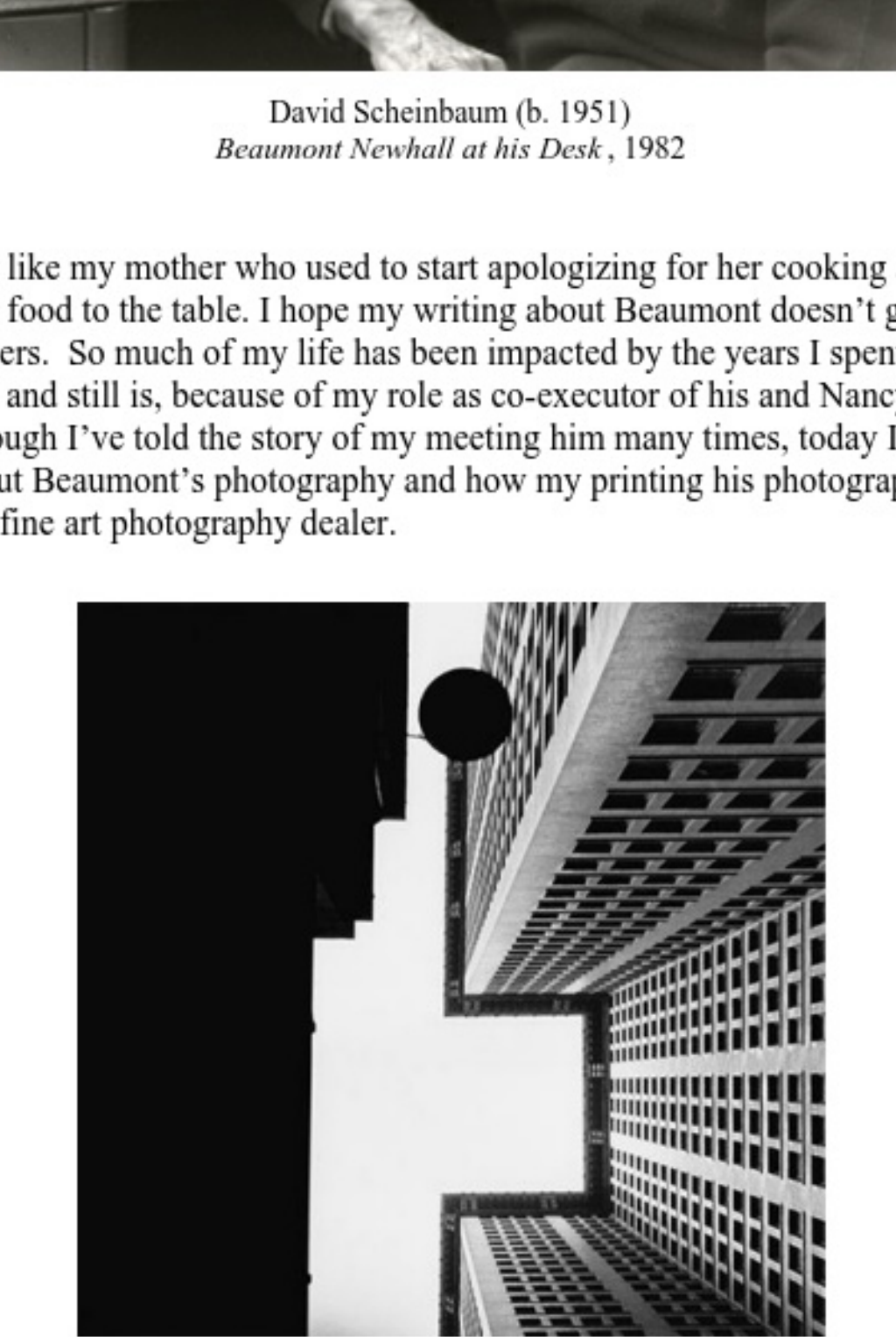


**Beaumont Newhall  
Personal Memories**

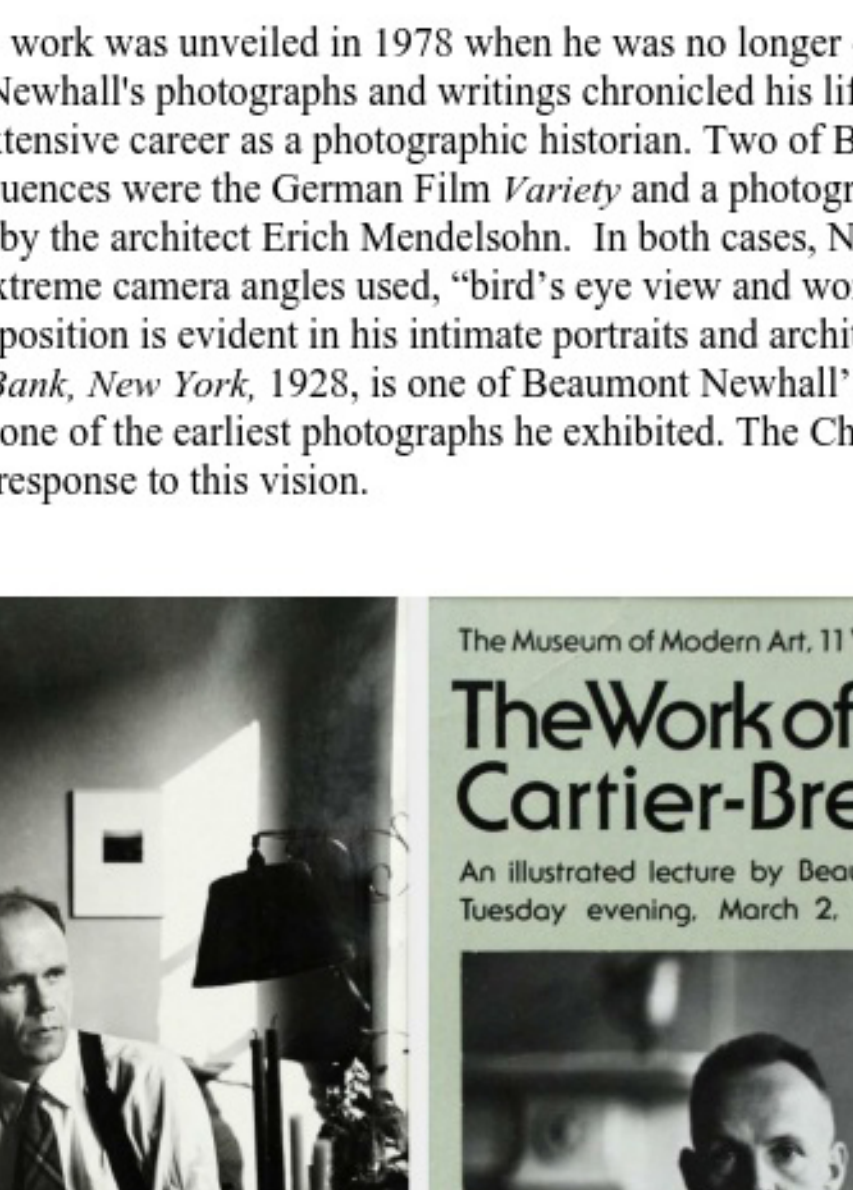
*"Over the years photography has been to me what a journal is to a writer - a record of things seen and experienced, moments in the flow of time, documents of significance to me, experiments in seeing. It has been important to me, as an historian of photography, to understand photography by photographing".*

Beaumont Newhall, *In Plain Sight*



David Scheinbaum (b. 1951)  
Beaumont Newhall at his Desk, 1982

I feel a little like my mother who used to start apologizing for her cooking as she was bringing the food to the table. I hope my writing about Beaumont doesn't get tiresome for you