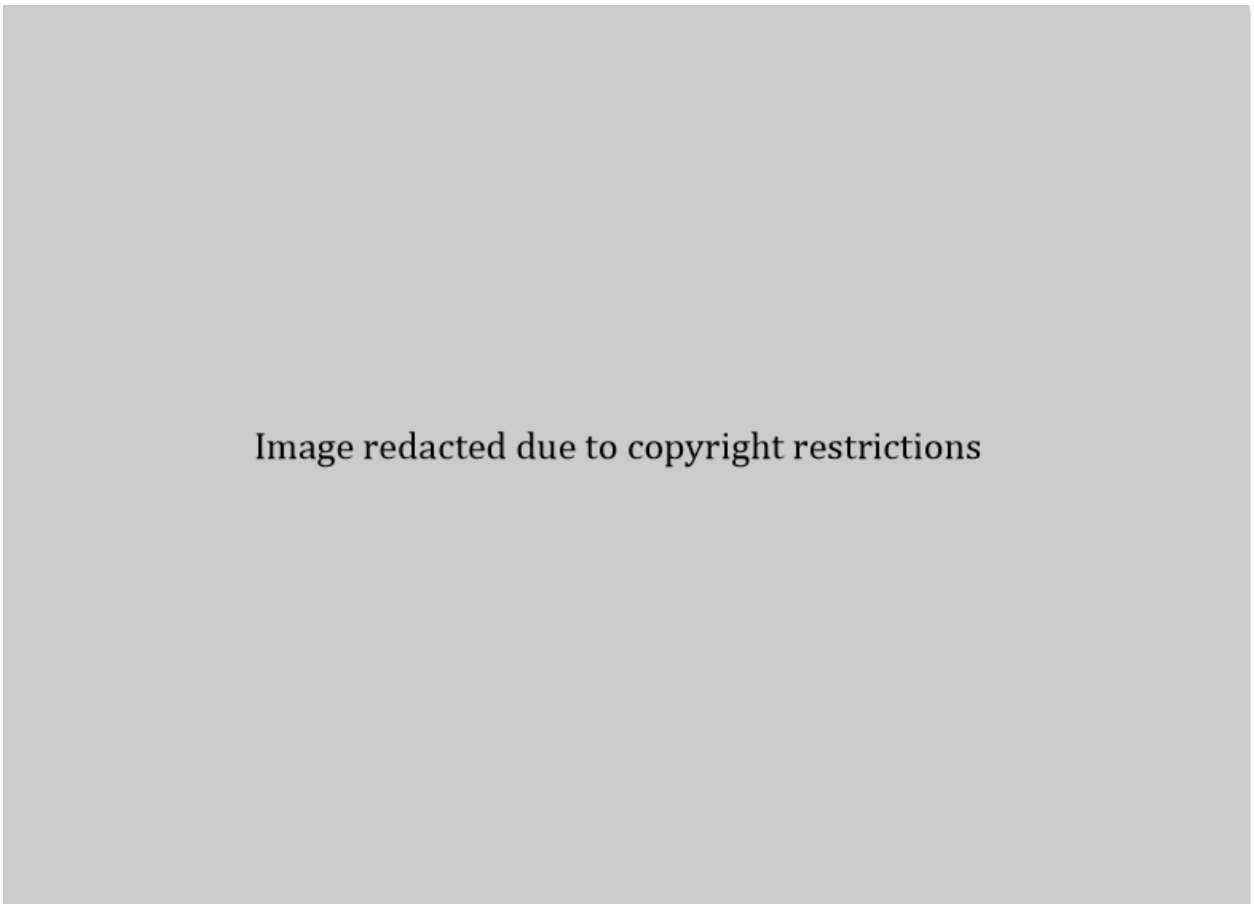

Figure 9 Edward Weston, *Pepper No. 14*, 1929

Gelatin Silver Print
Dimensions: 8 3/4 x 7 9/16 in. (22.2 x 19.2 cm)
Image Source: ARTSTOR

Image can be viewed online at:
http://library.artstor.org.proxy.library.emory.edu/asset/ABALTIMOREIG_10313362690

