

## **CONDITIONS OF USE FOR THIS PDF**

The images contained within this PDF may be used for private study, scholarship, and research only. They may not be published in print, posted on the internet, or exhibited. They may not be donated, sold, or otherwise transferred to another individual or repository without the written permission of The Museum of Modern Art Archives.

When publication is intended, publication-quality images must be obtained from SCALA Group, the Museum's agent for licensing and distribution of images to outside publishers and researchers.

If you wish to quote any of this material in a publication, an application for permission to publish must be submitted to the MoMA Archives. This stipulation also applies to dissertations and theses. All references to materials should cite the archival collection and folder, and acknowledge "The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York."

Whether publishing an image or quoting text, you are responsible for obtaining any consents or permissions which may be necessary in connection with any use of the archival materials, including, without limitation, any necessary authorizations from the copyright holder thereof or from any individual depicted therein.

In requesting and accepting this reproduction, you are agreeing to indemnify and hold harmless The Museum of Modern Art, its agents and employees against all claims, demands, costs and expenses incurred by copyright infringement or any other legal or regulatory cause of action arising from the use of this material.

### **NOTICE: WARNING CONCERNING COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS**

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be "used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research." If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement.

FOR STUDY PURPOSES ONLY. NOT FOR REPRODUCTION.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

Dr. Maurice G. Kott  
Director, Division of Mental Retardation  
State of New Jersey  
Department of Institutions & Agencies  
P.O. Box 1237  
Trenton, New Jersey 08625

609 292 4294  
609 292 3717  
609 292 2121

AUG 14 1974

Arbus - prepared  
1975  
Carlow du  
VDD  
wire

I would have sworn that I wrote this letter weeks ago,  
but I would apparently have been wrong.

John Stringer  
Assistant Director  
International  
The Museum of  
11 West 53rd St  
New York City

I am enclosing two receipt of delivery forms, one of  
four pages, and one single sheet, which I think cover  
all of the pictures of Diane's that we received on loan  
before the exhibition. You will note that the asterisks  
have somewhat different meanings on the two forms. I  
think that these forms record the disposition of every-  
thing that we borrowed before the show, and if you will  
sign the five sheets and return them to our Registrar  
in the enclosed envelope our records will be complete.

Dear Mr. Stringer:

So far, the Diane Arbus exhibition appear in museums in Europe, but I  
taken awhile. It seems strange and sad that the show should be finished  
prepared to go to the United States, and in London.  
the exhibitors and done with. Before long people over thirty will be  
paid for the telling their teenage friends that they saw it. It makes  
Also, I'm not one feel very old and historical.  
now touring the United States be the one which goes abroad,  
since that exhibition a number of Diane Arbus's own  
prints which I want back as soon as the

Again, thank you very, very much.

With warm best, ever.

If these two conditions dampen your interest, I'll understand.  
But if not, let me know and we can discuss it further.

Doon Arbus  
156 West 72nd Street  
New York, New York 10024

JS/pw

enc. 2

Sincerely,

Doon Arbus

Doon Arbus

FOR STUDY PURPOSES ONLY. NOT FOR REPRODUCTION.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series/Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

AUG 14 1974

December 2, 1975

Dear Doon:

I would have sworn that I wrote this letter weeks ago, but I would apparently have been wrong.

John Stringer  
Assistant Director  
International  
The Museum of  
11 West 53rd St  
New York City

Dear Mr. Stringer:

So far, the de  
taken awhile.  
Arbus exhibition  
prepared to  
the exhibitors  
paid for the  
Also, I'm not  
now touring the  
since that ex  
prints which I

I am enclosing two receipt of delivery forms, one of four pages, and one single sheet, which I think cover all of the pictures of Diane's that we received on loan before the exhibition. You will note that the asterisks have somewhat different meanings on the two forms. I think that these forms record the disposition of everything that we borrowed before the show, and if you will sign the five sheets and return them to our Registrar in the enclosed envelope our records will be complete.

It seems strange and sad that the show should be finished and done with. Before long people over thirty will be telling their teenage friends that they saw it. It makes one feel very old and historical.

Again, thank you very, very much.

With warm best,

If these two conditions dampen your interest, I'll understand. But if not, let me know and we can discuss it further.

Doon Arbus  
156 West 72nd Street  
New York, New York 10024

JS/pw

enc. 2

Sincerely,  
Doon Arbus



FOR STUDY PURPOSES ONLY. NOT FOR REPRODUCTION.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series/Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

AUG 14 1974

REPLY MY SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_  
DRAFT REPLY YOUR SIG \_\_\_\_\_  
ACTION AS REQUIRED \_\_\_\_\_  
SPEC \_\_\_\_\_  
NOT REPLY \_\_\_\_\_  
RE *Arbus - proposed*  
INFORMATION COMING TO  
*JS*  
*JS*  
*EVDD*  
*etc*

55 West 68th Street  
New York City 10023  
August 12, 1974

John Stringer  
Assistant Director  
International Program  
The Museum of Modern Art  
11 West 53rd Street  
New York City 10019

Dear Mr. Stringer:

So far, the decision hasn't been hard, but as you see, it's taken awhile. Naturally, I'm not averse to having the Diane Arbus exhibition appear in museums in Europe, but I'm not prepared to agree to this without some fee being paid by the exhibitors to the estate. As you may know, fees were paid for the exhibitions I arranged in Tokyo and in London. Also, I'm not sure I'm willing to have the exhibition that's now touring the United States be the one which goes abroad, since that exhibit contains a number of Diane Arbus's own prints which I want back as soon as the U.S. tour is over.

If these two conditions dampen your interest, I'll understand. But if not, let me know and we can discuss it further.

Sincerely,

*Diane Arbus*  
Diane Arbus

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series/Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

July 12, 1972

Diane Arbus photographs in the Department of Photography  
Collection: The Museum of Modern Art Archives