readers. So much of my life has been impacted by the years I spent with him, 1978-1993, and still is, because of my role as co-executor of his and Nancy Newhall's estate. Although I've told the story of my meeting him many times, today I would like to write about Beaumont's photography and how my printing his photographs led to becoming a fine art photography dealer.



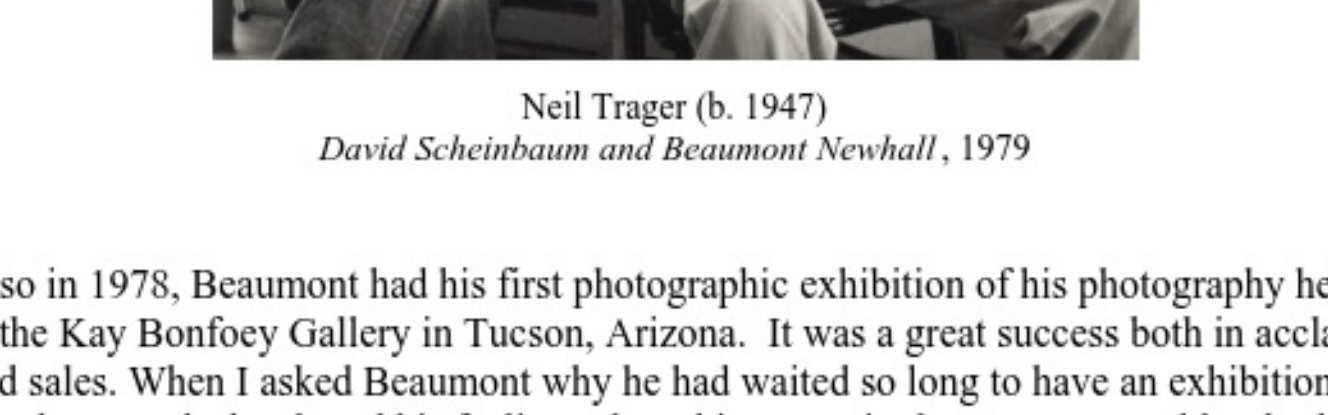
Beaumont Newhall (1908 - 1993)  
Chase National Bank, New York, 1928

One of Beaumont Newhall's earliest recollections was putting his hands in the hypo bath of his mother's darkroom trays to see how this strange smelling chemical tasted. Thus began a life in photography, as a curator, historian, and practitioner.

