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**Photojournalist’s work re-emerges in deCordova’s exhibition**

*Lucien Aigner: Photo/Story*

Lincoln, MA, October 18, 2010 – DeCordova Sculpture Park and Museum announces the first major museum showing of Lucien Aigner’s photography since the 1980s. Born in Hungary, Lucien Aigner was a pioneering photojournalist in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s who immigrated to New York City in 1939 and later settled in Great Barrington, MA. Aigner worked as both a reporter and a photojournalist—a rarity at the time—for more than 60 years and amassed a collection of approximately 100,000 negatives, thousands of vintage and modern prints, hundreds of articles and unpublished writings, and photographic equipment, which now constitute the Lucien Aigner Estate. Culled from this Boston-area archive, the 74 prints in this exhibition represent the first curatorial examination of this massive collection with a concentration on Aigner’s photo stories made in Europe, and will include many vintage prints which have never been seen before. By exhibiting Aigner’s photographs alongside his written commentary, this show will demonstrate the significance of Aigner’s work in the context of art and photojournalism history and present much of it as he originally intended, with both text and image. *Photo/Story* reaffirms deCordova’s commitment to photography and to the art and artists of New England.

Lucien Aigner documented public figures, major political events, and everyday work and leisure in Europe and the United States during the first half of the 20th century. This exhibition focuses on photo stories made in the 1930s on assignment and on speculation, and includes reports on French foreign diplomacy, Parisian life in the years leading up to World War II, and the newly constructed Rikers Island prison, among others. Also on view are some of Aigner’s most compelling singular images, portraits of historical and cultural figures such as Fiorello LaGuardia, Benito Mussolini, and Marlene Dietrich. Aigner was able to capture striking candid pictures of people and situations by using the pocket-sized 35mm Leica camera that revolutionized journalistic photography. He was one of the first to use it, when most news photographers at the time used slow, cumbersome glass plate-film cameras. Because of the Leica’s portability, fast lenses, and roll film format, Aigner was able to record successive exposures of fleeting activity and unobtrusively take photographs by smuggling his camera into places that prohibited journalists or had less than ideal lighting for photography.

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Because of the groundbreaking photographs made by him and his European contemporaries, such as Erich Salomon, Alfred Eisenstaedt, Henri Cartier-Bresson, and Robert Capa, in the 1920s and 1930s, these kinds of images are the norm in photojournalism today. Yet, Aigner’s deserved place in the history of photography remains to be widely recognized.

This exhibition is organized by guest curator Jennifer Uhrhane, an independent art consultant and curator.

**About the Artist**

Lucien Aigner was born in 1901 in Érsekújvár, Hungary (present day Nové Zámky, Slovak Republic). Although he studied law, in 1924 he became a reporter for the Hungarian newspaper *Az Est*. A year later he began supplying his own photographs to accompany his reports. In 1926 Aigner moved to Paris on an invitation to manage American photographer James Abbe’s assignments in France and continued to work for *Az Est* as its Paris correspondent. Around 1927, Aigner formed his press agency, ARAL, with fellow Hungarian journalist, Louis Aczél. They produced a multitude of stories for major European and American photo-illustrated periodicals during the 1930s. Aigner also freelanced for *Life*, *VU*, *Münchner Illustrierte Presse*, and the *Picture Post* (London), among other prestigious publications. In the rush to evacuate his family from Paris to the United States before the Nazi invasion, Aigner left behind a suitcase containing 50,000 negatives that comprised his European career. Through the 1940s Aigner continued his photographic practice in the United States, supplying illustrated articles for distinguished papers and magazines such as *The New York Times*, *Newsweek*, and the *Christian Science Monitor*. In the 1950s he moved to Great Barrington, MA, where he opened a portrait studio. It wasn’t until the 1970s that Aigner rediscovered his lost European negatives, stored away in a forgotten old suitcase in his darkroom. Lucien’s brother Etienne had returned it to him after the war, when Etienne and his family entered the US in 1950. It survived occupation by being passed through a number of hands. Realizing the significance of this body of work, Aigner spent the rest of his years—almost until he passed away in 1999—printing, archiving, and securing a small portion of it in several museum collections with the purpose of preserving his unique documentation of history.

**Educational Programming**

Curator Talk: Jennifer Uhrhane
Saturday, February 26, 3 pm
Free with museum admission

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About deCordova
DeCordova Sculpture Park and Museum was established in 1950 to educate the public about American contemporary art. DeCordova’s unique campus features both indoor and outdoor venues, allowing its visitors to celebrate and explore contemporary art across 35 acres. Inside, the Museum features a robust slate of rotating exhibitions and innovative interpretive programming. Outside, deCordova’s Sculpture Park hosts more than 60 works, the majority of which are on loan to the Museum. DeCordova also offers the largest non-degree granting studio art program in New England. DeCordova Sculpture Park and Museum attracts more than 100,000 visitors from New England and tourists from around the world to its campus each year and enrolls more than 3,000 students of all ages in its studio art program.

General Information
DeCordova is open Tuesday through Sunday, from 10 am to 5 pm and on selected Monday holidays. General admission during Museum hours is $12 for adults; $8 for senior citizens, students, and youth ages 6–12. Children age 5 and under, Lincoln residents, and Active Duty Military Personnel and their dependents are admitted free. The Sculpture Park is open year-round during daylight hours. Guided public tours of the Museum’s main galleries take place every Thursday at 1 pm and Sunday at 2 pm. Tours of the Sculpture Park are given on Saturday and Sunday at 1 pm from April to November. All guided tours are free with Campus admission. Visit www.decordova.org or call 781.259.8355 for further information.

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