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Marlborough MONSON ARTS GALLERY

PRESS RELEASE

Monson, Maine, June 17, 2024.

The Monson Arts Gallery, in collaboration with the Marlborough Gallery, New York, is pleased to announce its summer and fall exhibition, Berenice Abbott's Greenwich Village, featuring her original vintage photographs from the 1930s and 1940s.

I'm not a nice girl. I'm a photographer.

— Berenice Abbott

The above statement describes, in a line, one of the most creative, prolific and single-minded artists in art history.

This exhibition of over thirty photographs from Marlborough's collection includes many of the artist's most iconic images of Greenwich Village, along with a selection of rare pictures never before published.

The exhibition will continue from July 5th through October 27th, 2024, with the opening reception on July 12th from noon to 7 PM at the Monson Arts Gallery, 8 Greenville Road in Monson, Maine. Coffee and pastry served at noon. Berenice Abbott's friend and collaborator, Todd Watts, will give a talk at 1pm, hors d'oeuvres at 5pm.

At the age of nineteen, having left her native town of Springfield, Ohio, Berenice Abbott (1898–1991) arrived in Greenwich Village in New York City in 1918. She soon found herself among the literary and artistic avant-garde. Intending to pursue journalism and sculpture, it was not until her extended sojourn in Paris, France from 1921 through 1929 that she was introduced to the medium of photography, training in the atelier of (noted artist) Man Ray. In Paris, Abbott encountered and photographed many of the modernist figures she had known during her initial stay in Greenwich Village, and other notable artists who came to Paris to pursue their art.

To be 'done' by Man Ray and Berenice Abbott meant you were rated as somebody.

— Sylvia Beach, founder of Shakespeare and Company, Paris.

Upon her return to New York in 1929, Abbott was struck by the drastic change in architecture and the rapid modernization of the city. She first set up a portrait studio, photographing prominent American businessmen for Fortune magazine, as well as the distinguished New Yorkers who ran in her social circle, hoping that the profits would allow her to devote time to her real passion of documenting the ever-shifting urban landscape. She soon started photographing Greenwich Village.

In 1935, Abbott became a member of the Federal Arts Project of the Works Progress Administration, which helped fund her ongoing work. In 1939, she published her most well-known project, *Changing New York*, featuring ninety-seven out of the hundreds of photographs she made throughout the five boroughs of New York City in the 1930s and 1940s.

Berenice Abbott moved from Greenwich Village to Blanchard, Maine in the 1960s, then to Monson, Maine in 1981. She lived in Monson until her death in 1991.