Newhall came to the Museum of Modern Art in New York City as the librarian in the early 1930s. In 1937, the director, Alfred Barr Jr., invited him to mount an exhibition: the first comprehensive retrospective of the 100-year-old art of photography. The illustrated exhibition catalog formed the basis of Newhall's *The History of Photography*, which was the first volume to chronicle the medium's development as an art form, not merely as a technical medium. The book is in its fifth printing and has been translated into five languages. The Museum of Modern Art established a permanent position for Newhall as the first curator of photography. Newhall held that post until he returned from World War II.

In 1948, Newhall was named curator at George Eastman House in Rochester, New York, and served as its director from 1958 to 1971. Under Newhall's leadership, the museum established and built one of the greatest photographic collections in the world.

His photographic work was unveiled in 1978 when he was no longer connected to the museum world. Newhall's photographs and writings chronicled his life and work throughout his extensive career as a photographic historian. Two of Beaumont's early photographic influences were the German Film *Variety* and a photographic book entitled *Amerika* by the architect Erich Mendelsohn. In both cases, Newhall was inspired by the extreme camera angles used, "bird's eye view and worm's eye view". His sense of composition is evident in his intimate portraits and architectural studies. *Chase National Bank, New York, 1928*, is one of Beaumont Newhall's most celebrated photographs and one of the earliest photographs he exhibited. The Chase Bank image is a direct visual response to this vision.



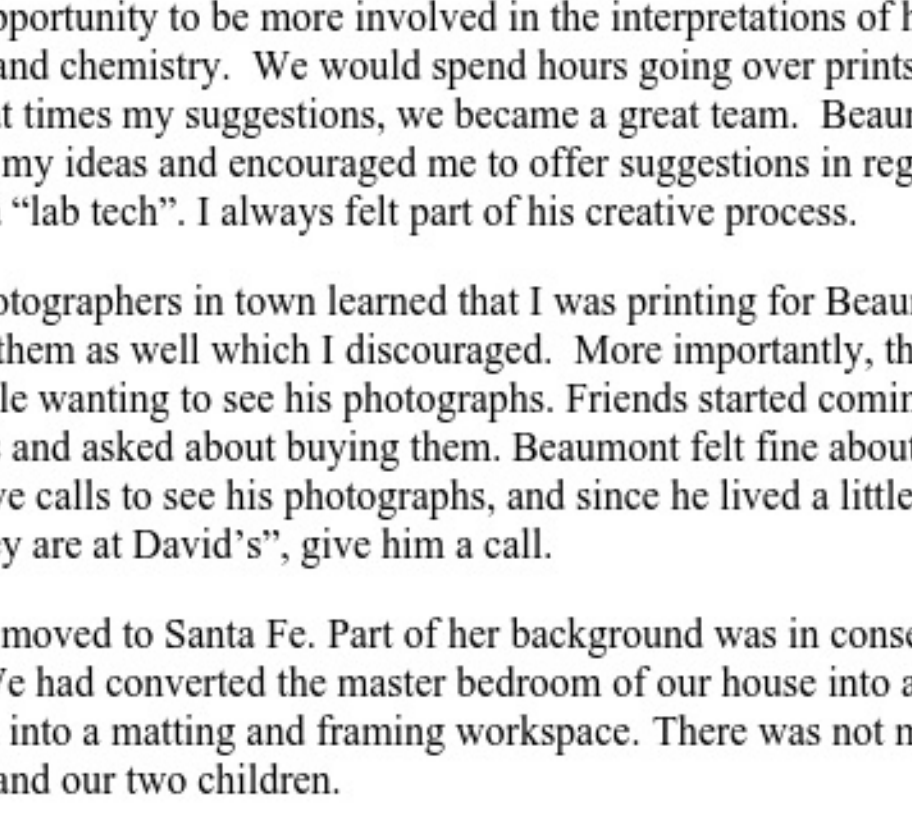
Henri Cartier-Bresson (1908 - 2004) and Beaumont Newhall (1908 - 1993)  
Beaumont Newhall at his desk, and an original broadside for a Cartier-Bresson lecture by Beaumont Newhall, Beaumont Newhall, with an original photograph of Cartier-Bresson by Beaumont Newhall, 1976

This piece hung in a glass case outside the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

I was enrolled in a Ph.D. program at the time we met in 1978. I began assisting him at his home/studio. Beaumont wanted my work with him to overlap with my academic program so he thought it appropriate that my first project those months was to help him reorganize his library. His few thousand books were shelved alphabetically with oversized volumes on the lower shelves. Beaumont felt that his alphabetical system worked well for a "research" library for him and his students who were invited to his home every Friday to use his library and have access to his extensive files, which are now housed at the [Getty](http://Getty).