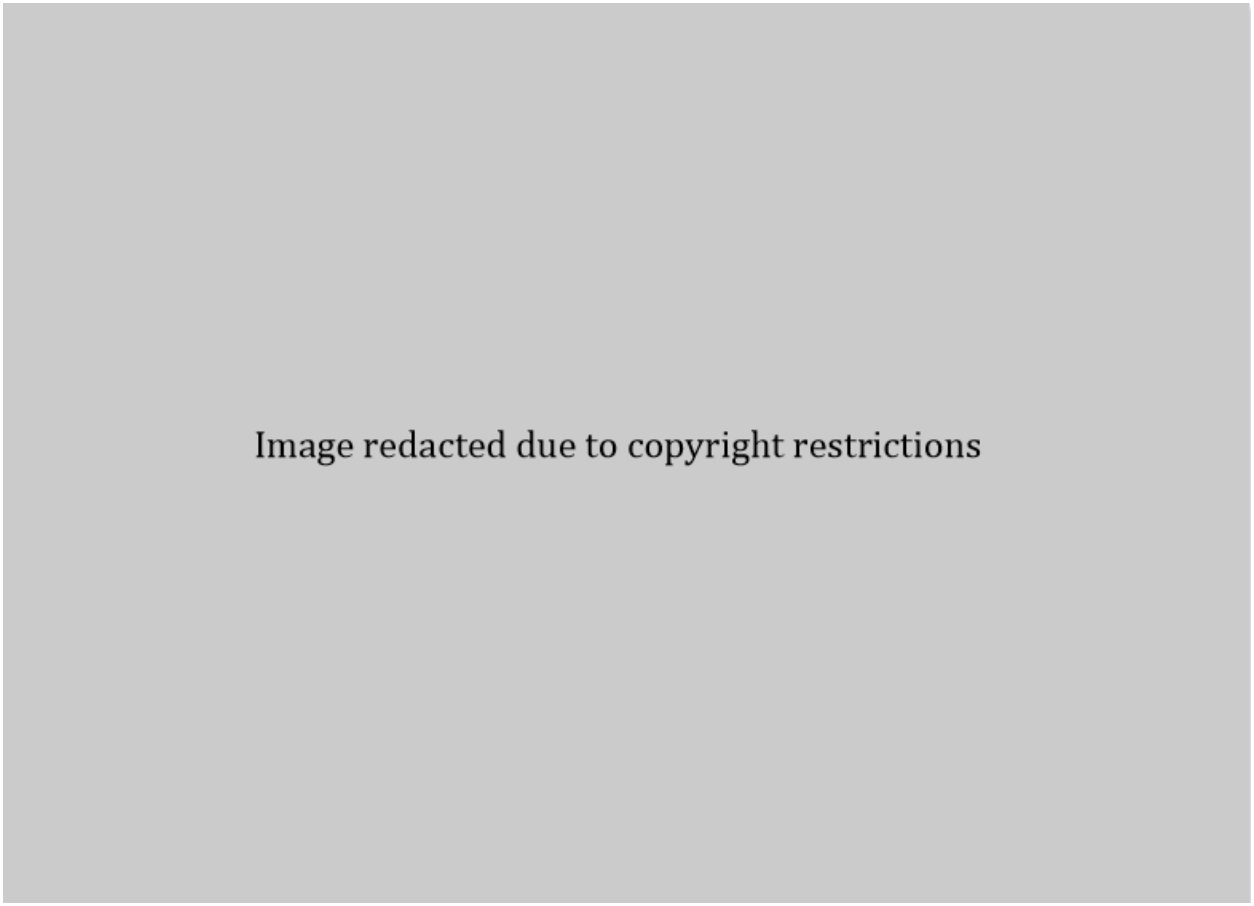

Figure 10 Edward Weston, *Pepper No. 30*, 1930

Gelatin Silver Print
Dimensions: 9 1/2 x 7 9/16 in. (24.13 x 19.21 cm)
Image Source: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art

