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BEATNIKS, BOHEMIANS AND BOB DYLAN: STRIKING IMAGES TAKEN
IN 1960S AND 70S NEW YORK BY LONGTIME VILLAGE VOICE
PHOTOGRAPHER WHO CAPTURED ARTISTS, POETS AND
PROTESTERS

By Regina F. Graham - September 20, 2018

- Photographer Fred W. McDarrah worked for 50 years capturing thousands of images showing the bohemian arts community within Greenwich Village
- He worked as the first photographer and then photo editor for the now-defunct The Village Voice, an American news and culture paper that was known for being the country's first alternative newsweekly
- McDarrah was on scene for most iconic moments in New York - the Stonewall rebellion, Andy Warhol filming and Bob Dylan hanging out around town
- Now, some of his most captivating images are going on display part of an exhibition by Steven Kasher Gallery titled Fred W. McDarrah: New York Scenes, running from September 20 to November 3



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Photographer Fred W. McDarrah served as the eyes for millions of New Yorkers for more than 50 years by using his camera lens to document the subculture bohemian arts community with the Greenwich Village.

From Bob Dylan saluting his camera while sitting on a park bench in 1960, to Andy Warhol posing next to one of his pieces at his 1964 exhibition opening, McDarrah's images showcase an interesting time to be living in the Big Apple. The photographer worked the majority of his life for the now-defunct The Village Voice - an American news and culture paper that was the known for being the country's first alternative newsweekly.

By working as the publications only staff photographer and then becoming the first picture editor, McDarrah's photos were the graphic expression of the Village Voice. He covered Gotham's diverse downtown scenes where he frequented galleries, cafes, bars and bookstores where artists and musicians often gathered.

McDarrah was on the scene for some of the most iconic moments in New York – the Stonewall rebellion, Warhol filming in the Factory and Dylan hanging out in Sheridan Square. Now, some of his most captivating images are going on display part of an exhibition by Steven Kasher Gallery titled Fred W. McDarrah: New York Scenes, September 20th - November 3rd.

The exhibit features roughly 100 of McDarrah's vintage black and white prints that span from the 1950s to 1970s. Included in the exhibit are some never-before-seen images from his extensive archive that will also be published within a new book on September 25 that collects the best of his work.

Born in 1926 in Brooklyn, McDarrah bought his first camera during the 1939 World's Fair in New York City.

He eventually served in the U.S. Army as a paratrooper during World War II and attended New York University where he earned a degree in Journalism following the war. While working in advertising at a company on Madison Avenue when his neighbor, Dan Wolf, told him that he was starting a newspaper with Norman Mailer that was going to be called The Village Voice.

McDarrah joined the pair in 1955 and worked as the publications only staff photographer for decades using his old Rolleicord or a 35-millimeter Nikon S2 cameras until he became a photo editor.

He was known to be in the right place at the right time and his images through the decades chronicle the growing bohemian community within Greenwich Village.

'I was a groupie at heart,' McDarrah wrote later. 'I wanted to be part of the action. My camera was my diary, my ticket of admission, my way of remembering, preserving, proving that I had been there when it all happened.'

One of his most well-known images shows a young Bob Dylan with chapped lips and squinting his eyes while sitting on a bench at Christopher Park as he offers a salute on January 22, 1965.

Another dynamic image McDarrah captured shows Pop artists Tom Wesselmann, Roy Lichtenstein, James Rosenquist, Andy Warhol and Claes Oldenburg standing together while at Warhol's Factor located at 231 East 47th Street on April 21, 1964.

He also snapped a photo showing then-New York Knicks forward Phil Jackson while on the hardwood at Madison Square Garden during a game on February 19, 1973.

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McDarrah even captured a stunning photo showing artist, activist and author Faith Ringgold posing near her work on August 30, 1978.

The photographer was also on-hand during one of the first protests in New York City against the Vietnam War. He snapped a striking image showing masked members of the Bread and Puppet Theater, led by artist and writer Peter Schumann, marching down Thompson Street from Washington Square Park on March 15, 1965.

The night Stonewall Inn got raided by NYPD officers in June 1969, McDarrah was at first reluctant to go capture photos of the scene because he felt it was not newsworthy, according to the forthcoming book showcasing his photos.

'Though not gay, a hard laboring family man, he's made photo records of gay parades for decades – sign of a real artist's inquisitive sympathy, intelligent democracy,' a passage from the book reads.

'However, his sense of duty, and his respect for most of his Voice colleagues, especially his friend Arthur Bell (who was the country's first openly gay newspaper columnist), kicked in, and he took nineteen photos of the event that marked the birth of the modern gay rights movement in the United States,' a passage from the book reads.

Historian Sean Wilentz evocatively describes how McDarrah documented the transformation of Greenwich Village and said no one came close to 'depicting what Fred did.'

'Fred left behind an unprecedented body of work from inside that movable site as it existed in mid-century Greenwich Village, when, for a while anyway, it shook the nation and the world.' Wilentz explained to the Steven Kasher Gallery.

'Nobody had ever come close to depicting what Fred did, and any future bohemian chronicle is bound to be shot differently from the way Fred did it. He was in the right place at the right time, and when the chance came for him to make the most of it, he didn't blow it.

'So as long as there are those who will pay attention, Fred W. McDarrah's spirit, the spirit inside these pictures, will tell its magical stories.'

The photographer, who died in 2007, worked for The Voice, which closed for good last month, for 50 years, presenting a style that was fun-loving yet candid within the thousands of images he captured.

Wilentz added: 'Nobody had ever come close to depicting what Fred did, and any future bohemian chronicle is bound to be shot differently from the way Fred did it. He was in the right place at the right time, and when the chance came for him to make the most of it, he didn't blow it. So as long as there are those who will pay attention, Fred W. McDarrah's spirit, the spirit inside these pictures, will tell its magical stories.' The photographer, who died in 2007, worked for The Voice, which closed for good last month, for 50 years, presenting a style that was fun-loving yet candid within the thousands of images he captured