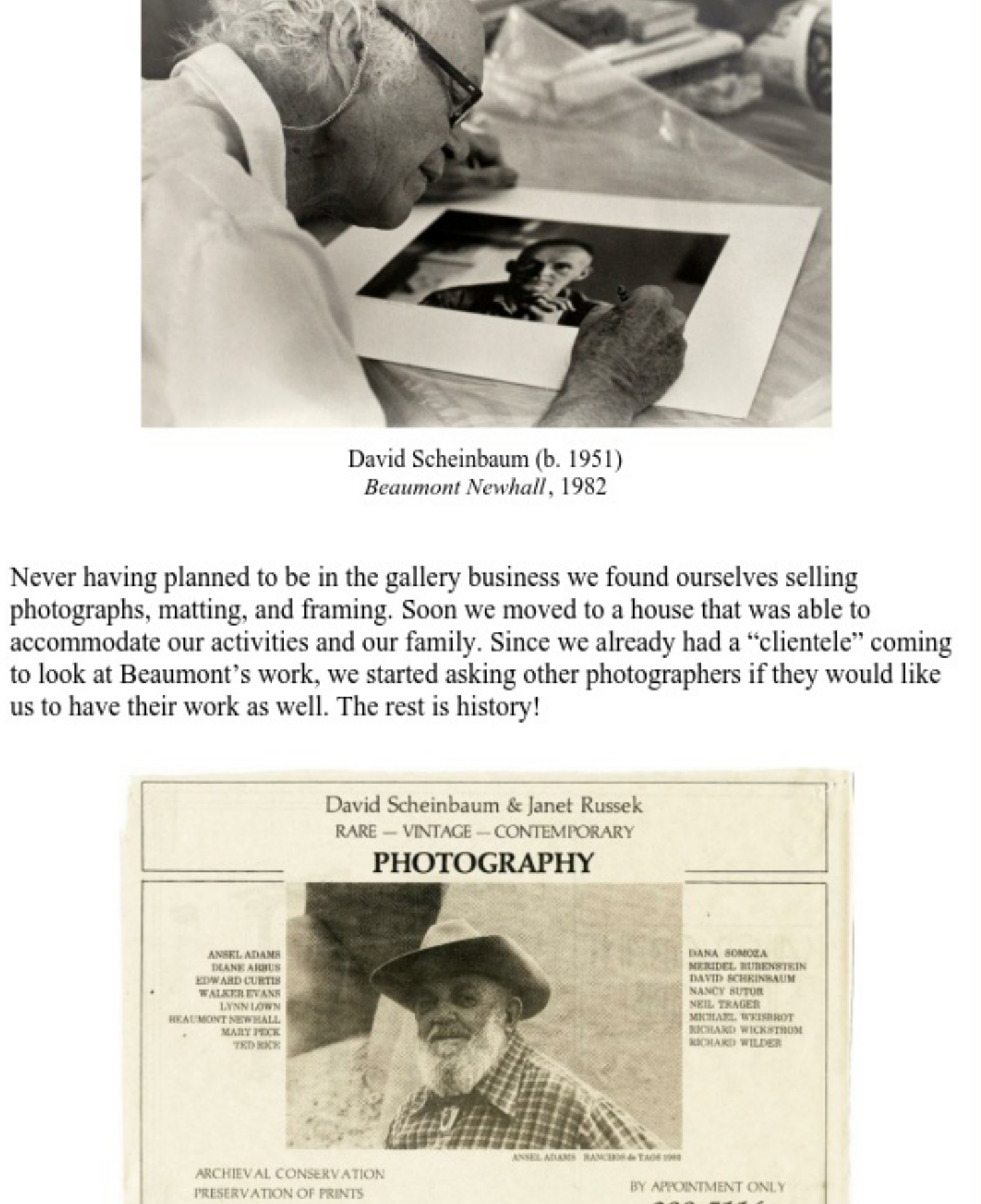
But, by 1978, Beaumont was feeling that for his writing projects the library would serve him better if organized in subcategories i.e.: History, Technical, Monographs, etc. For the first few months, we created a "colored coding dot" system, using the dots that galleries use for "sold" items. Color-coding the volumes gave me an intimate relationship with his books and familiarized me with subjects, topics, and artists I was not familiar with. After the coding was finished, we started moving books. It was a huge job and taught me so much. Within his shelving, which he built, there were several empty shelves. When asked about the empty space Beaumont explained that he calculated approximately how many linear feet of new books he received a year from former students and publishers, and those shelves were to accommodate books "not yet here". That wasn't working out, as there were books everywhere in his studio. More space was needed.

While this project was going on I was becoming familiar with Beaumont on a more personal level. I was learning the history of photography and photographers on a first name basis. Beaumont would talk about "Edward" and "Ansel", talk about "Henri or 'Stieglitz'". You can imagine what an opportunity this was for me.