Image can be viewed online at: https://www.sfmoma.org/artwork/39.208

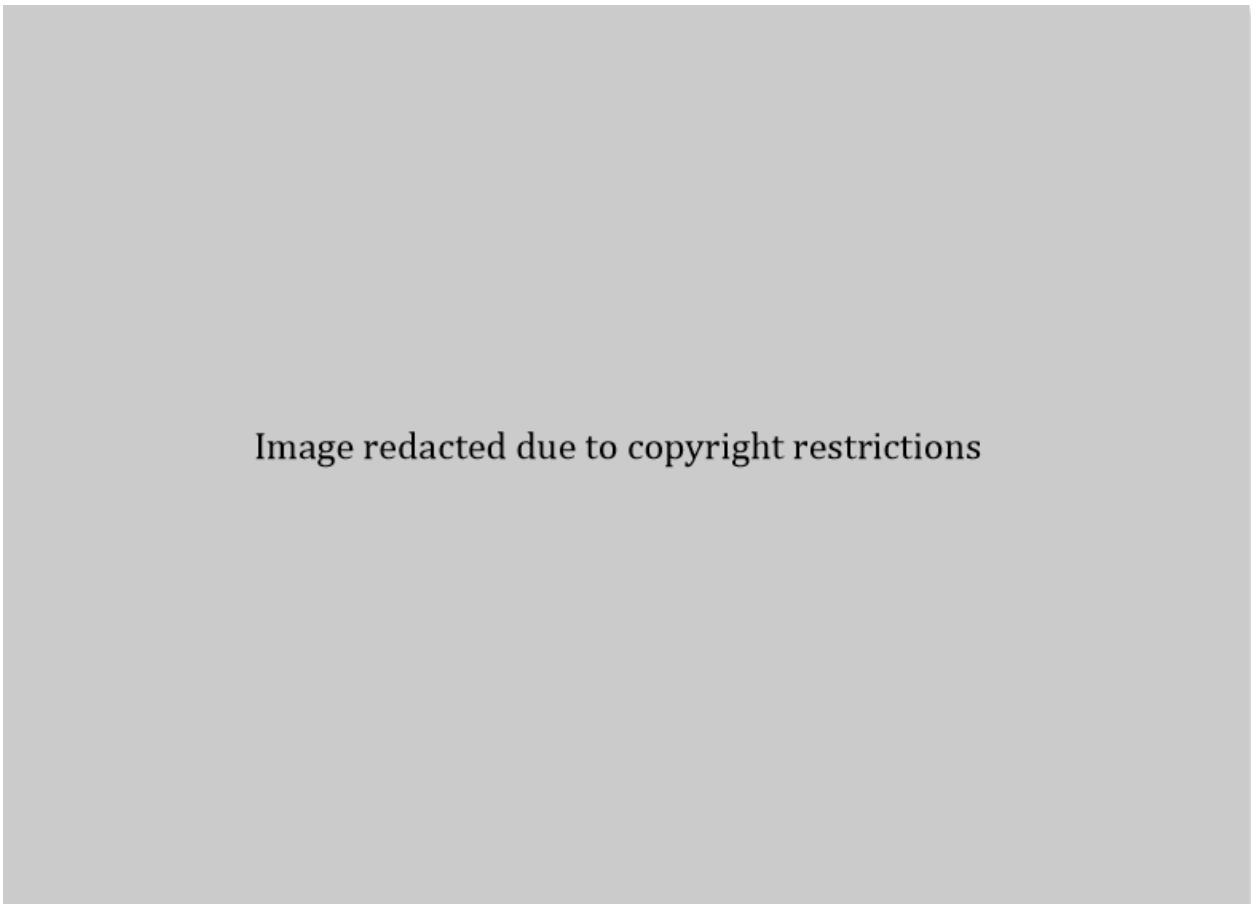

Figure 11 Edward Weston, *Pepper No. 35*, 1930

Gelatin Silver Print
Dimensions: 9 9/16 x 7 5/8 in. (24.3 x 19.3 cm)
Image Source: The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Image can be viewed online at:
https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/286226