Child at Night, Scribbled Wall, Greenwich St., N.Y.C., 1961	11 x 14	1156.62
Triplets, New Jersey, 1961	11 x 14	952.69
Man and Wife in the Woods, Evening, Radist Camp, N.J., 1963	11 x 14	1169.62
Child with Toy Hand Grenade, New York, 1962	11 x 14	1172.62
Levittown, New York, 1963	11 x 14	953.69
Transvestite with Torn Stocking, 1966	11 x 14	950.69
Two Young Women, New York, 1965	11 x 14	951.69
Nude Couple at Home, Sunshine Park, N.J., 1963	11 x 14	11168.62
Man and Wife at Home in a Radist Camp, one morning, N.J., 1963	16 x 20	*
Junior Interstate Ballroom Champions, 1962	11 x 14	954.69
Beauty Contest, Beach, 1962	11 x 14	1161.62
Widow in New York City, 1963	11 x 14	1167.62
Widow in New York City, 1963	11 x 20	*
Widow in New York City, 1963	16 x 20	2618.67
Lonely, Disper, 1967	16 x 20	2618.67
Lonely, Disper, 1967	16 x 20	*
Female Impersonator, 1967	8 x 5 1/2	1171.62
Waitress, Radist Camp, New Jersey, 1963	16 x 20	2670.67
Identical Twins, Hoboken, New Jersey, 1966	16 x 20	Study Coll.
Identical Twins, Kathleen and Colleen, Hoboken, 1967	16 x 20	*
A Family on the Lawn on a Sunday, New York, 1963	16 x 20	*
A Family and Their Car in a Radist Camp in Pennsylvania, 1965	16 x 20	*
Men with Carriers, New York, 1965	16 x 20	*
Teenage Couple on 10th Street, New York City, 1963	16 x 20	*
Boy with a Straw Hat and Flag, Pro War Parade, NYC, 1967	16 x 20	*

\* Photographs purchased for New Photography 334. No accession numbers.

Mr. Marvin Israel  
141 Fifth Avenue  
New York, New York

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

July 12, 1972

Diane Arbus photographs in The Department of Photography  
Collection: The Museum of Modern Art

Child at Night, Scribbled Wall, Greenwich St., N.Y.C..1961	11 x 14	1166.64
Triplets, New Jersey. 1963 (off shoulder)	11 x 14	952.69
Man and Wife in the Woods, Evening, Nudist Camp, N.J. 1963	11 x 14	1169.64
Child with Toy Hand Grenade, New York. 1962	11 x 14	1172.64
Levittown, New York. 1963 (sitting baby)	11 x 14	953.69
Transvestite with Torn Stocking. 1966	11 x 14	950.69
Two Young Women, New York. 1965 (sitting)	11 x 14	951.69
Nudist Couple at Home, Sunshine Park, N.J. 1963	11 x 14	11168.64
Man and Wife at Home in a Nudist Camp, one morning, N.J. 1963	16 x 20	*
Junior Interstate Ballroom Champions. 1962	11 x 14	954.69
Beauty Contest, Miss Venice Beach. 1962 (sitting)	11 x 14	1161.62
Widow in Her Bedroom, New York City. 1962	11 x 14	1167.64
Widow in Her Bedroom, 55th St., New York City. 1962	16 x 20	*
Widow in Her Bedroom, 55th St., New York City. 1962	16 x 20	2616.67
Loser, Diaper Derby Contest, Palisades, N.J. 1967	16 x 20	2618.67
Loser, Diaper Derby Contest, Palisades, N.J. 1967 1968	16 x 20	*
Female Impersonators, New York. 1962 (sitting) 1963	8 x 5 1/2	1171.64
Waitress, Nudist Camp, New Jersey. 1963	16 x 20	2670.67
Identical Twins, Roselle, New Jersey. 1966	16 x 20	Study Coll.
Identical Twins, Cathleen and Colleen, Roselle, N.J. 1967	16 x 20	*
A Family on the Lawn on a Sunday, New York. 1963	16 x 20	*
A Family and Their Car in a Nudist Camp in Pennsylvania. '65	16 x 20	*
Man with Curlers, New York. 1966	16 x 20*	*
Teenage Couple on 10th Street, New York City. 1963	16 x 20	*
Boy with a Straw Hat and Flag, Pro War Parade, NYC. 1967	16 x 20	*

\* Photographs purchased for New Photography USA. No Accession numbers.



The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

July 12, 1972

Diane Arbus photographs in The Department of Photography  
Not the property of The Museum of Modern Art

(Couple standing by rumpled bed)	11 x 14
(Figure with dress strap off shoulder)	11 x 14
(Woman smoking cigar)	11 x 14
(Young man and woman seated)	11 x 14
(Close-up of head of sleeping baby)	11 x 14
(	
(Woman in bathing suit at hospital)	16 x 20
(Giant man at home with his parents)	16 x 20
(Three children: one bending over)	16 x 20
(Four people in costumes)	16 x 20
(Young man with flag and "I'm Proud" button)	16 x 20
(Young girl in white sweater crying)	16 x 20

## Photographs used in the Osaka Exhibition

A Family on the Lawn on a Sunday, Purchase, N.Y. 1968	11 x 14
Widownin Her Bedroom, 55th St., N.Y.C. 1963	11 x 14
Baby in New Jersey. 1967	11 x 14
Teenage Couple on 10th Street, N.Y.C. 1963	11 x 14
Christmas Tree in a Living Room, Levittown, N.Y. 1962	11 x 14
Identical Twins, Roselle, New Jersey. 1966	11 x 14
Junior Interstate Dance Champions of 1963. N.Y.C.	11 x 14
Bird Mask. 1967	11 x 14
Muscle Builder, 1968	11 x 14

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

Dear John,

Here's the correspondence about Vineland. Neil is beginning to make the prints for you to send them and Marvin will get them to you as soon as they're done.

Let me know how it goes. For no particular reason it's become one of those things that comes into my head in the middle of the night and sticks there.

*Don*



The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

What I am trying to clarify here is not a matter that can be settled by restrictions but is rather a matter of intent: I do assume that you will make pictures available for publicity at the time of the exhibition, beyond the twenty five to be released by the Museum.

4. The Museum agrees to not release publicity prints in connection with the exhibition, except to other institutions that may be interested in the show after the end of April of next year, when the exhibition comes down here after the show. After this date publicity requests that seem potentially valuable will be cleared with you.

Dear Doon,

To make sure that we now have the same understanding of how the question of publicity will be handled on Diane's show it might be a good idea for me to put in writing what I understand our agreement to be:

1. At this point twenty five photographs from the exhibition are to be available to the Museum for distribution without charge for reviews or news stories connected to the exhibition. These prints will be produced from copy negatives made from originals lent by you or in the Museum's collections. These pictures will be those included in the existing portfolio of original prints, plus the projected portfolio of reproductions, with the exception of the portrait of the nudist couple in the woods. In addition to these nineteen, the six additional pictures will include the early transvestite couple (35mm); the young nudist waitress with apron; Amy on Cape Cod; woman in black dress and black mask; and two pictures to be chosen, I suggest from the Vineland and late Central Park pictures.

2. It is essential that publications that express interest in publicizing the exhibition do understand that publicity prints are available from the Museum without charge. Obviously the Museum must not be in a position where it would appear that some publications are being charged for the same thing that others are being granted free of charge. If this is made clear, a publication that expresses a preference for working from original rather than copy prints, is free to get these from you at whatever price you determine, as long as it is understood that the charge is not for reproduction rights, since these are available from the Museum without charge.

