

Diane Arbus

3 september - 8 oktober, 2011

When Diane Arbus took her own life July 26, 1971, she was at the top of a career that had taken her from relative success as a fashion photographer in the 1950s to becoming one of the most esteemed contemporary art photographers of her time. She gained legendary status shortly after her death. Arbus' photographs have often been interpreted as testimonies of her biography. This interpretation may have increased the popularity of her photographs, but has overshadowed aspects that are equally interesting.

Arbus' daughters Amy and Doon Arbus have protected her interests with a keen eye on how her heritage has been managed. Copyright laws have been stringent and relatively few works have circulated in exhibitions, publications and on the art market. Only with long intervals have the Estate of Diane Arbus released previously unpublished material from her archive. The Estate has also been restrictive in the use of her works as illustrations. The author of the only biography on Arbus, published in 1984, was not allowed to reprint her photographs in the book. This has resulted in a reception of her work that rests on a small number of photographs only; primarily those circulated in exhibitions and in books published in the 1970s. As we know that Arbus was a remarkably active photographer – always with her camera close at hand – there is reason to believe that our understanding of what her art represents will be modified and elaborated as the knowledge of her body of work emerges.

The selection of works in the exhibition at Peder Lund is an opportunity to question common conceptions and interpretations of Arbus by exhibiting both well-known and less-known sides of her oeuvre. This approach enables us to critically assess the conception that her photographs mirror her biography, whilst simultaneously encouraging a reading of her work as part of a larger context related to the history of photography, culture, and social history.

The unique collection of 21 vintage photographs, printed by the artist herself between 1956 and 1971, demonstrates the breadth of Arbus' career. Diane Arbus' most best-known photographs such as "Child with a toy hand grenade in Central Park, N.Y.C." (1962) and "Identical Twins, Roselle, N.J." (1966) are included in this retrospective exhibition alongside less-known photographs that have not been as widely exhibited.

During the opening of the exhibition on September 3, Professor Øivind Storm Bjerke will hold an introductory lecture about Diane Arbus and her artistic career at 1 p.m. The exhibition is on display until October 8, 2011.

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