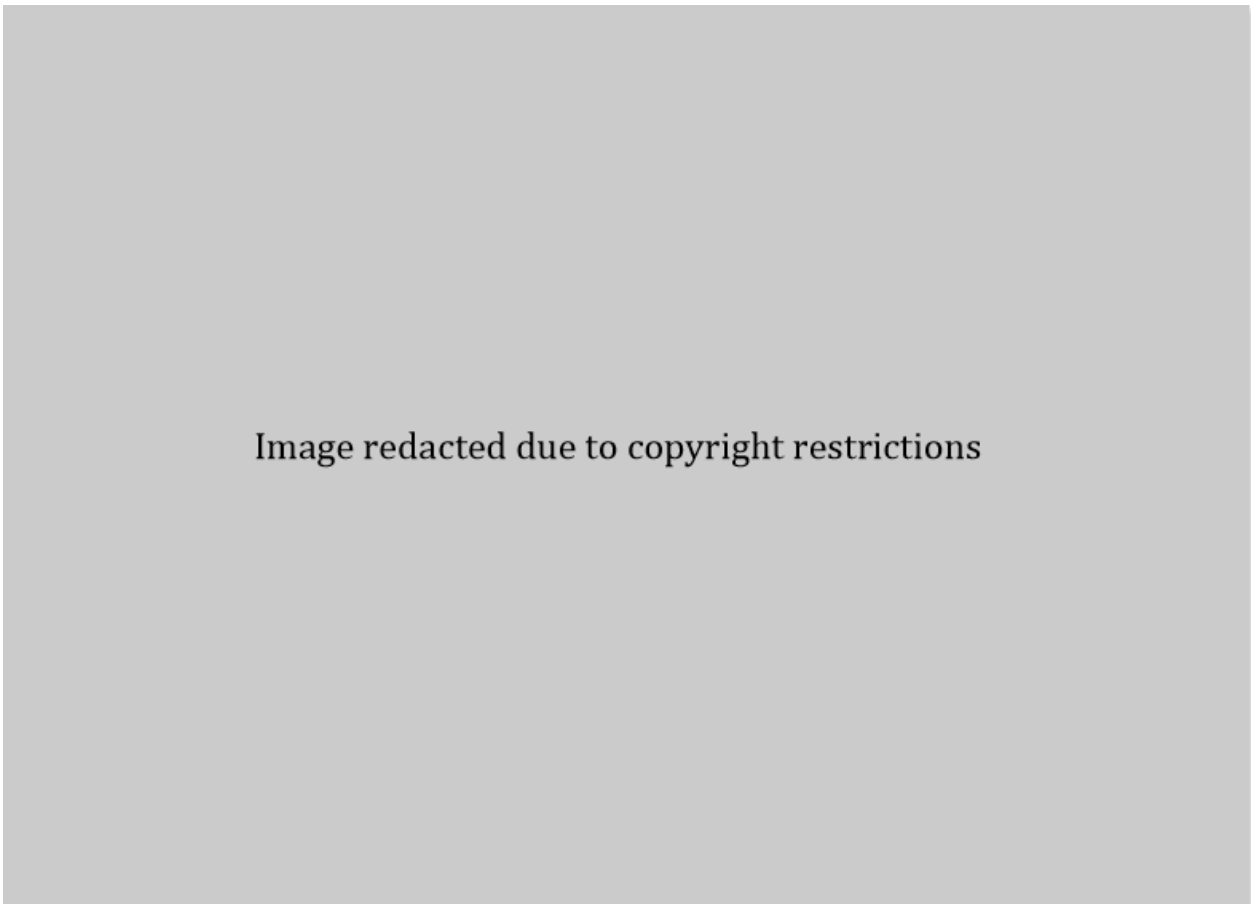

Figure 12 Man Ray, *Anatomies*, 1929-1930

Gelatin Silver Print
Dimensions: 8 7/8 x 6 3/4 in. (22.6 x 17.2 cm)
Image Source: The Museum of Modern Art