3. I assume that you will be willing to make available by special arrangement and for payment, the larger part of the remaining (approximately 100) prints that will be included in the exhibition. It is understood that you will feel free to withhold for various reasons a reasonable number of pictures from publication at this time. With reference to pictures beyond the twenty five defined above, it goes without saying that you are free to grant exclusive rights to publications of your choice, and that you will at your discretion limit the number of pictures to be used by any one publication.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

What I am trying to clarify here is not a matter that can be defined by restrictions but is rather a matter of intent: I do assume that you will make pictures available for publicity at the time of the exhibition, beyond the twenty five to be released by the Museum.

4. The Museum agrees to not release publicity prints, in connection with the exhibition, except to other institutions that may be taking the show after the end of April of next year, when the exhibition comes down here at the Museum. After this date publicity requests that seem potentially valuable will be cleared with you.

5. If the exhibition is to be properly publicized, it is essential that the Public Information Department here be kept fully aware of conversations on arrangements that you may wish to make directly with magazines and other publicity outlets. Elizabeth Shaw can at the same time keep you informed as to her activity.

I hope that this covers the publicity question and that it is a fair summary of what our understanding is. In practice the matter is less complicated than it probably sounds on paper.

Since I am writing things down I might as well make note of a couple of additional past arrangements: the \$1,000 payment made early this year was for five unspecified prints, which will be selected from the loan material.

The period for which the exhibition is being offered to other museums extends through May of 1974. I think it rather likely that the Exhibitions Department may request an extension of the loan period later on, but at this point we will request the loans only until mid-1974. If there are other questions that you think might get to be problems, let us try to thrash them out now so that we can get on with the good part. And if there is anything in this letter that seems at variance with what we have agreed on, please do let me know.

With all best,

John Szarkowski

Miss Doon Arbus  
55 West 68th Street  
New York, New York 10023

cc: Marvin Israel



FOR STUDY PURPOSES ONLY. NOT FOR REPRODUCTION.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

Dear John  
I would be most  
inordinately grateful  
if you would find  
someone to spot the prints  
with high esteem.  
Dorothy



FOR STUDY PURPOSES ONLY. NOT FOR REPRODUCTION.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31



FOR STUDY PURPOSES ONLY. NOT FOR REPRODUCTION.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

A FORMER STUDENT IS  
WORKING AT THIS NITE SPOT  
AS STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER...  
I WILL HAVE ALL OF DIANE'S  
PICTURES FOR YOU AT THE END  
OF THE WEEK. MARVIN

CAN I SEE YOU FOR  
A MOMENT THEN.

THIS IS A JUMBO POSTCARD

MR JOHN SZARKOWSKI  
MUSEUM OF MODERN ART  
21 WEST 53<sup>RD</sup>  
NEW YORK CITY 10022





The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

Hans van den Houten

Richard Palmer

September 14, 1972

DIANE ARBUS

Dear Hans,

This will follow-up our conversation of yesterday morning in which I advised you that we will be incurring an expense for "outside assistance" for the ARBUS exhibition which was not anticipated in the budget. John Szarkowski has had to depend heavily on Marvin Israel to go through Diane Arbus' records, to find negatives, have them proofed, and then supervise the making of final prints for our show. This has been a very time-consuming job and there is no question in John's mind but what we must pay Mr. Israel for his services since they have been and are essential to the show. I understand a payment of \$1,000 has been agreed upon although it does not represent a true reimbursement for the amount of time involved.

John and I feel we will be able to squeeze this payment out of the existing budget since we expect carpentry and "miscellaneous installation costs" both to be well under the approved budget levels. With your authorization, we will proceed to make the payment to Mr. Israel, charging it to the contingency line of the ARBUS budget. If, in the end, there is a budget overrun, John and I have already discussed how it might be handled.

cc: ✓ Mr. Szarkowski, Mr. Skryanz, Mr. Idell, Ms. Ristuccia, ARBUS-expenses, RP-financial

Frightening can happen to them, so don't have to go through life dreading what may happen. It's already happened. They've passed their test. They're aristocrats.

"As I told you, I've spent the past eight years—which is how long I've been devoting my full time to my photography—exploring, caring, doing things I'd once done before, things I'd fantasized about as a child—like all children do. I've taken risks, and I've never gotten into any serious trouble. I'm a little feck-burdy as



The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

4

1. walking around her exhibit room, Diane was reluctant to discuss the people or the situations in her pictures because she prides herself in getting people to open up their secrets to her and her ability to keep these secrets. She's very anxious to remain anonymous so people won't immediately recognize her and shy away from her before she can then into letting her photograph them---so, she asked that her picture not be used in the film story. She did discuss some of the subjects in general, though: Standing before a picture of a <sup>trio</sup> ~~family~~ of Russian circus performers who were <sup>midgets</sup> ~~freaks~~ she said: "The freaks were an early <sup>trio</sup> ~~interest~~ interest for me. I started to go to carnivals, circuses, fairs--things I'd never done <sup>much</sup> as a child. Freaks were among the first circus people that impressed me. I like them and find them extraordinary because they've already passed their test. Most people know <sup>or fear</sup> that sometimes in their life they're going to have to face some monumental, traumatic experience--so they sort of have this dread hanging in ~~front~~ front of them all through life. But the freaks are born with a ~~trauma~~ situation that is ~~tra~~ traumatic--they know that nothing much worse or more frightening can happen to them, so <sup>that</sup> ~~so~~ don't have to go through life dreading what may happen it's already happened. They've passed their test. They're aristocrats.

2. "As I told you, I've spent <sup>the</sup> the past eight years <sup>s/</sup> which is how long I've been devoting my full time to my photography --exploring, daring, doing things I'd ~~can~~ never done before, things I'd fantasized about as a child--like all children do. I've taken risks, and I've never gotten into any serious trouble. I'm a little fool-hardy 43

FOR STUDY PURPOSES ONLY. NOT FOR REPRODUCTION.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series/Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

NEWSWEEK RESEARCH REPORT

DEPARTMENT: Art RESEARCHER: Ann Ray Martin DATE: 3/6/67  
SUBJECT: Diane Arbus, 131 1/2 Charles. WA 4-4608 or CR 7-1846  
SOURCES: Diane Arbus

Thirty-two ~~photographs~~ <sup>her</sup> photographs by Diane Arbus fill ~~the~~ exhibit room in the MOMA

"New Documents" show. Her subjects range from transsexuals, ~~transvestites~~ transvestites and dwarfs.