Neil Trager (b. 1947)  
David Scheinbaum and Beaumont Newhall, 1979

Also in 1978, Beaumont had his first photographic exhibition of his photography held at the Kay Bonfoey Gallery in Tucson, Arizona. It was a great success both in acclaim and sales. When I asked Beaumont why he had waited so long to have an exhibition of his photographs he shared his feelings about his career in the museum world as both curator and museum director. He felt strongly that museum professionals should never promote themselves as artists or actively become collectors. He felt both these endeavors breached an ethical line. He understood his positions and the power that was inherent with them. When he was gifted a photograph, he knew that it was because of his association with his institution, and always placed those works within the museum collection if they merited it. Exceptions were works from his close friends that were meant for him. He felt the same way about exhibiting, that it would be taking advantage of his position. That said, by 1978 he was retired from the museum world and had the time to begin reviewing his life work with the camera. To his surprise, there was much interest in his photographs and the demand for his work was starting to grow.

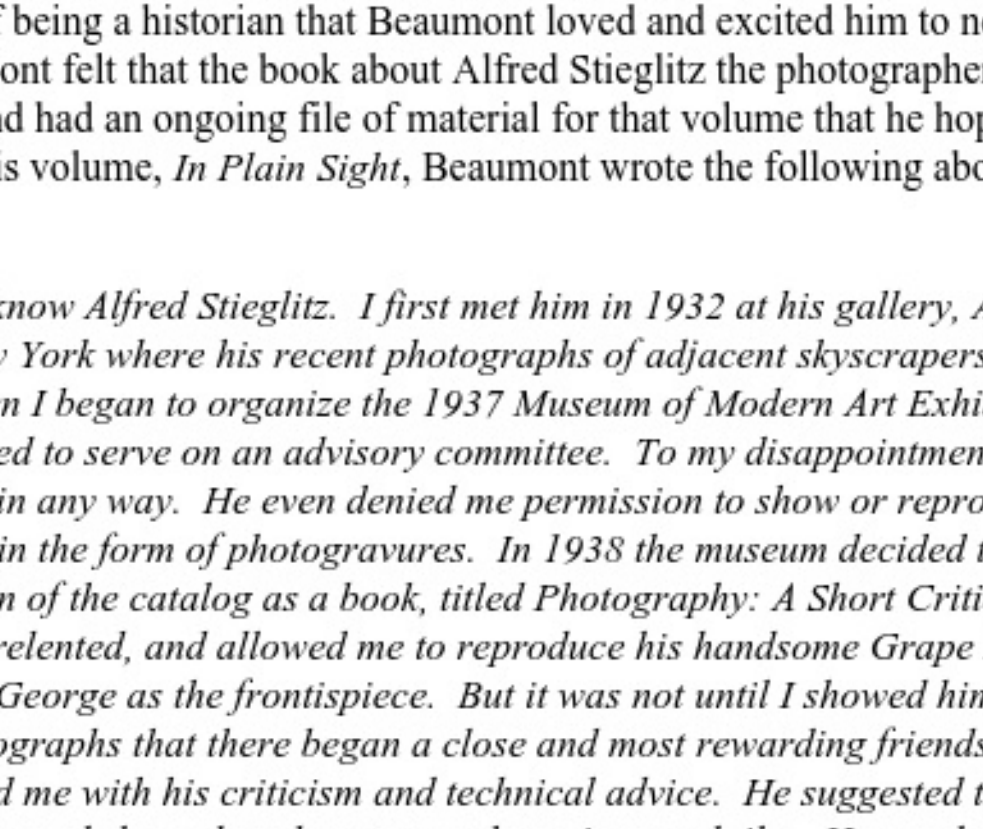


Beaumont Newhall (1908 - 1993)  
In Plain Sight poster with inscription to David Scheinbaum

During the years between 1978 and 1980, I was going back and forth to New York to visit Janet as often as my budget permitted. My primary income was my unemployment checks that I was still receiving from New York every two weeks and some part-time arts curriculum work I was doing for a newly formed primary school, The Rio Grande School. Money was tight. Since I was going to New York fairly often, Beaumont asked me if I would bring his negatives to his printer in New York at Modernage Photo Lab. He was reluctant to mail them and this worked out well for him and it was no problem for me. He didn't often ask me to pick up works from the lab but one time I did pick up a few prints to bring back to Santa Fe and was also given his invoice. I remember being shocked at the cost of making his 11 x 14 prints. I did not want to suggest that they were overpriced, but rather my ignorance, as I had no idea what it cost to have a print made by a lab. When I returned to Santa Fe and brought Beaumont his prints I nervously asked him if I could do his printing. This would solve a practical problem for him and a financial one for me. He looked at me and said: "if you can do as good a job as Modernage, sure". Becoming Beaumont's printer also gave him the opportunity to be more involved in the interpretations of his negatives, paper choice, and chemistry. We would spend hours going over prints and with his guidance, and at times my suggestions, we became great students. Beaumont was always open to my ideas and encouraged me to offer suggestions in regard to printing. I never felt like a "lab tech". I always felt part of his creative process.

