

The Museum of Modern Art

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PHOTOGRAPHS OF PARTIES BY LEE FRIEDLANDER AT MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Note: Shown by slide projection. Running time approximately 20 minutes.

One hundred forty photographs taken by Lee Friedlander at some of the dozens of parties he has attended during the past few years will be shown by slide projection at The Museum of Modern Art from February 1 through March 5, 1972.

Some of the parties in Gatherings were at the Museum, some were at art galleries, some in bars, some in private homes, including his own.

"Those in the audience who have themselves attended parties, and observed them with a reasonable degree of acuity, will recognize that parties in real life are very much different than they appear in Lee Friedlander's photographs (which are, after all, only pictures)." John Szarkowski, Director of the Museum's Department of Photography and director of the exhibition, writes in the accompanying wall label, "Parties in real life are more pleasurable, more fraternal, more sweetly affable and joyous, than one would guess from these photographs -- some of which almost give the impression that the participants would be equally happy doing something else in another place in different company.

"This apparent discrepancy between life and art is probably due to the imperfect state of advancement of documentary photography; it can at least be hoped that further progress (perhaps in optics or chemistry) will close the gap between the way things are and the way the camera makes them seem."

Lee Friedlander was born in Aberdeen, Washington in 1934. He has been photographing since 1948 and studied at the Art Center in Los Angeles with Edward Kaminski. In 1960 and in 1962 he received Guggenheim fellowships for photographic studies of the changing American scene.

His work was first shown at The Museum of Modern Art in 1963 in an exhibition Photography for Collectors. In 1964 he was represented in The Photographer's Eye. In 1967 a larger selection was shown along with work by Diane Arbus and Garry Winogrand in an exhibition called New Documents. At that time John Szarkowski referred to the three photographers as leading

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representatives of a new generation of documentary photographers. "In the past decade this new generation of photographers has redirected the technique and aesthetic of documentary photography to more personal ends. Their aim has been not to reform life but to know it, not to persuade but to understand. The world, in spite of its terrors, is approached as the ultimate source of wonder and fascination, no less precious for being irrational and incoherent."

In 1970 the Museum published E.J. Bellocq: Storyville Portraits which consisted of photographs printed by Lee Friedlander from the original glass plates taken in the New Orleans red-light district about 1912 by a little known photographer, E.J. Bellocq. Friedlander first saw the plates in 1958 (they had been discovered in Bellocq's desk after his death in the 40s) and bought them in 1966. The introductory text by John Szarkowski is an edited synthesis of four long interviews recorded by Friedlander in 1969.

Additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, New York 10019. Tel: (212) 956-7501, -7504.