to overly wise teenage couples ~~and~~ and nudists. Asked why she's interested in the

sexually unusual she said: "It's irrational to be born in a certain place, ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup>

and it's irrational how much you can change these circumstances...and how

a gap between the guise people ~~think~~ think they're present

world actually sees ~~in them~~. All sorts of ~~other~~ cases of

re-frocks, for instance--the ~~dwarfs~~ <sup>in</sup> ~~dwarfs~~. Part of the reason

graph then is that it's educational--it's like if you could

as you'd learn something from him that you could not over

back to photography--and ~~never~~ before did I do work

a sort of grown up. A lot of the things I photograph have

, childhood fantasies. I was raised in an upper-middle-c

Jewish family--my father had a large furrier <sup>1/2</sup> department ~~store~~ sort of thing--

we lived on Park Ave. when times were good, and during the depression we lived on Central

Park West. I had a governess--the whole bit. The whole idea of my being Jewish and

born rich is part of that irrationality too. And if ~~you're~~ you're born one thing

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Pg 3

is missing



FOR STUDY PURPOSES ONLY. NOT FOR REPRODUCTION.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series/Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

NEWSWEEK RESEARCH REPORT

DEPARTMENT: Art RESEARCHER: Ann Ray Martin DATE: 3/6/67

SUBJECT: Diane Arbus, 1914- Charles. WA 4-4608 or CA 7-4848

SOURCES: Diane Arbus

Thirty-two ~~photographs~~ <sup>her</sup> photographs by Diane Arbus fill ~~the~~ exhibit room in the MOMA

"New Documents" show. Her subjects range from transsexuals, ~~transvestites~~ transvestites and dwarfs.

to overly wise teenage couples ~~and~~ and nudists. Asked why she's interested in the

sexually unusual she said: "It's irrational to be born in a certain place, ~~and~~ sex

sex, time--and it's irrational how much you can change these circumstances...and how

much you can't. There's also a gap between the guise people ~~put~~ think they're present

to the world and what the world actually sees ~~in them~~. All sorts of ~~strange~~ cases of

identity are interesting to me--freaks, for instance--the ~~dwarfs~~ <sup>little</sup> dwarfs. Part of the reason

I like to ~~photograph~~ photograph them is that it's educational--it's like if you could

talk to someone with two heads you'd learn something from him that you could not even

learn in any other way. ~~It's not like you can go to a museum and see a collection of~~

~~photographs~~ I didn't ~~really~~ go back to photography--and ~~never~~ before did I do work

like this--until my kids were sort of grown up. A lot of the things I photograph have

to do with childhood secrets, childhood fantasies. I was raised in an upper-middle-

Jewish family--my father had a large furrier <sup>5/</sup>department store sort of thing--

we lived on Park Ave. when times were good, and during the depression we lived on Central

Park West. I had a governess--the whole bit. The whole idea of my being Jewish and

born rich is part of that irrationality too. And if ~~you're~~ you're born one thing



The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

instead of five million other things you can, if you dare, venture to become as glass

as you can to being ten thousand other things. This is hard when you're young--like

a woman spends the first first major block of her life looking for a husband and being

a woman and a mother and trying to actually get these roles down pat--you don't have

time to play other ~~the~~ roles--but now ~~different~~ because of my age, I have much less to lose

if I try to play out all these fantasies. My childhood was pretty sheltered, or buffered

I should say, by advantages. I don't remember when the old Reservoir <sup>System</sup> ~~was~~ <sup>around 1837</sup> was

emptied there was a shanty town that sprang up there--tin <sup>(cardboard)</sup> cardboard houses. I stood

there with my governess on the rim looking down at it. So now I think I use my photograph

to be all these ten thousands other things--I do it in order not to be exempt or in any

Diane Arbus is not much more than 5 feet tall, has huge grayish eyes, a pert nose, and wavy gray hair and wears a total

poplin mini-suit made along the lines of an ~~business~~ <sup>composite</sup> costume to be worn on an African

safari. She obviously enjoyed watching the ~~immense~~ crowd of viewers look at her picture.

"I've been here as many times as I can get here--I love it. The show looks wonderful.

Now it's beautifully hung--and all the pictures look so...so professional. And of course

it impresses me tremendously to have a show at the Museum of Modern Art, but I wouldn't

have done it for anyone but John Szarkowsky--he's wonderful. I always thought <sup>OK</sup> ~~that~~ whit

until I'm 90 ~~and then~~ have a show or write a book, because I figured I was good for only

- one shot---that I wanted to wait until I had it all done. But then I decided

perhaps that was even more pretentious than having a show now. *The Show*

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

In walking around her exhibit room, Diane was reluctant to discuss the people or the situations in her pictures because she prides herself in getting people to open up their secrets to her and her ability to keep these secrets. She's very anxious to remain anonymous so people won't immediately recognize her and shy away from her before she can con them into letting her photograph them---so, she asked that her picture not be used in the film story. She did discuss some of the subjects in general though: Standing before a picture of a <sup>trio</sup> ~~group~~ of Russian circus performers who were ~~midgets~~ she said: "The freaks were an early interest for me. I started to go to carnivals, circuses, fairs--things I'd never done as a child. Freaks were among the first circus people that impressed me. I like them and find them extraordinary because they've already passed their test. Most people know, <sup>much</sup> that sometimes in their life they're going to have to face some monumental, traumatic experience--so they sort of have this dread hanging in ~~front~~ front of them all through life. But the freaks are born with a ~~traumatic~~ situation that is ~~too~~ traumatic--they know that nothing much worse or more frightening can happen to them, so <sup>that</sup> don't have to go through life dreading what may happen it's already happened. They've passed their test. They're aristocrats.

"As I told you, I've spent the past eight years <sup>of</sup> which is how long I've been devoting my full time to my photography --exploring, daring, doing things I'd ~~can~~ never done before, things I'd fantasized about as a child, like all children do. I've taken risks, and I've never gotten into any serious trouble. I'm a little fool-hardy do



The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series/Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

1009563

in rushing in to explore all these things--transvestites down in the Village, burlesque houses in New Jersey, things like that. Others don't take pictures like like these, and I don't have to, but that's what makes me like I am.

"And back to the freaks--you can't become a freak, but you can be a fan of freaks--  
I am. I'd much rather be a fan of freaks than of movie stars, because movie stars get bored with their fans, and freaks really love for someone to pay them honest attention not making fun of them, of course; I could never do that---I really am a fan. I think they're aristocratic."

About the pictures made in the nudist camps: "I've been to three nudist camps--  
I'm a nudist. I don't think they'd like to photograph them like this if they thought I was just there as a photographer--I really like nudism, it's great. I admit I happened upon nudist camps because I thought they'd be in line with the sort of pictures I was doing, but it turned out I really liked it for its own sake. The reasons I photograph freaks on the one hand and nudists on the other is that they're both apart from the norm, but I can't be a freak and I can be a nudist--there's the knowledge of possibility of taking on a new role as a nudist, not just fantasy. There's a quality of legend about freaks. Like a person in a fairy tale who stops you and demands that you answer a riddle. You see, I can enact my childhood fantasies."

