

Seventy photographers look at New York

Author

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Seventy Photographers Look at New York

November 26, 1957 through March, 1958

Photographers in the Exhibition

*Berenice Abbott, Alice Austen, Joseph Bellanca, Paul Berg, Mathew B. Brady, S. C. Burden, Butler, The Byron Company, Edwin Carswell, Daily Mirror from INP, Roy DeCarava, Detroit Photographic Company, Sam Falk, Andreas Feininger, Harold Feinstein, Robert Frank, U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, Charles D. Fredericks, Mildred Grossman, J. Gurney & Son, Ernst Haas, Geo. P. Hall & Son, Ken Heyman, Lewis W. Hine, William H. Jackson, Raymond Jacobs, Yale Joel, Art Kane, Ben Korngold, Lisa Larsen, Leon Levinstein, Helen Levitt, Rollie McKenna, Joseph Maira, Jay Maisel, Reginald Marsh, Gjon Mili, Wayne Miller, Lisette Model, Robert M. Mottar, Marcus Ormsbee, G. W. Pach, Homer Page, Rolf Petersen, Morton Press, Victor Prevost, Jacob A. Riis, Rintoul & Rockwood, Napoleon Sarony, Emil Schulthess, Timothy Sheehan, A. F. Sherman, Hal Siegel, Walt Silver, W. Eugene Smith, Edward Steichen, Alfred Stieglitz, Leonard Stern, Ann Treer, Underwood & Underwood, UP, David Vestal, Todd Webb, Weegee, Dan Weiner, Mottke Weissman, Brett Weston, Garry Winogrand, Adolph Witte-
mann, Fred Zinnemann, Arthur Rothstein, John Vachon.*

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Here we have a rounded sampling of the images some seventy photographers have made of, at, and to the city of New York. These prints are mainly the work of contemporary photographers, with flashbacks provided by earlier photographers telling what the fabulous City was like in times when men wore stovepipe hats any place, any time. We have the remarkably fine early stereographs; the literal and the fancied-up postcards ushering in the "wish you were here" era; we have the early factual news report; and we have both early and recent examples of the literal camera image subordinated to and used as a tool to represent, reflect, or convey the personal comment, reaction, or emotion of the photographer.

Here is featured the early documentary work of citizen Jacob Riis, an ardent crusader on behalf of the outcast and the underprivileged New Yorker. This dedicated news reporter, though an inexperienced amateur with the camera, succeeded in making photographs that marked the beginning of a new, more humane and human page in the history of New York, as well as a new and unique contribution to the art of photography.

Here are recent color photographs by Ernst Haas whose exploration, with the poetic imagination of an artist's feeling, concept, and vision, leads into the highways and byways of the City, disclosing new beauties and meanings in details and fragments ordinarily invisible to the harried, hurried, or heedless citizen.

Between these aspects of New York are images of love, admiration, wit, characterization, and satire, from faces close up to the splendor of the far-off view of the City brought near as by the telescope. Here is the brooding mood of the silent, Sunday City; the utter loneliness of the anonymous individual amid the City's millions; the tumult of celebration; the cheers and ticker tape the crowd pours over the moment's idol. Here are tolerance and intolerance, luxury and misery, gaiety and sorrow, the cockeyed and the purposeful, photographs that in themselves constitute a melting pot reflecting the human melting pot of this unique fabulous City.

Edward Steichen

Director of the Exhibition

I find in this visit to New York, and the daily contact and rapport with its myriad people, on the scale of the oceans and tides, the best, most effective medicine my soul has yet partaken — the grandest physical habitat and surroundings of land and water the globe affords.

Walt Whitman

Specimen Days & Collect; D. McKay, 1882-3

The city is like poetry: it compresses all life, all races and breeds into a small island and adds music and the accompaniment of internal engines.

E. B. White

Here Is New York, 1949, Harper & Brothers

Before the Civil War, New York shared its intellectual distinction with Boston, its industrial place with Philadelphia, and its commercial supremacy with Baltimore and New Orleans. Though it had become the mouth of the continent, thanks to the Erie Canal, it was not yet the maw. After the Civil War, despite the energetic rise of Chicago, New York City became an imperial metropolis, sucking into its own whirlpool the wealth and the wreckage of the rest of the country and of the lands beyond the sea.

Lewis Mumford

America and Alfred Stieglitz, 1934; Doubleday & Co., Inc.

Here is a volcanic crater of blind, confused, human forces pushing together and grinding upon each other, moved by greed in common exploitation, forcing anxiety upon all life. No noble expression of life, this . . .

The buildings are a shimmering verticality, a gossamer veil, a festive scene-drop hanging there against the black sky to dazzle, entertain and amaze . . . At night the city not only seems to live. It does live — as illusion lives.

Frank Lloyd Wright

The Disappearing City; 1932 Copyright by William Farquar Payson

. . . New York standing up above Manhattan is like a rose-colored stone in the blue of a maritime sky; New York at night is like a limitless cluster of jewels.

. . . Between the present skyscrapers there are masses of large and small buildings. Most of them small. What are these small houses doing in dramatic Manhattan? I haven't the slightest idea. It is incomprehensible. It is a fact, nothing more, as the debris after an earthquake or bombardment is a fact.

. . . A hundred times I have thought: New York is a catastrophe, and fifty times: it is a beautiful catastrophe.

. . . That is the Manhattan of vehement silhouettes. Those are the verities of technique, which is the springboard of lyricism. The fields of water, the railroads, the planes, the stars, and the vertical city with its unimaginable diamonds. Everything is there, and it is real.

Le Corbusier

When the Cathedrals were White, 1947; Harcourt, Brace and Co., Inc.

Long ago it was said that "one half of the world does not know how the other half lives." . . . Information on the subject has been accumulating rapidly since, and the whole world has had its hands full answering for its old ignorance.

Jacob A. Riis, 1890

How the Other Half Lives; Charles Scribner's Sons, 1890

By day the skyscraper looms in the smoke and sun and has a soul . . .
It is the men and women, boys and girls so poured in and out all day
that give the building a soul of dreams and thoughts and memories.
Elevators slide on their cables and tubes catch letters and parcels and iron
pipes carry gas and water in and sewage out.
Wires climb with secrets, carry light and carry words, and tell terrors and
profits and loves – curses of men grappling plans of business and
questions of women in plots of love . . .

Carl Sandburg

from *Chicago Poems*; Henry Holt and Company, 1916

A Town that has no ceiling price,
A Town of double-talk;
A Town so big men name her twice,
Like so: N'Yawk, N'Yawk.

Christopher Morley

The Ballad of New York, New York; Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1950

. . . and suddenly New York blazes like a magnificent jewel in its fit setting of sea,
and earth, and stars.

There is no place like it, no place with an atom of its glory, pride and exultancy.
It lays its hand upon a man's bowels; he grows drunk with ecstasy; he grows young
and full of glory, he feels that he can never die . . . Hideously ugly for the most part,
one yet remembers it as a place of proud and passionate beauty; the place of ever-
lasting hunger, it is also the place where men feel their lives will gloriously be
fulfilled and their hunger fed.

Thomas Wolfe

The Web and the Rock, 1939; Harper & Brothers

. . . But who can comprehend the meaning of the voice of the city? O. Henry

The Voice of the City; Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1910

Ah! some love Paris,
And some Purdue.
But love is an archer with a low I. Q.
A bold, bad bowman, and innocent of pity.
So I'm in love with
New York City.

Phyllis McGinley

from *The Love Letters of Phyllis McGinley*; The Viking Press, Inc., 1953