

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Martha Cooper

Exhibition: April 20th – June 3rd, 2017

Opening Reception: Thursday, April 20th, 6-8PM

Steven Kasher Gallery is honored to be the first gallery to take on exclusive worldwide representation of Martha Cooper. It features over 30 new editions of her legendary street art photographs. Also featured are new editions of 1970s and 1980s black and white photographs from her books *New York State of Mind*, *Street Play* and *Tokyo Tattoo*. Over four decades, Cooper has explored creativity as seen on the streets of New York and abroad, documenting DIY culture and how it shapes our understanding of “what is art?”

Cooper has chronicled street art from its earliest days and has created some of the most iconic and well-known images of this global phenomenon. The show also includes Cooper’s recent environmental portraits of contemporary street artists at work.



From 1977 to 1980, Cooper was a staff photographer at the New York Post. While on daily assignments throughout the city she was intrigued by the ingenuity of unsupervised kids playing amidst the rubble of disintegrating neighborhoods. Her interest in documenting creative play led to a chance encounter with HE3, a young graffiti artist tagging in the Bronx. He asked Martha if she “wanted to meet a king” and took her to meet legendary street artist Dondi. Soon after, Dondi introduced Cooper to other famous graffiti artists of the

70s and the 80s, including Daze, Futura and Seen. Like an ethnographer, she started to accompany them on their late night art-driven missions with the goal of documenting their work. Cooper says, “Until then I had not really understood how they had been able to paint such large pieces — often covering an entire subway car — in one night. Or how they could climb up to the top of the train and paint.”

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Her photographs of trains rolling through New York City (mostly in the South Bronx) preserve paintings that only existed for a matter of days, or, in some cases, hours. After being notified of a fresh piece by the writers, Cooper would camp out in a vacant lot, sometimes for up to 5 hours, and wait for special cars to roll by. On May 31, 1980, Cooper accompanied Dondi to the New Lots train yard and watched him paint “Children of the Grave Part 3”. Over the course of one night she photographed the entire process of him completing this full-car masterpiece, capturing in stunning detail exactly how a writer managed to get his work onto the side of the trains, a process that was a mystery to most straphangers at that time.



Martha Cooper (b. 1942) grew up surrounded by cameras, her father and uncle were camera store owners. From an early age she accompanied her father on outings with the Baltimore Camera Club. She took her first photographs at age 3. In the decades since, Cooper’s work has been exhibited in museums and galleries worldwide including Museum of the City of New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Pera Museum, Istanbul; Hellerau European Center for the Arts, Dresden; Urbannation, Berlin; Trafo Galerie, Prague; Pallazo Incontro, Rome; Stolen Space Gallery, London and Fullersta Gard, Stockholm. Her work was featured in the exhibition *Bridges of Graffiti* at the 2015 Venice Biennale. Numerous books of her work have been published including *Subway Art* (1984), *Hip Hop Files* (2004), *We B* Girlz* (2005), *Street Play* (2006), *New York State of Mind* (2007), *Tag Town* (2007), *Going Postal* (2009) and *Tokyo Tattoo 1970* (2012). Her first book *Subway Art* (with Henry Chalfant), has been reprinted multiple times and is affectionately called the “bible” by graffiti artists. In the 33 years it has been in print has consistently outsold nearly every other art book on the market. In 2016, she was invited to speak at TEDxVienna, on the theme Out There.

Martha Cooper will be on view April 20th-June 3rd, 2017. Steven Kasher Gallery is located at 515 W. 26th St., New York, NY 10001. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 10 AM to 6 PM. For press and all other inquiries, please contact Cassandra Johnson, 212 966 3978, cassandra@stevenkasher.com.