She has photographs of twins and triplets--identical, in both cases. Why? "I thought



The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series/Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

6

how absolutely ordinary is a charming pair of twins, although we make over them. Can you imagine a society in which twins were considered <sup>2</sup>taboo? ~~It's strange strange which alterations~~ ~~and in which people who were chosen.~~ It's strange strange which alterations societies choose to honor and dishonor. In some cultures mongoloid children are regarded, in others ~~midwives~~ ~~are thought to be witches.~~ These triplets? They remind me of myself, my own adolescent self--lined up in three images, each with a tiny difference.

"The Burlesque Comedian"--a blowy, chubby blonde sitting before her cluttered dressing table backstage: "I went to a burlesque show a couple of years ago--I'd never been to one when I was a kid. This comedian looks <sup>change</sup> like she stopped when burlesque died--in the 1940's--with her Betty Grable hair and mouth, and platform shoes."

Diane said she used to be a fashion photographer with her husband, and their work appeared mostly in Seventeen, Glamour, Mademoiselle. She's done ~~work~~ work since she been <sup>in</sup> on her serious art-photography phase, for Harper's Bazaar and Esquire. She uses either a 35 millimetre or a two and a-quarter camera and prints the pictures at whatever size appeals to her based on the subject. For the exhibit ~~she~~ she blew some of them up to life-size at John Szarkowsky's suggestion. Her photos--most of them--and those of the two other photographers in the show are on sale. Her prices are \$50-75, depending on size.

(mrm)

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

Asked if she deliberately uses distortions in her work she said: "The process of photographing itself is a little bit of a distortion, but I'm not interested in distortion itself. Photography is different from painting--in lots of ways, of course--but one of the ways is that the camera is recalcitrant--it's determined to do one thing and you may want to do something else--you have to fuse what you want and what the camera wants. I think my pictures are often too narrowed, too zoomed in."

Bio: "I was born in ~~Upper~~ Manhattan, as I said, of upper-class Jewish parents. I was a surly child but I was certainly happy enough, I suppose. I went to Ethical Culture school--~~F~~Fieldston. Then I got married and I have two children--~~from~~ a twenty-two-year-old daughter, <sup>60%</sup>Dawn, and a twelve-year-old, Amy. My husband and I are now separated, but we're very good friends and he helps me with ~~photography~~ photography projects sometimes. I studied photography with Lisette Model. She helped me a great deal. For I'd gone along thinking about photography more than doing it. Lisette told me I had a feeling guilty about being a woman and not understanding machinery. Painters have to ~~draw~~ <sup>I always thought</sup> every line that ends up on their canvas and they experience the thing more, ~~where~~ where it always bothered me that all I had to do ~~was~~ was snap. Lisette talked to me about the ancient camera was and she talked about light and that if light really stains the silver or ~~what the heck that stuff on a film is--that memory~~ can stain too--that I could experience just as fully the scene I was <sup>shooting</sup> ~~seeing~~ as a painter could in painting it. And she shook my puritan hang-ups about things that are



The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

fun should shouldn't be good and important. She told me to take pictures when I felt like it, to enjoy it. She told me to take photographs when it was fun and when it was easy. So, that way I enjoyed it and I learned from working--fun--<sup>Wo</sup>working--so much, the I wanted to shoot pictures all the time. I recently bought an old car for \$20 and now I drive all over Jersey and Brooklyn. I work from an awkwardness, whereas Dick Ivedon works from ~~grace~~ grace. By that I mean, I don't like to arrange things. If I stand in front of something, instead of arranging it I arrange myself. It's important to take bad pictures--it's the bad ones that have to do with what you've never done before. Sometimes looking in a camera frame is like looking in a kaleidoscope and you shake it around and sometimes it just won't shake out right. I'm not a virtuoso. I can't do <sup>just</sup> anything I want. In fact I can't seem to do anything I want. Except be a spy. ~~Since~~ I've got incredible power locked in my closet--not power to do harm--just feeling that I have captured pictures of people who since have died and people will never look that way again. I love secrets and I can find out anything. ~~Since~~ I'm clever--I don't mean I can always match wits with people, ~~because~~ 'cause I certainly can't, but I can figure myself into any situation. I choose <sup>Haris</sup>photography projects that are somewhat Mata ~~Hari~~ish. "I'll not risk my life, but I'll risk my reputation or my virtue--but I don't have so much left," she laughed. "Everyone suffers from the limitation of being only one person."

(more)

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series/Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

*Everyone does it in my opinion.*  
 "I love to go ~~down~~ into other people's houses. I think that's part of the thrill of seduction for a woman--to see how he lives, the pictures on the walls, his wife's slippers in the bathroom. But ~~I'm not~~ *I'm not* being vicarious --I really am involved. And all the time I'm photographing I'm having a terrific time."

"I found fashion photography frightening, but dangers of violence--rape, murder--are more moving and not as dangerous in my way of thinking. I can't think of anything quite as frightening as having to make a living or having to take a good picture. And about fashion--I hate fashion photography because the clothes don't belong to the people who are wearing them. When the clothes do belong to the person wearing them they take on a person's flaws and characteristics and are wonderful."

She's won two Guggenheims, both for ~~other~~ *other* work in this country. The first, in 1963, she devoted to "American Rites"--trying to do comprehensive pictures of hundreds of people. The beauty contest picture is from that time. The public, the masses, the social vagaries--not individual ones--interested me ~~then~~ *then* then. But I got tired--and also mass happenings are hard to condense into one picture and I hate photo essays. The current Guggenheim, I got it in 1966, I'm using to explore--to learn about anything I don't know about: sex, secrets--~~for~~ *for* pictures. Avedon has a criticism of my pictures ~~that~~ *that* which is that formally they're in the tradition of the 19th century in that they're unarranged--but I hate to arrange."



The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series/Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

10

Told that her pictures, particularly "The <sup>Widow</sup> ~~Widow~~" reminded me of Joseph Cornell's ~~little~~ boxes, Diane was very pleased: "I love his secrets, all those little secrets in little boxes. And I adore Steinberg, and I adore Pinter's 'The Homecoming'. Pinter has such secrets in his use of language."

The name of the show is "New Documents", what does that mean to you? "The word 'document' had a sense of literalness. I like it that in part a fantasy can be a

"I like danger. And when you face things that scare you and you survive you've conquered your anxiety, which is worse than the danger could ever be."

