

PRESS RELEASE

Changing New York

Berenice Abbott

Exhibition Wednesday March 7th until Friday, May 4th, 2012

Space II

From Wednesday to the Saturday from 2pm to 7 pm
And by appointment

We're happy to invite you to the show of *Changing New York* with a selection of prints of Berenice Abbott.

During the entire - ten year period of the project - 1929 -1939 - Berenice Abbott produced the finest record ever made of an American City. Her point was graphically to capture the times - to make a record, in as artistic a fashion as possible, that would be of use to historians, sociologists and even art critics.

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**LES DOUCHES
LA GALERIE**

Berenice Abbott "*Changing New York*"

In February 1929, Berenice Abbott returned to United States for a short visit. She was not prepared for New York in 1929 but the city appeared to her like one gigantic subject for a photograph that needed to be taken. Her excitement with the city demanded that she shift her focus to an entirely new field.

In Paris in 1929, Berenice Abbott's work had never been better and her friends were there. She was torn, but her mind was made up. She had to photograph New York. There was no reason why she couldn't set up a new portrait business there. She had received good notices in the New York press and she felt she could easily build up a reputation and a clientele. In her spare time, she would photograph the city.

But the task was more difficult than she had imagined. She was unprepared for many things : the increased cost of living, the prejudice against women in photography, the outright competitive hostility among many American photographers and the preoccupation with strictly commercial values, which were foreign to her.

The absence of work discouraged her from carrying out her original plans of working a portraits part of the time to earn expenses and devoting the rest to roaming New York, familiarizing herself with new aspects of the city. Because of her portrait business was nonexistent, more of the time was occupied in taking new photographs of the city. But to photograph the city properly she needed money. And all the attempts to obtain outside funding for his project now calling *Changing New York*, were rejected.

In the spring of 1935, the New School for Social Research asked Abbott to give a course in photography. She was terrified of teaching, but the prospect of a modest salary tempted her. Finally, late in september 1935, *Changing New York* became an official project supported by a federal government organization, the Federal Art Project. Finally after six years, she had found funding. After a year of work, it was obvious to Berenice Abbott that *Changing New York* was a never- ending job. The more she did, the more she realized there was to do. By the end of the year, however, indications were that all was not well with her project, at least in the eyes of the *Federal Art Project*. There was intense rivalry within the organization and the jealousy of other photographers and staff members have killed the project. When The *Federal Art Project* asked her to abandon *Changing New York* to remain a staff regular photographer, she resigned. Because the photographs express the spirit of the age rather than simply show a specific location at a specific moment, they transcend time and exist as permanent statements.

When *Changing New York* was finished, she didn't want to sacrifice any more. *Changing New York* had been a ten-year struggle.

*City Arabesque from the Roof of 60 Wall Street Tower, New York
1938*

Tirage Gélantino-Argentique, réalisé dans les années 1970-1980,
signé par l'artiste
40,6 x 50,8 cm



View of Exchange Place from Broadway, New York, 1934

Tirage Gélantino-Argentique, réalisé dans les années 1970-1980,
signé par l'artiste
35,5 x 76,2 cm



Consolidated Edison Building, New York, 1938

Tirage Gélantino-Argentique, réalisé dans les années 1970-1980,
signé par l'artiste
40,6 x 50,8 cm



Pennsylvania Station, Interior, New York, 1936

Tirage Gélantino-Argentique, réalisé dans les années 1970-1980,
signé par l'artiste
40,6 x 50,8 cm



Hoboken Ferry Terminal, Barclay Street, New York, 1931

Tirage Gélantino-Argentique, réalisé dans les années 1970-1980,
signé par l'artiste
40,6 x 50,8 cm



Under the El at the Battery, New York, 1932

Tirage Gélantino-Argentique, réalisé dans les années 1970-1980,
signé par l'artiste
40,6 x 50,8 cm



Nightview, New York, 1932

Tirage Gélantino-Argentique, réalisé dans les années 1970-1980,
signé par l'artiste
40,6 x 50,8 cm