Image can be viewed online at:
https://www.moma.org/collection/works/46921?artist_id=3716&locale=en&page=1&sov_referrer=artist

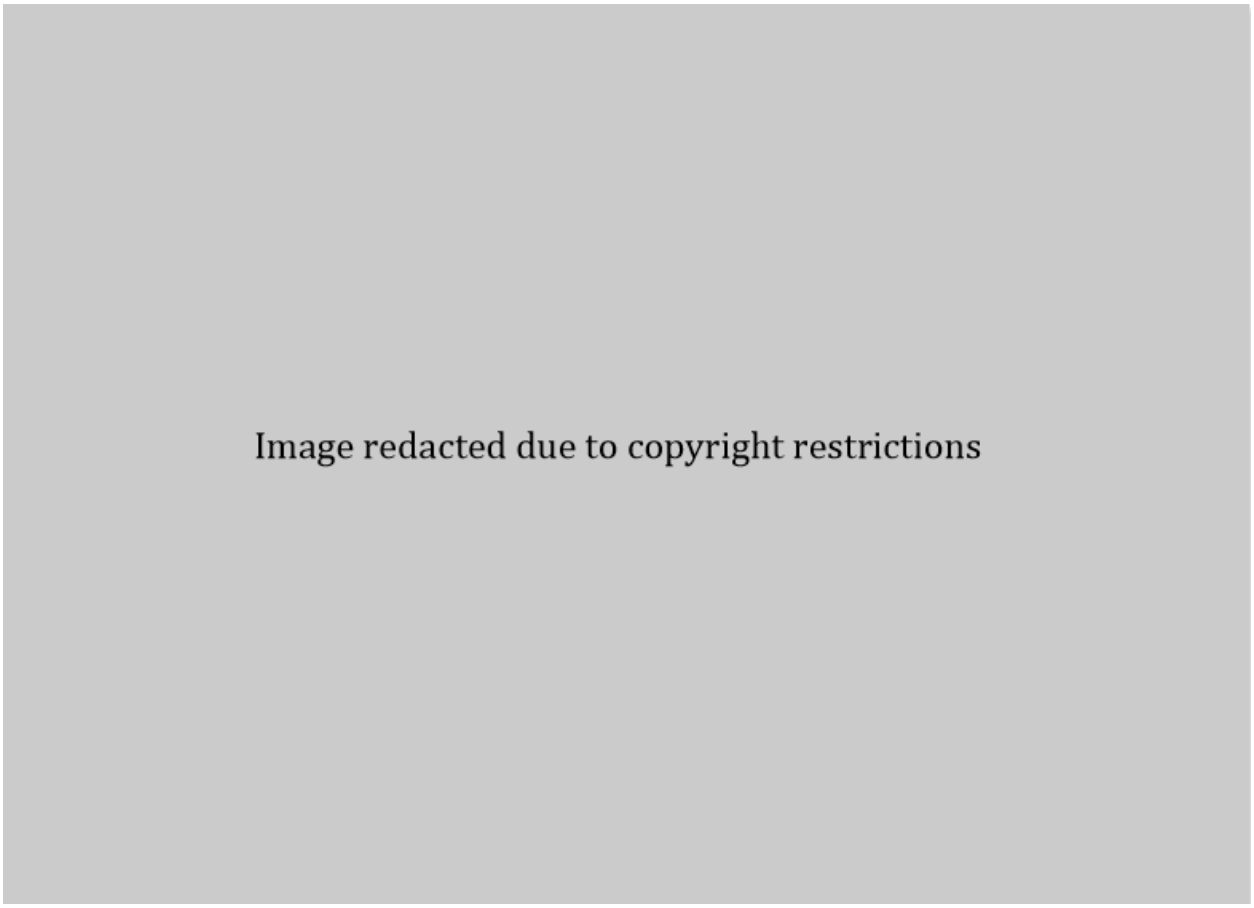

Figure 12a Man Ray, *Anatomies*, 1929-1930

Gelatin Silver Print

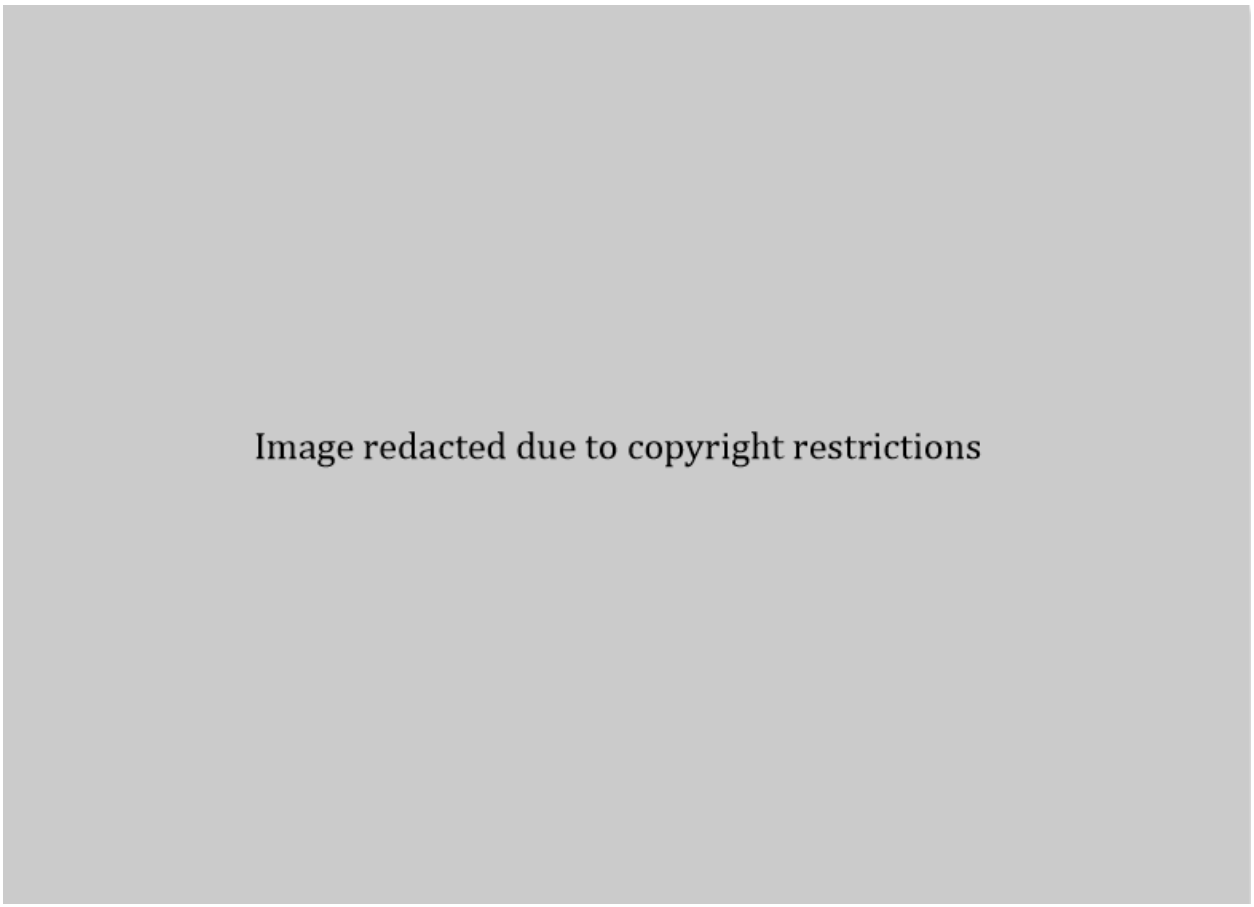

Figure 13 Man Ray, *Lee Miller's Neck*, c.1930

Gelatin Silver Print
Dimensions: 9 1/8 x 7 in. (23 x 17.8 cm)
Image Source: TATE Modern

Image can be viewed online at: http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/surrealism-desire-unbound/surrealism-desire-unbound-room-5-anatomies