About the gap between guise and truth: "One's whole guise is like giving a sign to the world to think of you in a certain way, but there's a point between what you want people to know about you and things you can't help people knowing about you."

The camera is cruel. And although I think people have to betray each other, I feel the camera is so cold that I try to be as good as I can to make things even. The poetry, the irony, the fantasy are all built in."

About Avedon: "I do terribly admire Avedon's work---it's influenced me terrifically

And he has personally been helpful to me."

Her abiding passion is to discover secrets---and I feel she is gentle with them: "When I walk along the streets I look up at buildings and see all those windows

I think, behind each window is a room and I think of myself like 'The Little Match Girl'---pressing my nose to all those windows"

#

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

## ARBUS

Diane Arbus was possessed by an intelligence so keen and lively that one listened with elbows on knees, so not to miss even one of the clear and simple surprises that her talk was <sup>rich</sup> ~~filled~~ with. She was full of the kind of serious gaiety ordinarily observed only in the best of children. At forty-seven she resembled, at first glance, a ~~game~~ <sup>game</sup> but slightly worried child. Both the youth and the uncertainty were doubtless in part cultivated, designed to create in precise measure a self-deprecating suggestion of amateurism, that might partially conceal both her superior intelligence and her fierce ambition. The ambition was of the most demanding kind, since its object was not applause or money or power, but personal excellence.

This appetite was mitigated also by a wholly genuine wit, that accepted without rancor life's idea of an interesting story. She enjoyed ~~formal~~ <sup>repeated</sup> formal jokes, and herself ~~told~~ <sup>repeated</sup> at least one: in which one man asks the other, Why have you got that banana in your ear?, and the other answers (eventually) I'm sorry I can't hear you because I have this banana in my ear. Anyone who has visited serious bars will remember the story, with affection, as one of those with which men have comforted each other, and diminished the defeats and humiliations of the day. But when Arbus told the story it was promoted somehow from folklore to myth. Her story spoke of the ~~element~~ <sup>ineluctable</sup> separateness of each of us.

This intuition was also the basis for her work. Her pictures challenged the basic assumptions on which most so-called documentary photography ~~fixes~~ had been assumed to rest. ~~Now~~ They were concerned with private rather than social realities, with psychological rather than visual coherence, with the prototypical and mythic rather than the topical and temporal.

Often - though less often than is assumed - the nominal subject



The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

Arbus-2

matter of her pictures was exotic. Among her best portraits are many of transvestites, nudists, other ideological specialists, freaks, and the mentally retarded. The meaning of these pictures has been missed by those who have not noticed that in ~~these pictures~~<sup>them</sup> (as in those that she made of the rest of us) her real subject was no less than the unique interior lives of those she photographed. Her most frequently recurring subject was in fact children, perhaps because their individuality was purer, less skillfully concealed, closer to the surface.

She was not a theorist but an artist. Her concern was not to buttress philosophical positions but to make pictures. She loved photography for the miracles it performs each day by accident, and respected it for the precise intentional tool that it could be, given talent, intelligence, dedication, and discipline. Her interest in the medium's tradition was broad and generous, but her own favorite predecessors were ~~those~~ those whose work nourished her own: August Sander, Brassai, Weegee, and Bill Brandt. She revered these photographers for the precision of their feeling, the economy of their description, the blunt immobility of their imagery, and surely also for their knowledge of darkness. In their photographs she found an unornamented truthfulness that was resonant with her own guesses.

Everyone <sup>knows</sup> ~~knows~~ that honesty is a good thing. Arbus knew also that it is ~~not~~ a gift, endowed by a native naivete, nor a matter of style, or politics, or philosophy. It is rather a reward<sup>ar</sup> bestowed for bravery in the face of the truth. Those who have been news reporters, and have been required by their role to ask the unforgivable question, or make the unforgivable photograph, know the sense of relief with which one averts one's eyes, once perfunctory duty is done. Arbus did not avert her eyes. She stuck with her subjects, exploring their secrets (and thus her own) more and more deeply, and in the process exposing herself to the infection of despair. She was surely aware of

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

Arbus-3

the danger of this path, but she believed that her bravery would be equal to the demands she <sup>made</sup> ~~put~~ of it. She died, perhaps, of the sin of pride.

I did not really know Diane Arbus well, although she was a cherished friend for almost nine years. There was a large area of private thought and feeling that our friendship did not attempt to enter, except perhaps occasionally through <sup>jokes</sup> or other elliptical codes. She had about her an almost ceremonial sensitivity to roles - not only her own role, but the roles of others, defined according to her own subtly demanding intuitions. This made friendship with her rather like a measured dance at a masked ball - more exciting and more challenging, and less spontaneous, than real life. This careful self-discipline, with its suggestion of reticence, was ~~per~~ I think required by her work. She had assigned herself the task of photographing mysteries so shy, fugative, and terrific that they, or she, might have been frightened off, had the issues been openly stated.



The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

and the other is that it's totally peculiar. But there's some other in

I tend to think of the act of photographing generally speaking as an adventure. I mean my favorite thing is to go where I've never been. For me there's something just about going into somebody else's house. When it comes time to go, if I have to take a bus to somewhere or if I have to take a cab uptown, it's like I've got a blind date in a sense. It's always seemed something like that to me. And sometimes I have a sinking feeling of...oh God, it's time and I really don't want to go. And then, once I'm on my way, something terrific takes over about the sort of queasiness of it and how there's absolutely no method for control. ~~this and you sometimes see that very clearly in a photograph.~~

There are things which, if I were just curious about them, it would be very hard to say to someone, "I want to come and just go to your house and have you talk to me and tell me the story of your life." I mean people are going to say, "You're crazy." Plus they're going to keep mighty guarded. But the camera is a kind of license and, ~~for a lot of~~ for a lot of people, they want to be paid that much attention and that's a reasonable kind of attention to be paid.

Actually, they tend to like me. I'm extremely likeable with them. I think I'm kind of two-faced. I'm very ingratiating. It really kind of annoys me. I mean I think I'm that by nature. I'm just sort of a little too nice. [Everything is 66000.] I hear myself saying, "How terrific," and here's this hideous woman, making a hideous face. I really mean it's terrific. I don't mean I wish I looked like that. I don't mean I wish my children looked like that. I don't mean in my private life I want to kiss you. But I mean that's amazingly, undeniably something.

There are always two things that happen. One is recognition ~~xxxxx~~

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

-2-

and the other is that it's totally peculiar. But there's some sense in in which I always identify with them.

