

The Museum of Modern Art

11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 956-6100 Cable: Modernart

BERENICE ABBOTT: PHOTOGRAPHS

December 10, 1970 - March 10, 1971

Checklist

PORTRAITS

1. Jean Cocteau, 1927
2. James Joyce, 1928
3. Sophie Victor, 1926-29
4. Joe Gould, New York, c.1935
5. Mrs. Raymond Massey, 1926-29
6. Eugene Atget, 1927
7. Jane Heap, 1926-29
8. James Joyce, 1926-29
9. Edna St. Vincent Millay, 1926-29
10. Andre Gide, 1926-29
11. Peggy Guggenheim, 1926-29
12. George Antheil, 1926-29
13. Margaret Anderson, 1926-29
14. Jean Cocteau, 1926-29
15. Princess Eugene Murat, 1926-29

NEW YORK CITY

16. Centre Street, 1937
17. Trinity Church, c.1932
18. Wall Street, c.1931
19. St. Marks Church with Skywriting, 1937
20. Railroad Yard, c.1931
21. Federal Reserve Building, 1958
22. Blossom Restaurant, The Bowery, 1935
23. El at Battery, c.1936
24. Department of Docks, 1936
25. El at Columbus Avenue and Broadway, 1930
26. Christopher Street Shop, 1948
27. Rockefeller Center, 1932
28. Daily News Building, 1935

29. Birdseye View, Wall Street, c.1938
30. Flatiron Building, 1938
31. Trinity Church, c.1932
32. West Side looking north from Upper 30's, 1933
33. Exchange Place, c.1931
34. Old Post Office, c.1938
35. Pingpank Barber Shop, 413 Bleecker Street, 1938
36. Flam & Flam, 165 East 121st Street, 1938
37. Newsstand, 1935
38. Trinity Churchyard, c.1932
39. Hardware Store, 1938
40. Fifth Avenue at 8th Street, c.1936
41. Erie Station, c.1937
42. Warehouse, Lower Manhattan, 1936
43. Barclay Street Hoboken Ferry, c.1932
44. St. Paul's Church, c.1935
45. Financial District, c.1938
46. Grand Street, 1937
47. Hester Street, c.1930
48. Cherry Street, c.1932
49. Shoeshine Parlor, c.1930
50. Rockefeller Center, c.1932
51. Goldberg Clothing Store, Broadway & 9th Street, 1937
52. Chicken Market, 1937
53. Times Square, 1937

SCIENTIFIC ILLUSTRATIONS

54. Spinning wrench suspended on a long string. The center of mass moves in a straight line. 1958-61
55. The pendulum. 1958-61
56. Transformation of Energy. 1958-61
57. Multiple exposure showing the path of a moving ball ejected vertically from a moving object. 1958-61
58. Picture of motion made with time exposure. Light mounted on rim of rolling wheel illustrates cycloid curve. Light at center traces path of hub. 1958-61

- 59. Beams of light deflected through glass. 1958-61
- 60. A metal key changes the magnetic pattern of iron filings around a bar magnet. 1958-61
- 61. Parabolic mirror, made of many small flat sections, reflecting one eye. 1958-61
- 62. Interference pattern produced by two interacting sets of circular waves. 1958-61

The Museum of Modern Art

West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 956-6100 Cable: Modernart

NO. 130

FOR RELEASE: December 10, 1970

PRESS PREVIEW: December 9, 1970
(11 a.m. to 4 p.m.)

BERENICE ABBOTT

A selection of 63 works by the distinguished and influential American photographer Berenice Abbott will be on view from December 10 through February 28, 1971, in the Steichen Galleries of The Museum of Modern Art. The exhibition, directed by John Szarkowski, Director of the Department of Photography, will cover the entire range of Miss Abbott's work, including portraits made in Paris in the 20s, documentation of New York City from the 30s, and the more recent photographs which illustrate principles of physics.

Originally a sculptor, in the 20s Berenice Abbott studied in Berlin and later in Paris with Bourdelle. She became an assistant to Man Ray in Paris in 1923 and later opened her own studio there and photographed many artists and writers, including Cocteau, Gide, Joyce and Maurois. Another subject was the photographer Eugene Atget, then an unknown old man, whose work she saved after his death. She was among the first to appreciate the importance of Atget's work and was largely responsible for its later recognition.

Miss Abbott returned to the United States in 1929 and began her important photographic document of New York City. Much of this work during the 30s was done under the auspices of the Federal Art Project, which provided her with technical assistants and research workers. These photographs were published in the book Changing New York. "I hate photography that looks like painting," she has said. "I'm the least arty photographer in America." The New York photographs depend on her understanding of the material itself, and on an unwillingness to allow personal emotions or technical virtuosity to obtrude in the work.

Around 1939, Miss Abbott began to study the possibilities of photography as an interpreter of science. At first she could not find publications or educa-

(more)

tional organizations willing to back an attempt to bring science to the layman through photography. Eventually she made contact with the Physical Sciences Study Committee, initiated by M.I.T., and has since made numerous photographs illustrating physical principles involving magnetic fields, water patterns, bouncing and colliding balls, and the behavior of a pendulum. These scientific photographs have been published in three books--Magnet, Motion and The Attractive Universe.

Miss Abbott has exhibited her work in museums and galleries throughout the world. Last year a retrospective of her photographs was shown at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. The Museum's exhibition coincides with the publication of Berenice Abbott: Photographs, published by Horizon Press. The paper back edition is \$6.95, the cloth bound, \$20.00.

Additional information available from Mark Segal, Assistant, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53rd Street, New York, New York 10019. Tel: (212) 956-7296.

The Museum of Modern Art

West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 956-6100 Cable: Modernart

BERENICE ABBOTT: PHOTOGRAPHS

Wall Label

Berenice Abbott is one of that tiny horde of Midwestern Yankee Americans who in the 1920s temporarily reversed the Course of Empire, and transferred the center of American cultural life to Paris.

She was born in Springfield, Ohio, and attended Ohio State University (without knowing James Thurber, who had left the year she came). In 1918 she went to New York to study sculpture, and in 1921 moved on to study in Paris (with Bourdelle) and in Berlin. In 1923 she settled in Paris as an assistant to Man Ray; two years later she first saw the photographs of Eugene Atget, and was irrevocably marked by their pure photographic authority. In the following year she opened her own portrait studio, and photographed with honesty and grace the famous, the great, and the influential of that city's intellectual world.

In 1928, after Atget's death, she bought the contents of his studio, and saved the work of this great, but virtually unknown, artist from almost certain loss. During the next forty years she devoted a major part of her energies to the cause of his art.

In 1929 she returned to New York, enlarged in her perspectives but no less stubbornly a native, to photograph her own country. Here, between commercial assignments, she began to do for this city something similar to what Atget had done for Paris -- an unblinking but affectionate pictorial record of its most characteristic scenes and monuments. This work was continued in 1935 under the sponsorship of the Federal Arts Project, and culminated in 1939 in the publication of her book Changing New York -- perhaps to this day the best photographic book done on the city.

At about this time Abbott began her first experiments as a visual interpreter of the basic principles of physical science. In this field she was an original, often working with primitive and improvised equipment of her own devising. Her work in this area was finally published in the 1960s in three volumes dealing with magnetism, motion, and gravity.

Since 1968 Miss Abbott has lived in Maine, where she continues to photograph.

John Szarkowski

BERENICE ABBOTT/PHOTOGRAPHS, recently published by Horizon Press, is available in the Museum bookstore.