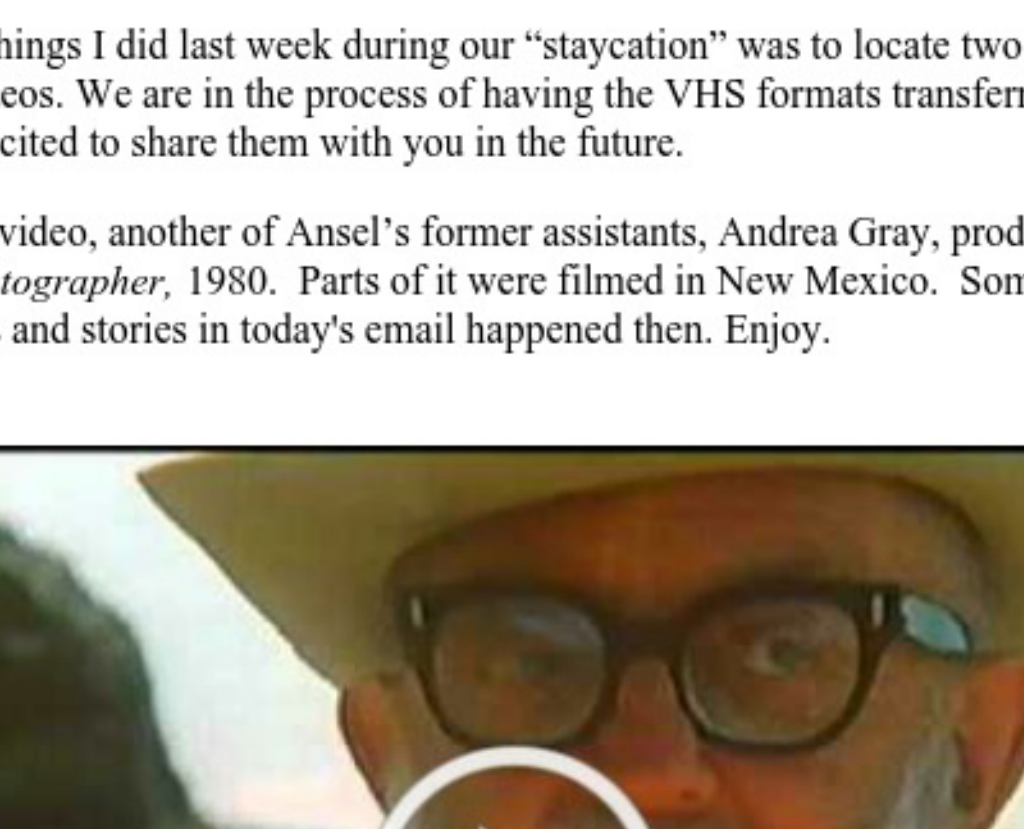
When other photographers in town learned that I was printing for Beaumont they asked me to print for them as well which I discouraged. More importantly, there was much interest in his prints and wanting to see his photographs. Friends started coming to my house to see his prints and asked about buying them. Beaumont felt fine about that and when he would receive calls to see his photographs, and since he lived a little out of town, he would say, "they are at David's", give him a call.

By 1980, Janet moved to Santa Fe. Part of her background was in conservation and preservation. We had converted the master bedroom of our house into a darkroom, and the living room into a matting and framing workspace. There was not much space left for Janet and I and our two children.



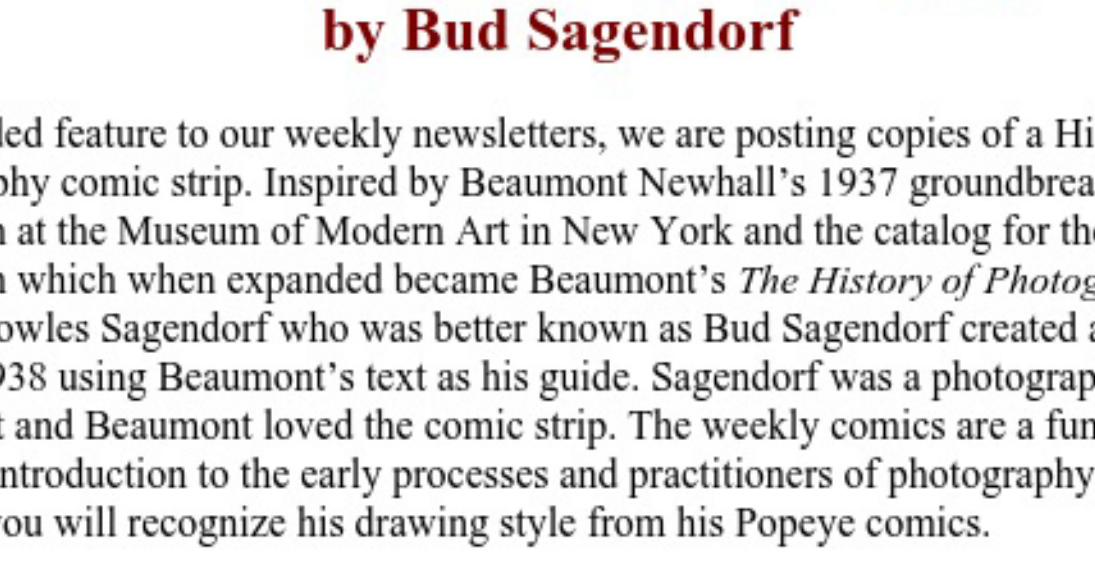
Beaumont Newhall (1908 - 1993)  
Ansel Adams, Rancho de Taos, New Mexico, 1980

