



IKONA GALLERY

exhibition curated by Živa Kraus

08/10 - 10/12/2023

from 10:00 to 18:00 - closed on Saturdays

Opening Sunday 08 October 2023, h 12 pm

NEW YORK, NEW YORK

Photographs by: Bernice Abbott, Ilse Bing, Margaret Bourke-White, René Burri, Andreas Feininger, Dorothea Lange, Francesca Woodman, Anonimo.



Nightview, New York at Night, Empire State Building, Bernice Abbott, 1932

«The old New York is quickly vanishing [...]. Almost everywhere on the island of Manhattan, one can catch a glimpse of the dramatic contrasts between the old and the new, and the bold prelude to the future [...]. The city is in the process of becoming, and if this transition is not permanently crystallised now, it will be lost forever...Nowadays, only the camera is capable of capturing the fast-moving urban surfaces and of speaking in a language accessible to all.»

Bernice Abbott in Hank O'Neal, Bernice Abbott: American Photographer

Male and female spectators of a politically tumultuous era - from the early 1930's to the 1950's - eight male and female photographers, sharing exiles and oscillations between the Old and New Worlds, saw their destinies intertwine in the midst of an era of extreme blossoming of the arts and photography.

The beginning of the 1930's witnessed the birth of avant-garde artistic movements in Europe - women photographers gained the status of authors and experimental photography developed -, fuelling passionate exchanges between Paris and New York. This creative flow between the two continents was abruptly interrupted by the Spanish War (1936-39) and subsequently by the Second World War (1939-45), conflicts that led to a forced mass emigration from Europe: thousands of anti-Nazi and Jewish photographers – as a result of their relationships, family or professional networks - left their countries of origin and took refuge in New York. Photographers in exile or unable to travel between the two continents found themselves in a country wracked by the aftermath of the American Great Depression (1929-39): the concept of “committed photography” photojournalism - already widespread in Europe - was established to document the misery and marginalisation of a country immobilised by the crisis.

It was from the 1940's onwards that the reinterpretation of European tropes - brought by the exiles - in an American key led to the creation of new forms of photographic documentation in the United States: Precisionism, Straight Photography and the Photographic Essay. Photographers - first publishing in high circulation magazines and then exhibiting in galleries, museums or private collections - captured and celebrated with photography a reinvigorated, enthusiastic, optimistic New York: emerging from the darkness of the Great Depression, the new metropolis, from the mid-1950's onwards, took over from Europe as the main artistic centre and established photography in museums and galleries.

Eight prominent personalities from the world of photography find a meeting point on the walls of the Ikona Gallery in Venice, linked by art-historical threads that interweave their life paths and work. Born in the United States or Europe, the tormented historical events of the 1930's led them to pursue their careers in New York or through well-known American magazines. The experiences gained during their travels between the Old and the New Continent allowed them to combine multiple avant-garde influences in the creation of new styles, which were at the same time unique. Margaret Bourke-White, Dorothea Lange and Ilse Bing made their way into the world of photography by dedicating themselves, through photojournalism, to “committed photography” : documentation and denunciation of misery and marginalisation became fundamental aspects of their work. Berenice Abbott, in line with Bourke-White, Andreas Feininger and, in some respects, Lange, make use of the new forms of documentation to capture and celebrate the rapid transformations of an expanding New York: monumental masses of skyscrapers, bridges, statues and everyday images of modernity are immortalised with innovative and sometimes unexpected framing. Other artistic forms that link these photographers with each other are portraits and self-portraits: think of Lange, Abbott, Bing and, in particular, René Burri's portraits of important personalities, Francesca Woodman's theatrical and enigmatic self-portraits, and an anonymous portrait of an intimate and immediate woman.

A green satchel containing camera equipment and lenses and a room used as a darkroom are the only elements that bind the anonymous Venetian collector to the memory of his great-uncle and aunt, both photographers. In the absence of tangible forms of his loved ones' work, he has a plan: to compose a collection that evokes the images they captured. We perceive, among the works on display, the theme of flowers so dear to his great-uncle. *New York, New York*, the title of the exhibition, highlights the key to the collection: a favourite city photographed by his aunt, New York is celebrated in its many facets, through shots mainly of American women photographers, concretely evoking an otherwise distant and incorporeal emotional bond.

From the text by Carole Nagggar for the catalogue *New York New York*.

Catalogue *New York New York*, texts Živa Kraus, Carole Nagggar e Ernesta Caviola.

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