

STIEGLITZ - PHOTOGRAPHY PIONEER



Stieglitz was a student in Germany when he bought his first camera, an 8 × 10 plate film camera that required a tripod. Despite its bulk, Stieglitz travelled throughout Europe, **taking photographs of landscapes and labourers** in Germany, Italy and the Netherlands.

Stieglitz **collected books on photography and photographers** in Europe and the US and wrote articles on the technical and aesthetic aspects of photography. Through his self-study, Stieglitz developed and refined his vision of **photography as an art form**.

In 1902, Stieglitz founded 'Photo-Secession', a **radical and controversial** movement that was influential in promoting photography as a fine art. For this group, photography was viewed **not just as a documenting tool**, but as a **new way of expression and creation**.

The ideas of Photo-Secession, and the establishment of photography as a fine art, were promoted through Stieglitz's Camera Work, a quarterly photographic journal published from 1903 to 1917. The first issue was printed in December 1902, and like all of the subsequent issues it contained beautiful **hand-pulled photogravures** (a process that uses gelatin to transfer the image from a black and white negative to a copper printing plate), critical writings on photography, and commentaries on photographers and exhibitions.

In 1905 Stieglitz opened the "little galleries of the Photo-Secession" in New York at 291 Fifth Avenue, which later became known as gallery '291'. The effect of the First World War and the changes in the New York arts scene meant that in 1917 Stieglitz could no longer afford to publish Camera Work or to run the gallery.

Between 1925 and 1934, Stieglitz took **a series of photographs of clouds**. The '**Equivalent**s', as he came to call them, are some of the first **intentionally abstract** photographic works of art and have been hailed as his most important contribution to photography.

These images had a huge impact at the time, especially **considering photography had only been recognised as a distinct art form for about fifteen years**, and that within this short time **no tradition of abstraction had existed**.