Ansel was visiting New Mexico for the filming of a documentary on his life and work. A portion was filmed at Georgia O'Keefe's home and, for the part with Beaumont, at the San Francisco de Asis Church at Rancho de Taos. Beaumont and Ansel had some time together the previous day and this was great for me to meet Ansel then for the first time and to be a fly on the wall for these two friends to reconnect. The plan was to meet the next day in Taos. After Ansel left Beaumont remembered that we were going to ask Ansel to sign two prints we had just found in his files. When he received them from Beaumont and why they were unsigned was a mystery to Beaumont, but they were beautiful prints and we thought worthy of his signature. So imagine this - during a break in filming, Ansel, Mary Alinder, his assistant, Beaumont and I went to a local restaurant for a bite to eat. Sitting in a booth at *Michael's Kitchen* Beaumont says to me, "Oh, David, go get those prints from the car". I returned with the prints and Beaumont slid two prints of "*Moonrise*" across the table and Ansel says, "these are beautiful, I should sign them for you Beau". With my shaking hands, I place them both back into a box and return them to the car. I'm sure many historic meetings took place at *Michael's Kitchen* restaurant, but this has to be one of the most unusual.



David Scheinbaum (b. 1951)  
Beaumont Newhall, 1982

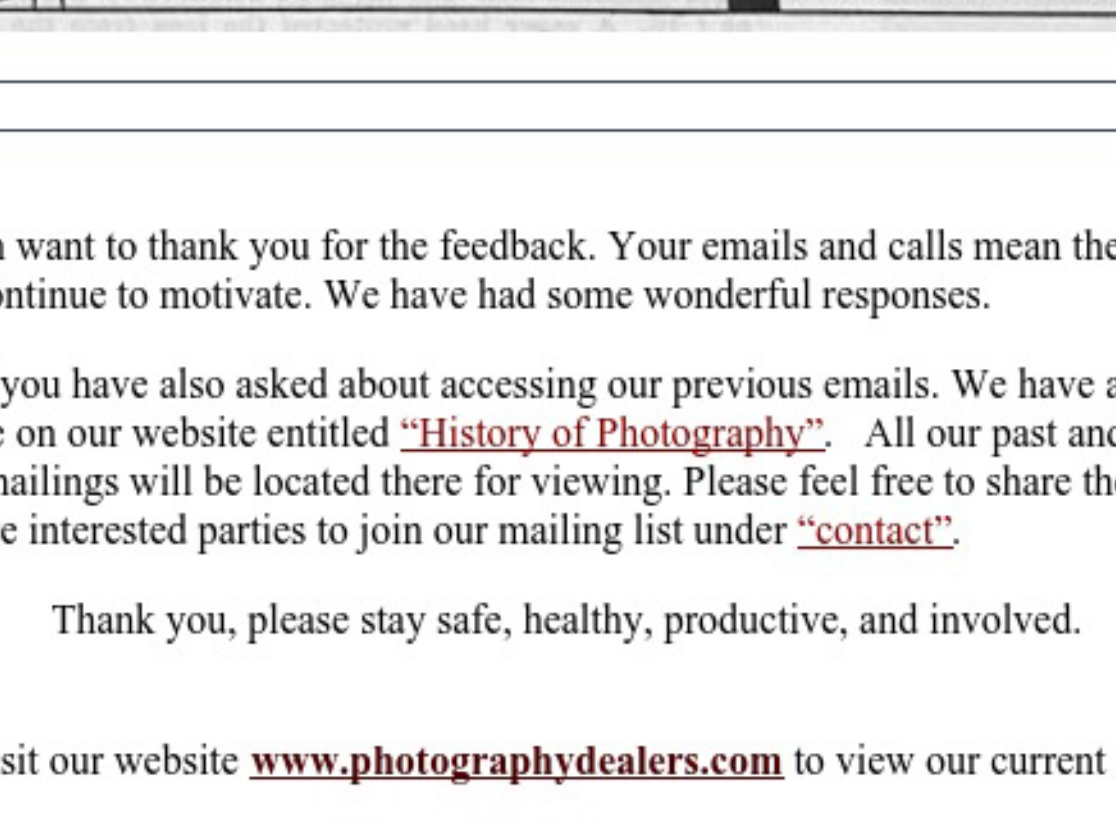
Never having planned to be in the gallery business we found ourselves able to accommodate our activities and our family. Since we already had a "clientele" coming to look at Beaumont's work, we started asking other photographers if they would like us to have their work as well. The rest is history!



Scheinbaum & Russek's opening announcement from the Santa Fe Reporter, 1980

I continued to work and assist Beaumont in many ways for the next 15 years, including traveling with him for many of those trips. It might be that many of you reading this today are people we met during those years.

