

Painting and Photography (1927)

In April 1927 *i 10* published "Painting and Photography" by Ernst Kállai, editor of the Bauhaus journal. Comments on the article by several artists appeared in the June issue of *i 10* under the title "Diskussion uber Ernst Kállai's Artikel 'Malerei und Fotografie.'" Among them were these few lines by Mondrian.

The question of representation in photography was keenly debated at this time, particularly in Germany where Albert Renger-Patzsch championed the precisionist "New Objectivity." At the Bauhaus, László Moholy-Nagy (who was photography editor for *i 10*) introduced photomontage, cropping, and cameraless photography or "photograms." Moholy-Nagy's influential *Malerei, Fotografie, Film* (Painting, photography, film) was published as Bauhaus Book no. 8 (1925).

Although I largely agree with Mr. Ernst Kállai's interesting remarks on "painting and photography," I think one must not overlook the fact that the "artist," not the "means," creates the work of art.

Certainly the means is highly important and closely tied to the plastic expression of a work, but it is the artist who essentially decides whether it is *purely plastic* and not imitative.

Photography, however, seems to me rather more imitative than plastic in character. Photography in the usual sense is the

appropriate means for *reproduction* of objectivity, and all art is *creation*. But it is difficult at present to predetermine the evolution of photography—indeed such great accomplishments have been realized in the realm of pure plastic that everything may also be expected of photography. It is quite possible that the technique of photography will change, just as the technique of painting has changed; and Mr. Ernst Kállai's comparisons and observations may help bring this about.