



# New Deal Photography

## The Works of Dorothea Lange and Walker Evans

Judith Keller

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*Judith Keller*

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# Introduction

## *A Tale of Two Photographers*



*Dorothea Lange, Resettlement Administration  
photographer, in California, 1936.*

Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division

Dorothea Lange had an extraordinary life and career as a prolific photographer. She worked for Arnold Genthe in his portrait studio in New York and studied photography with Clarence White at Columbia University. In 1918 she began to travel around the world to make her living as a photographer. She found herself stranded in San Francisco, so she opened a photographic studio there. Paul Taylor, who would become her second husband, hired her to document migratory workers in California.

In 1935 she began to work for the Resettlement Administration (later the Farm Security Administration). During this period, she made her most famous image. *Human Erosion in California*

# American Photographs

## Evans in Middletown

Judith Keller

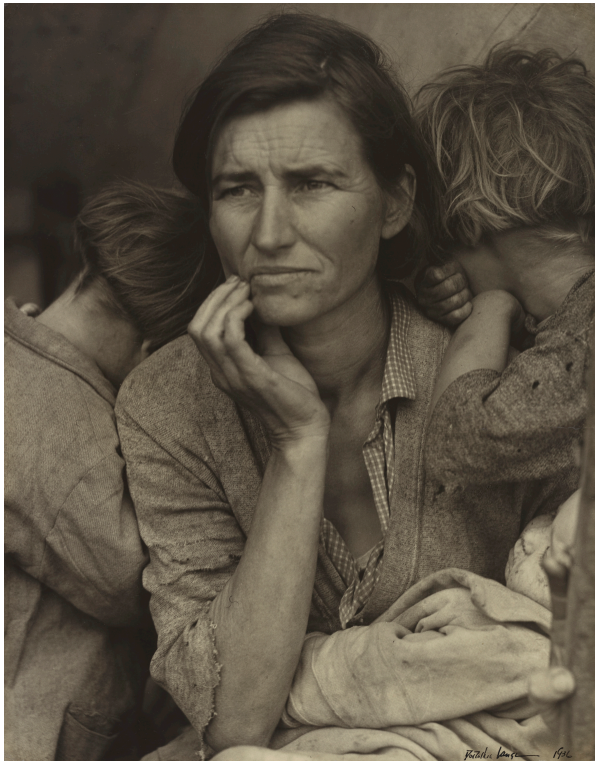
The Museum of Modern Art was very interested indeed in Walker Evans's work, and things happened quickly for him there. The files of the registrar at the museum reveal that a little more than two weeks after the above communication between Evans and Stryker, Thomas Mabry, then Executive Director, wrote to Lincoln Kirstein, reminding him that he had agreed to prepare an essay on Evans's work. Mabry also offered rather specific suggestions as to the content of that promised piece:

*You know much more about Walker's work than I do. However I should think that you might want to define as simply and clearly as possible the difference between Walker's work and the majority of photographers both "documentary" and "lyric." Also I think that the article should not have an in memoriam flavor. The canonization of the commonplace that documentary photography has turned into (Margaret Bourke-White, "Life" photographers, and much of the Federal Art Project photography) is just as bad to me as any kind of Herald Tribune beautiful baby contest photography. Also, turning the commonplace into something precious, exquisite, etched and fabulous (Weston and Strand, to a degree) is equally bad. Incidentally, I think that some of Stieglitz's early work is very good.<sup>1</sup>*

Kirstein, then director of the American Ballet Company, is often credited with orchestrating the book and exhibition that have become known as *American Photographs*.<sup>2</sup> He would be a lifelong friend of Evans's; his efforts to promote the photographer's work in 1938 were a watershed.<sup>3</sup> In an article on the exhibition 1938 that Mabry himself prepared for the November 1938 issue of *Harper's Bazaar*, he boldly predicted the power of this venue:

