

DARK ROOM - a collection of photographs by Diane Arbus

Dates September 10 - October 9, 2021
Opening September 10, 5-9 pm
Location 136 Baxter Street New York, NY 10013

anonymous gallery is proud to present *DARK ROOM* -- a private collection of proof prints of seventeen iconic images photographed by Diane Arbus. Never before exhibited, the proofs were printed in Arbus' darkroom at 29 Charles Street in preparation for the Museum of Modern Art's posthumous retrospective, "Diane Arbus". Each proof is an eloquent testament, not only to the power and influence of the photographer's vision, but also to the innate magic and mystery of the creative process.

The images in *DARK ROOM* allow the viewer a rare glimpse into truths about conception, technique and discovery. When they survive, working proofs such as these impart a greater understanding of the final prints and reveal the ontological nature of the work. Each proof shows a different moment in the photographer's quest for perfection. Some include annotations about solutions and timing. Chemical stains and streaks that no longer appear in final prints are exposed on the proofs, revealing the last stretch in an intimate journey between what the photographer has captured on film and what an audience will see.

Equally in proof form, the images in *DARK ROOM* are stunning. Arbus' distinctive visual language empowered her vivid exploration of human nature. Never before had a photographer so candidly and thoughtfully captured life quite like Arbus. Confronting the soul, thoughts and aspirations of her subjects, she documented and exposed the ethereal underside of what society more typically suppresses from view. In the words of John Swarkowski, the former Director of the Department of Photography at MoMA and the curator of its Arbus retrospective:

"From about 1963 until her death in July, 1971, Diane Arbus produced a body of photographic portraits of generally uncelebrated people she found to be of exceptional interest. These pictures challenged the basic assumptions on which most documentary photography of the period had been predicated. Her work was concerned primarily with psychological rather than visual coherence with private rather than social realities, with the prototypical and mythic rather than the topical and temporal. Her true subject was no less than the interior life of those she photographed."

Museum of Modern Art press release No.116, October 12, 1972. See also, [Diane Arbus](#), an Aperture Monograph, originally published in 1972 and reissued by Aperture in 1988; edited by Marvin Israel and Doon Arbus.

The MoMA retrospective, which took place between November 7, 1972 and January 21, 1973, displayed prints of 125 images photographed by Arbus in the decade before her death in 1971. The exhibition later traveled to the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago; the Baltimore Museum of Art; the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, and the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa; and helped to forever cement Diane Arbus' position in photographic history.