

SFMOMA PRESENTS *DIANE ARBUS: IN THE BEGINNING* IN THE NEW PRITZKER CENTER FOR PHOTOGRAPHY JANUARY 21–APRIL 30, 2017



SAN FRANCISCO, CA (October 27, 2016)—The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) will present the West Coast debut of the acclaimed exhibition *diane arbus: in the beginning*, on view January 21 through April 30, 2017. Organized by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, *diane arbus: in the beginning* considers the first seven years of the photographer’s career, from 1956 to 1962. Bringing together over 100 photographs from this formative period, many on display for the first time, the exhibition offers fresh insights into the distinctive vision of this iconic American photographer. The exhibition will be on view in the museum’s new Pritzker Center for Photography, made possible by the Lisa and John Pritzker Family Fund. SFMOMA is the only American venue other than The Metropolitan Museum of Art to present this exhibition.

A lifelong New Yorker, Diane Arbus (1923–1971) found the city and its citizens an endlessly rich subject for her art. Working in Times Square, the Lower East Side and Coney Island, she made some of the most powerful portraits of the 20th century, training her lens on the pedestrians and performers she encountered there. This exhibition highlights her early and enduring interest in the subject matter that would come to define her as an artist. It also reveals the artist’s evolution from a 35mm format to the now instantly recognizable and widely imitated look of the square format she adopted in 1962.

Although this period was exceptionally fruitful—nearly half the photographs that Arbus printed during her lifetime were produced during these years—the work has remained little known. It was only after her death that much of it was brought to light. The exhibition includes many lesser-known published works, including *Lady on a bus, N.Y.C. 1957*; *Boy stepping off the curb, N.Y.C. 1957–58*; *The Backwards Man in his hotel room, N.Y.C. 1961*; and *Jack Dracula at a bar, New London, Conn. 1961*. It also highlights previously unknown additions to her body of work, including *Taxicab driver at the wheel with two*

passengers, N.Y.C. 1956; Woman with white gloves and a pocket book, N.Y.C. 1956; and Man in hat, trunks, socks and shoes, Coney Island, N.Y. 1960.

The majority of the photographs included in the exhibition are part of The Metropolitan Museum of Art's vast Diane Arbus Archive, acquired in 2007 by gift and promised gift from the artist's daughters, Doon Arbus and Amy Arbus.

The exhibition will be complemented by a gallery featuring works by artists Arbus admired as well as by her contemporaries in New York including Walker Evans, Louis Faurer, Robert Frank, Lee Friedlander, William Klein, Helen Levitt, Lisette Model, August Sander, Weegee and Garry Winogrand, all drawn from SFMOMA's photography collection.

diane arbus: in the beginning builds on SFMOMA's longstanding commitment to the artist, including the groundbreaking exhibition *Diane Arbus Revelations*, presented in San Francisco from October 2003 through February 2004. Co-organized by guest curator Elisabeth Sussman and Sandra S. Phillips, curator emerita of photography at SFMOMA, *Diane Arbus Revelations* brought together approximately 200 of the artist's most significant photographs—making it the most complete presentation of her work ever assembled. The exhibition traveled to six additional venues in the United States and Europe.

"We're so pleased to bring Arbus's work back to the Bay Area," said Corey Keller, curator of photography at SFMOMA. "Arbus made some of the most potent photographs of the 20th century, and this exhibition provides a unique opportunity to consider the origins of her vision and to explore a tremendously rich but largely unfamiliar body of early work."

SFMOMA's Commitment to Photography

SFMOMA has been collecting and exhibiting photography since its founding in 1935 and was one of the first American art museums to do so. An independent department was established under the direction of Van Deren Coke in 1980. Under the leadership of Sandra S. Phillips, who joined SFMOMA in 1987 and now serves as curator emerita of photography, the collection has grown exponentially in size and quality, and the program, based on a philosophy of collecting and interpreting the photographic medium in all its richness and complexity, has earned an international reputation. Clément Chéroux will join the department as senior curator of photography in early 2017.

Today the photography collection numbers more than 17,000 objects, and is the largest collection at the museum. Its strengths include outstanding examples of work by West Coast modernist masters such as Ansel Adams, Edward Weston and their counterparts on the East Coast, most notably Alfred Stieglitz and Charles Sheeler. A small but important group of European modernist works by Hans Bellmer, Claude Cahun, László Moholy-Nagy and Man Ray, among others, represents another highlight of this period. The collection also demonstrates a deep commitment to the work of major 20th - and 21st-century figures, including Robert Adams, Diane Arbus, Lewis Baltz, Rineke Dijkstra, William Eggleston and Larry Sultan.

SFMOMA is particularly renowned for its thematic exhibitions, presenting photography as a vital modern visual language. This strong interest in photography's social and cultural importance and this pioneering commitment to examining the medium's distinguishing—and changing—characteristics continues to grow in relevance, as newer generations and evolving technologies challenge the very definition of photography as never before.

Organization

The exhibition is organized by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Publication

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue of more than 100 photographs which includes two essays: “in the beginning” by Jeff L. Rosenheim, curator in charge of the department of photographs at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and “notes from the archive” by Karan Rinaldo, senior research assistant at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Available for purchase through the SFMOMA Museum Store, the book is published by The Metropolitan Museum of Art and distributed by Yale University Press (hardcover; \$50).

Exhibition Sponsorship

Major support for *diane arbus: in the beginning* is provided by Lisa and John Pritzker. Generous support is provided by Randi and Bob Fisher and Sheri and Paul Siegel.

SFMOMA Hours and Admission

Open Friday–Tuesday 10 a.m.–5 p.m. and until 9 p.m. Thursday. Closed Wednesday. Public spaces open at 9:30 a.m.

Annual membership begins at \$100, and members enjoy unlimited free admission (with advance reservation). Adult admission to SFMOMA is \$25 and admission for seniors 65 years and older is \$22. Admission for visitors ages 19 through 24 is \$19. SFMOMA provides free admission to all visitors 18 and younger, furthering its goal of building the next generation of art lovers.

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art

151 Third Street
San Francisco, CA 94103

SFMOMA is dedicated to making the art for our time a vital and meaningful part of public life. Founded in 1935 as the first West Coast museum devoted to modern and contemporary art, a thoroughly transformed SFMOMA, with triple the gallery space, an enhanced education center and new free public galleries, opened to the public on May 14, 2016.

Visit sfmoma.org or call 415.357.4000 for more information.

Media Contacts

Jill Lynch, jilynych@sfmoma.org, 415.357.4172
Clara Hatcher, chatcher@sfmoma.org, 415.357.4177
Emma LeHocky, elehocky@sfmoma.org, 415.357.4170

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