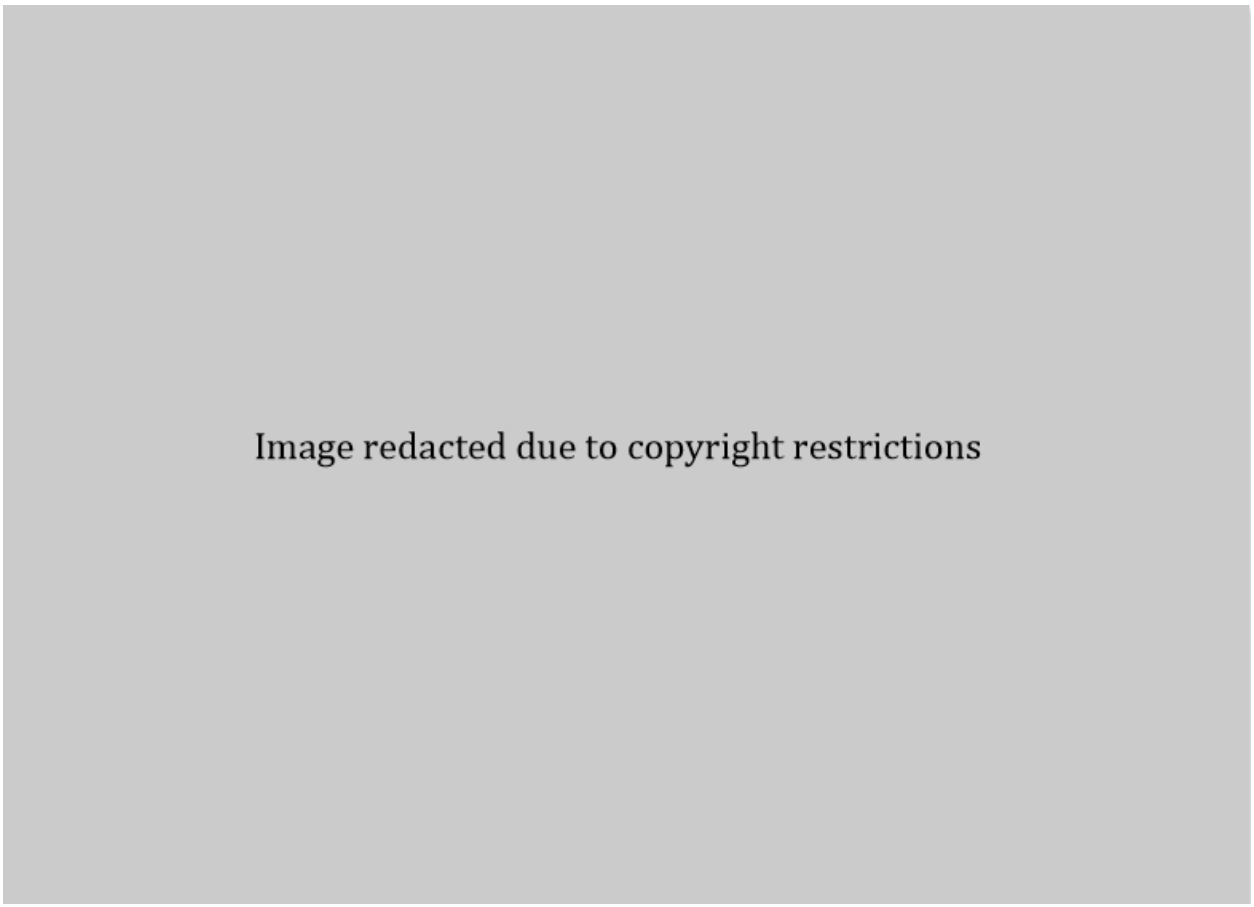

Figure 14 Edward Weston, *La Teresina*, 1933

Gelatin Silver Print
Dimensions: 4 5/8 x 3 5/8 in. (11.8 x 9.2 cm)
Image Source: ARTSTOR

Image can be viewed online at:
http://library.artstor.org.proxy.library.emory.edu/#/asset/AWSS35953_35953_38008011

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