Colombus Circle, New York, 1936

Tirage Gélantino-Argentique, réalisé dans les années 1970-1980,
signé par l'artiste
35,7,6 x 43 cm



Construction Old and New, 38 Greenwich Street, New York, 1936

Tirage Gélantino-Argentique, réalisé dans les années 1970-1980,
signé par l'artiste
40,6 x 50,8 cm



Fifth Avenue Houses, No. 4, 6, 8, New York, 1936

Tirage Gélantino-Argentique, réalisé dans les années 1970-1980,
signé par l'artiste
40,6 x 50,8 cm



El, Second and Third Avenue Line at Pearl Street, New York, 1936

Tirage Gélantino-Argentique, réalisé dans les années 1970-1980,
signé par l'artiste
40,6 x 50,8 cm



Flatiron Building, Broadway and Fifth Avenue, New York, 1938
Tirage Gélantino-Argentique, réalisé dans les années 1970-1980,
signé par l'artiste
40,6 x 50,8 cm



Gunsmith and Police Department 6 Centre Market Place and 240
Centre Street New York, 1937
Tirage Gélantino-Argentique, réalisé dans les années 1970-1980,
signé par l'artiste
40,6 x 50,8 cm



West Street, New York, 1938
Tirage Gélantino-Argentique, réalisé dans les années 1970-1980,
signé par l'artiste
40,6 x 50,8 cm



Repair Shop, Christopher Street, New York, 1947
Tirage Gélantino-Argentique, réalisé dans les années 1970-1980,
signé par l'artiste
40,6 x 50,8 cm



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Berenice Abbott

Born in 1898 in Springfield, Ohio, USA

Died in 1991 in Monson, Maine, USA

A Twentieth Century artist of limitless imagination, Berenice Abbott, devoted her life to photography. She began her own photographic career in 1923 as an apprentice to her friend, Man Ray, in his Paris studio. It was while with Man Ray she first became aware of the French master, Eugène Atget, an event that would have far reaching consequences in her life.

Abbott established her own portrait studio in 1926, where she made compelling photographs of the celebrated writers and artists of the day, including the only Twentieth Century portrait of Atget, who died a short time after he posed for her. In 1928 Abbott acquired Atget's prints and negatives, began a second career of forty years of hard work and established his reputation as one of foremost photographic artists of his time.

In 1929 Abbott returned to New York City and saw America with a fresh and enriched perspective and began to photograph the rapidly evolving urban landscape of a city in transition. This ten-year project, often self financed, resulted in the monumental and widely acclaimed documentary project she later called "Changing New York." Her captivating photographs of new bridges and skyscrapers, replacing older structures, as well as the juxtaposition of evolving modes of transportation with those of the past and crowded street scenes evoke an exciting combination of objectivity and impassioned realism that is key to the timeless quality of her art.

Abbott didn't restrict her activities to New York City and was also a keen observer of the American scene. As early as 1932 she traveled throughout New England and along the East Coast documenting certain cities, as they existed before the Civil War. In the mid-1930s she was active in the Midwest and south and in the early 1950s documented US Route 1 from Fort Kent, Maine to Key West, Florida. Later in the 1960s she documented Maine from a new standpoint, as a full time resident.

In 1939, Abbott's first book, Changing New York was published. In the years that followed, her name would appear on a dozen other books, as well as countless magazine articles and essays. At the same time she became a creative inventor, securing half a dozen patents, and began her explorations in scientific photography. At the time she said, "Photography fits in with the speed of our time... It is a realistic medium appropriate to a realistic and scientific age."

After solitary work for two decades, in 1958 she undertook her most remarkable project, to photograph scientific phenomena for the Physical Sciences Study Committee at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Easily her most creative and innovative work, these aesthetically elegant photographs of swinging pendulums, bouncing balls, and wave patterns lend understandable reality to the many complex concepts of physical science.

Though Abbott continued to take photographs for over two decades, her scientific images were a perfect achievement with which to conclude a remarkable career.