*During the month of October, the Museum of Modern*

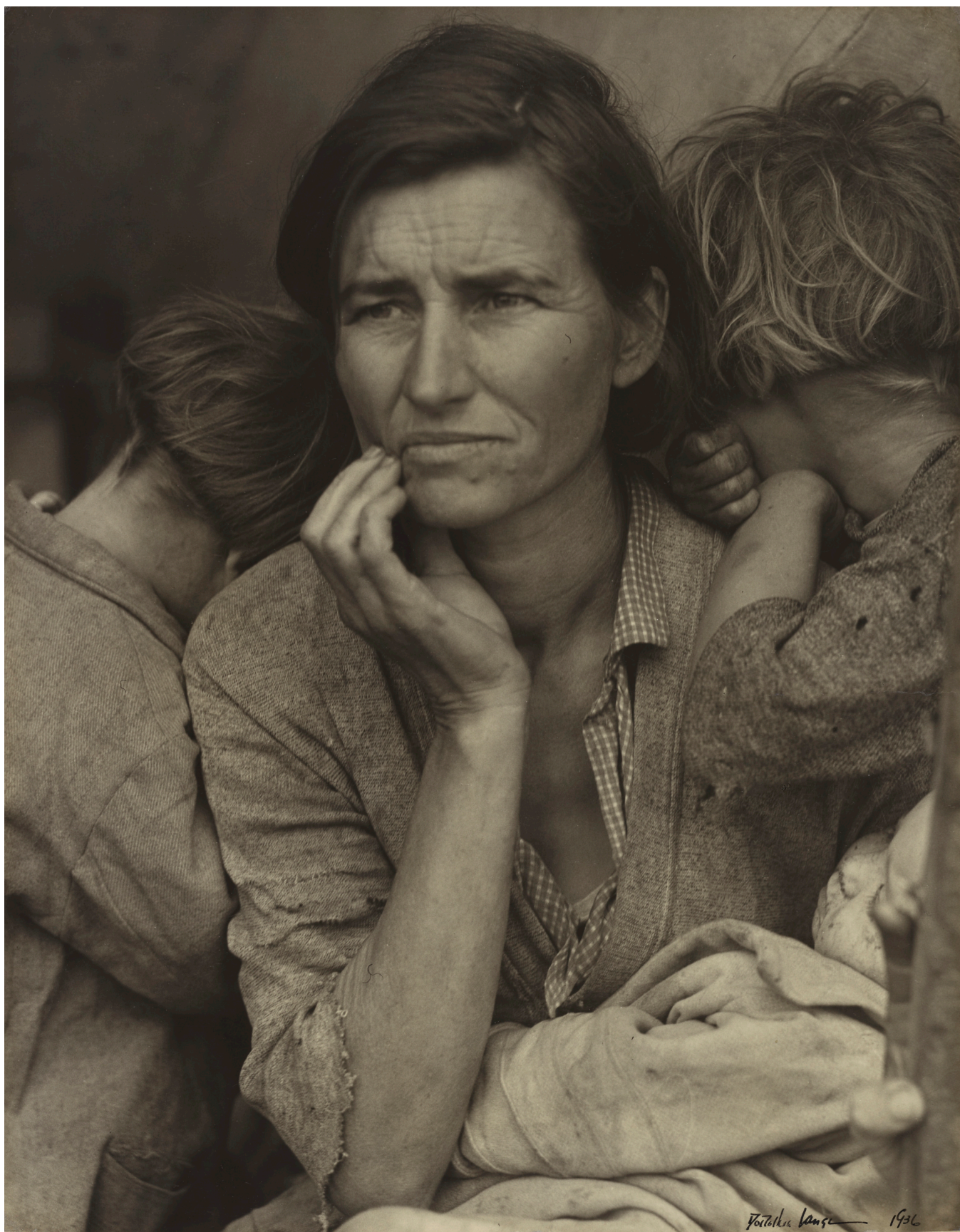
# Catalogue



Human Erosion in California / Migrant  
Mother







Verelken Lange 1936





## *Pea Pickers, Nipomo, California*

Artist	Dorothea Lange
Year	1936
Dimensions	29.5 cm × 24.4 cm (7 <sup>11</sup> / <sub>16</sub> in × 9 <sup>5</sup> / <sub>8</sub> in.)
Medium	Gelatin silver print, with applied pigment



*Bud Fields with His Wife Ivy, and His  
Daughter Ellen, Hale County, Alabama*

Artist

Walker Evans

Year

1936

Dimensions

19.4 x 24.4 (7 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 9 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.)





## *Burrough's Family, Hale County, Alabama*

Artist

Walker Evans

Year

1935

Dimensions

19.2 x 24.1 (7 <sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 9 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in.)

# Contributors



## **Judith Keller**

[http://news.getty.edu/  
judith-keller-named-  
senior-curator-  
photographs-at-j-paul-  
getty-museum.htm](http://news.getty.edu/judith-keller-named-senior-curator-photographs-at-j-paul-getty-museum.htm)

Judith Keller joined the J. Paul Getty Museum in 1986 and since 2008 was an Associate Curator of Photographs. In 2010, she was named the Senior Curator of Photographs. Keller received her B.A. in Art History and a Masters in Museum Practice and Art History from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. She also completed course work for a Phd. in Art History at the University of Michigan. Prior to her tenure at the Getty, Keller worked at The University of Michigan Museum of Art (1979 – 1981) and at the Archer M. Huntington Art Gallery (now the Blanton Museum of Art) at The University of Texas, Austin, as Curator of Prints and Drawings.

# About

This is a starter theme for Quire, a digital publishing framework built on top of the Hugo static site generator. Quire can be used to generate Web, PDF, and print books (with Epub coming soon) from a single set of text files.