When Janet and I started Scheinbaum & Russek, we promised each other that we would never stop doing our own photography. Taking a lead from Beaumont's teachings, we always have tried to keep our own work separate from our gallery business. I'm proud that we both have been able to keep that promise and we are moving to a time in our lives where, like Beaumont felt in 1978, we can start spending more time on our personal photographic endeavors.



Beaumont Newhall (1908 - 1993)  
Self Portrait at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1970

*The photographers whom I count as decisive influences on my vision are Stieglitz, Ansel and Edward, Cartier Bresson and Maholy Nagy. Ansel, the person with whom I have the greatest friendship, had the least influence. I could never keep in step with his insistence on technical perfection; for me it got in the way. In terms of my own photography, I was most influenced by Cartier Bresson: his philosophy, his concept of photography, as well as his way of watching his camera an integral part of his vision. He did not stand aside and watch events happen, but he was really in there, moving with them, making his camera an extension of his own body. When we met in 1946 he pointed out the flaws of using my Rolleflex and teased me about viewing the world from waist level. Inspired by his photographs, I became a great fan of the miniature camera.*

*Focus: A Life in Photography - The Memoirs of Beaumont Newhall*

Although this missive is focused on Beaumont's photography I can't resist sharing something about the History of Photography, and one of his many contributions to the subject. This story begins with a legendary challenge from the time that both Beaumont and Van Deren Coke were teaching at the University of New Mexico. Van Beaumont challenged Beaumont to give a 1-hour lecture using only one slide. Beaumont accepted the challenge and selected Alfred Stieglitz's *The Steerage* as the slide. Beaumont had a long time interest in this photograph and had been researching it for many years. One day I arrived at his house and he had a ship model on his desk and he was slowly moving a reflector floodlight in a circular motion around the ship. He had a compass and protractor measuring the shadows and was in deep concentration. Although *The Steerage* has been considered a masterpiece both for its "perfect" compositional elements and its powerful subject matter, it has also been understood as an image depicting immigration. Beaumont had studied Stieglitz's journals and questioned when and where he took this photograph. He shared his thoughts during his 1-hour lecture and later published it as an ArtNews article. This kind of "detective" work was one of the aspects of being a historian that Beaumont loved and excited him to no end... As an aside, Beaumont felt that the book about Alfred Stieglitz the photographer hadn't been written yet and had an ongoing file of material for that volume that he hoped to write one day. In his volume, *In Plain Sight*, Beaumont wrote the following about Alfred Stieglitz:

*...I came to know Alfred Stieglitz. I first met him in 1932 at his gallery, An American Place, in New York where his recent photographs of adjacent skyscrapers were on display. When I began to organize the 1937 Museum of Modern Art Exhibition he was the first I asked to serve on an advisory committee. To my disappointment he refused to cooperate in any way. He even denied me permission to show or reproduce his work, except in the form of photogravures. In 1938 the museum decided to publish a second edition of the catalog as a book, titled Photography: A Short Critical History. He relented, and allowed me to reproduce his handsome Grape Leaves and My Own, Lake George as the frontpiece. But it was not until I showed him a group of my own photographs that there began a close and most rewarding friendship between us. He helped me with his criticism and technical advice. He suggested that I acquire a view camera and showed me how to use the swings and tilts. He taught me how to wax my prints and drymount them. He gave me chemicals he was no longer using. But what I learned mostly from him was ineffable. He passed on to me some of the intuitive recognition of that spirit he called "the idea photography."*



Click on the image or [here](#) to read the article

One of the things I did last week during our "staying in the city" was to locate two boxes of my teaching videos. We are in the process of having the VHS formats transferred to digital files. I'm excited to share them with you in the future.

For today's video, another of Ansel's former assistants, Andrea Gray, produced *Ansel Adams: Photographer*, 1980. Parts of it were filmed in New Mexico. Some of the photographs and stories in today's email happened then. Enjoy.



**The Illustrated History of Photograph  
by Bud Sagendorf**

As an added feature to our weekly newsletters, we are posting copies of a History of Photography comic strip. Inspired by Beaumont Newhall's 1937 groundbreaking exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the catalog for the exhibition which when expanded became Beaumont's *The History of Photography*. Forrest Cowles Sagendorf who was better known as Bud Sagendorf created a weekly strip in 1938 using Beaumont's text as his guide. Sagendorf was a photography enthusiast and Beaumont loved the comic strip. The weekly comics are a fun and accurate introduction to the early processes and practitioners of photography. I'm sure some of you will recognize his drawing style from his Popeye comics.



We again want to thank you for the feedback. Your emails and calls mean the world to us and continue to motivate. We have had some wonderful responses.

Many of you have also asked about accessing our previous emails. We have added a new page on our website entitled "[History of Photography](http://History of Photography)". All our past and future weekly mailings will be located there for viewing. Please feel free to share them and encourage interested parties to join our mailing list under "[contact](http://contact)".

Thank you, please stay safe, healthy, productive, and involved.

Please visit our website [www.photographydealers.com](http://www.photographydealers.com) to view our current inventory.