The process itself has a kind of sensitivity, a kind of sensitivity that Everybody has that thing where they need to look one way but they come out looking another way and that's what people observe. You see someone walking along the street and you think, there's something funny about them. It's something you store up in your head. It's like a comic variation, a comic flaw for you. I mean if you scrutinize reality closely enough, or if in some way you really, really get to it, it becomes fantastic. You know, it really is totally fantastic that we look like this and you sometimes see that very clearly in a photograph. It has to do with this thing I used to call the gap between intention and effect. Something is ironic in the world and it has to do with the fact that what you intend never comes out like you intend it.

What I'm trying to describe is that it's impossible to get out of your skin into somebody else's. And that's somehow what all this is a little bit about. That somebody else's tragedy is not the same as your own.

Another thing is a photograph has to be specific. I remember a long time ago when I first began to photograph I thought, there are an awful lot of people in the world and it's going to be terribly hard to photograph all of them so, if I photograph some kind of generalized human being, everybody'll recognize it. It'll be like what they used to call the common man or something like that. It was my teacher, Lisette Model, who finally made it clear to me that the more specific you are, the more general it'll be. You know, you really have to face that thing.



The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

-3-

And there are certain evasions, certain nicenesses that I think you have to get out of.

The process itself has a kind of exactitude, a kind of scrutiny that we're not normally subject to. I mean that we don't subject each other to. We're nicer to each other than the intervention of the camera is going to make us. It's a little bit cold, a little bit harsh.

Now, I don't mean to say that all photographs have to be mean. Sometimes they show something really nicer than what you felt, or oddly different. But in a way this scrutiny has to do with not evading facts, not evading what it really looks like.

Freaks was a thing I photographed a lot. It was one of the first things I photographed and it had a terrific kind of excitement for me. I just used to adore them. I still do adore some of them. I don't quite mean they're my best friends but I felt a mixture of shame and awe. Like a person in a fairy tale who stops you and demands that you answer a riddle, they've passed their test in life. Most people go through life dreading they'll have a traumatic experience. Freaks were born with their trauma. They've already passed it.

Sometimes you can see a photograph or a painting -- this is a thing I've often worked from and it comes totally automatically -- you see it and you think, That's not the way it is. I don't mean a feeling of I don't like it. I mean the feeling that this is fantastic, BUT...a totally private feeling when you come outdoors of how different it is. Something will come up in you very strongly of No, a terrific No.

I'm not saying I get it only from photographs I don't like. I also

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

-4-

get it from pictures I like a lot. ~~xxxxxx~~ You come outdoors and all you've got is you and all photographs begin to fall away and you think, my God, it's really totally different. I don't mean to say you can do it precisely like it is, but you do it more like it is.

Photography tends to deal with facts whereas film tends to deal with fiction. The best example I know is that when you go to the movies and you see two people in bed, you're ~~xxxxxx~~ willing to put aside the fact that you perfectly well know that there was a director and a cameraman and assorted lighting people all in that same room and the two people in bed weren't really alone. But when you look at a photograph, you can never put that aside.

I used to have this notion when I was a kid that the minute you said anything, it was no longer true. Of course it would have driven me crazy very rapidly if I hadn't dropped it, but there's something similar in what I'm trying to say. That once it's been done, you want to go someplace else. There's just some sense of straining.

I mean I'm very little drawn to photographing people that are known or even subjects that are known. They fascinate me when I've barely heard of them and the minute they get public, I become terribly ~~xxxxxx~~ blank about them.

~~xxxxxx~~ One way to lead yourself into a project is to put things up around your bed. I mean I do that all the time, pictures of mine that I like and other things, and I change it every month or so. There's some funny subliminal thing that happens. It isn't just looking at it. It's looking at it when you're not looking



The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

-5-

at it when you're not looking at it. It really begins to act on you in a funny way.

I suppose a lot of these observations are bound to be after the fact. I mean they're nothing you can really do to yourself to get yourself to work. You can't make yourself work by putting up something beautiful on the wall or by knowing yourself. Very often knowing yourself isn't really going to lead you anywhere. Sometimes it's going to leave you kind of blank. Like, here I am, there is a me, I've got a history, I've got things that are mysterious to me in the world, I've got things that bug me in the world. But there are moments when all that doesn't seem to avail.

Another thing I've worked from is reading. It happens very obliquely. I don't mean I read something and rush out and make a picture of it. And I hate that business of illustrating poems. But here's an example of something I've never photographed that's like a photograph to me. There's a Kafka story called "Investigations of a Dog" which I read a long, long time ago and I've read it again since a number of times. It's a terrific story written by the dog and it's the real dog life of a dog.

Actually one of the first pictures I ever took must have been related to that story because it was of a dog. This was about twenty years ago and I was living in the summer on Martha's Vineyard. There was a dog that came at twilight every day. A big dog. Kind of a mutt. He had sort of Weimeraner eyes, grey eyes. I just remember it was very ~~haunting. He would come and just stare at me in what seemed a very mythic way. I mean a dog, not barking, not licking, just looking right through you. I don't think he liked me. I did take a picture of him but it wasn't~~ haunting. He would come and just stare at me in what seemed a very mythic way. I mean a dog, not barking, not licking, just looking right through you. I don't think he liked me. I did take a picture of him but it wasn't

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

-6-

particularly good.

I don't particularly like dogs. Well, I love stray dogs, dogs who don't like people. And that's the kind of dog picture I would take if I ever took a dog picture.

One thing I would never photograph is dogs lying the mud.

In the beginning of photographing, I used to make very grainy things. I'd be fascinated by what the grain did because it would make a kind of tapestry of all these little dots and everything would be translated into this medium of dots. Skin would be the same as water would be the same as sky and you were dealing mostly in dark and light, not so much in flesh and blood.

But when I'd been working for a while with all these dots, I suddenly wanted terribly to get through there. I wanted to see the real differences between things. I'm not talking about textures. I really hate that, the idea that a picture can be interesting simply because it shows texture. I mean that just kills me. I don't see what's interesting about texture. It really bores the hell out of me. But I wanted to see the difference between flesh and material, the densities of different kinds of things: air and water and shiny. So I gradually had to learn different techniques to make it come clear. I began to get terribly hyped on clarity.

But lately I've been struck with how I really love what you can't see in a photograph. An actual physical darkness. And it's very thrilling to see darkness again for me.

I think the camera is something of a nuisance in a way. It's interesting because it's a limitation and you've got to figure it out.



The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

-7-

It's like a horse. Well, that's a bad comparison because I'm not much of a horseback rider, but I mean you get to learn what it will do. I've worked with a couple of them. One will be terrific in certain situations or I can make it be terrific. Another will be very dumb but sometimes I kind of like that dumbness. It'll do, you know. I get a great sense that they're different from me. I don't feel that total identity with the machine. I mean I can work it fine, although I'm not so great actually. Sometimes when I'm winding it, it'll get stuck or something will go wrong and I just start clicking everything and suddenly, very often, it's all right again. That's my feeling about machines. If you sort of look the other way, they'll get fixed. Except for certain ones.

I used to have a theory about photographing. It was a sense of getting in between two actions, or in between action and repose. I don't mean to make a big deal of it. It was just like an expression I didn't see or wouldn't have seen. I mean one of the excitements of strobe at one time was that you were essentially blind at the moment you took the picture. I mean not really blind but it alters the light enormously and reveals things you don't see. In fact, that's what made me really sick of it. I really began to miss light like it really is and now I'm trying to get back to some kind of obscurity where at least there's normal obscurity.

There used to be this moment of panic for me, which I still can get, where I'd look in the ground glass and I wouldn't know what was wrong. It just looked ugly to me and I didn't want it that way. And I used to think maybe if I could shuffle it all around like a kaleidoscope, it would all go away. But short of that, since I couldn't do that, I just

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

-8-

back up or start to talk or, I don't know, go someplace else. But I don't think that's the sort of thing you can calculate on because there's always this mysterious thing in the process.

Very often, when you go to photograph, it's like you're going for an event. Say it's a beauty contest. You picture it in your mind a little bit, that there'll be these people who'll be the judges and they'll be choosing the winner from all these contestants and then you get there and it's not like that at all. Very often an event happens scattered, and the account of it will look to you in your mind like it's going to be very straight and photographable. But actually, one person is over there and another person is over here and they don't get together. Even when you go to do a family, you want to show the whole family, but how often are the mother and the father and the two kids all on the same side of the room? Unless you tell them to go there.

I remember one summer I worked a lot in Washington Square Park. It must have been about 1966. The Park was divided. It has these walks, sort of like a sunburst and there were these territories staked out. There were young hippie junkies down one row. There were the lesbians down another, really tough, amazingly hard-core lesbians. And in the middle were winos. They were like the first echelon and the girls who came from the Bronx to become hippies would have to sleep with the winos to get to sit on the other part with the junkie hippies. It was really remarkable. And I found it very scary. I mean I could become a nudist, I could become a million things. But I could never become that, whatever all these people were. There were days I just couldn't do it and then there were days I could. And then, having



The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

-9-

done it a little, I could do it more. I got to know a few of them. I hung around a lot. They were very much like sculptures in a funny way. I was very keen to get very close to them, so I had to ask to photograph them. You can't get that close to somebody and not say a word, although I have done that.

I have this funny thing which is that I'm never afraid when I'm looking in the ground glass. This person could be approaching with a gun or something like that and I'd have my eyes glued to the finder and it wasn't like I was really vulnerable. It just seemed terrific what was happening. I mean I'm sure there are limits. God knows, when the troops start advancing on me, you do approach that stricken feeling where you perfectly can get killed.

But there's a kind of power thing about the camera. I mean everyone knows you've got some edge. You're carrying some slight magic which does something to them. It fixes them in a way.

I used to think I was shy and I got incredibly persistent in the shyness. I remember enjoying enormously the situation of being put off and having to wait. I still do. I suppose I use that waiting time for a kind of nervousness, for getting calm or, I don't know, just waiting. It isn't such a productive time. It's a really boring time. I remember once I went to the ~~82 Club~~ 82 Club and I waited about four hours and then I couldn't photograph and they told me to come back another night. But somehow I learned to like that experience because, while being bored, I was also entranced. I mean it was boring because they kept me in a sort of outer place, but it was also mysterious, people would pass.





The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

-11-

The thing that's important to know is that you never know. You're always sort of feeling your way.

One thing that struck me very early is that you don't put into a photograph what's going to come out. Or, vice versa, what comes out is not what you put in.

I never have taken a picture I've intended. They're always better or worse.

I think you learn a lot from your mistakes. Last week I did a picture -- I've had this experience before -- and I made rough prints of a number of them. There was something wrong in all of them. I felt I'd sort of missed it and I figured I'd go back. But there was one that was just totally peculiar. It was a terrible dodo of a picture. It looks to me a little as if the lady's husband took it. It's terribly head-on and sort of ugly and there's something terrific about it. I've gotten to like it better and better and now I'm secretly sort of nutty about it.

I hate the idea of composition. I don't know what good composition is. I mean I guess I must know something about it from doing it a lot and feeling my way into it and into what I like. Sometimes for me composition has to do with a certain brightness or a certain coming to restness and other times it has to do with funny mistakes. There's a kind of rightness and wrongness and sometimes I like rightness and sometimes I like wrongness. Composition is like that.

For me, the subject of the picture is always more important than the picture. and more complicated. I do have a feeling for the print

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

## The Museum of Modern Art

but I don't have a holy feeling for it. I really think what it is is about what it's about. I mean it has to be of something. And what it's of is always more remarkable than what it is.

I just never have believed that photographs are very useful to anybody but me, I mean my photographs. I ~~xi~~ do think it would be nice to keep them because I think I do have some slight corner on something about the quality of things. It's very subtle and it's a little ~~embarrassing~~ embarrassing to me, but I really think there are things which nobody would see unless I photographed them.

1. Text Working: 0033
2. Mr. M. Committee assignments
3. Report on Publication - 100 photographs from the collection of the MoMA
4. Grant from The Daily News for the iconography of the Picture Press
5. Mr. Bullock: Fairchild Foundation proposals
6. Stamp Album Book
7. Barbara Morgan Reception - May 14, 1970
8. Earl Edward Steichen Photography Center Collection - Albert Jones
9. Proposed Acquisitions



FOR STUDY PURPOSES ONLY. NOT FOR REPRODUCTION.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

## The Museum of Modern Art

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

Department of Photography

Meeting of the Photography Committee  
Tuesday, May 2, 1972, Committee Room

### AGENDA

1. Next Meeting: ~~Oct 3/1972~~ <sup>?</sup> ~~Nov 14~~ <sup>?</sup> Oct 31
2. Dr. Moe: Committee assignments
3. Report on Publication - 100 Photographs from the Collection of the MOMA
4. Grant from The Daily News for the Iconography of the Picture Press
5. Mr. Bullowa: Fairchild Foundation prospects
6. Diane Arbus Book
7. Barbara Morgan Reception - May 4, 1972
8. Next Edward Steichen Photography Center Exhibition - Atget Trees
9. Proposed Acquisitions

FOR STUDY PURPOSES ONLY. NOT FOR REPRODUCTION.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

## The Museum of Modern Art

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

Department of Photography

May 2, 1972

### PURCHASE FUNDS

### Restricted

The Family of Man Fund	(\$2.90)	
David H. McAlpin Fund	1,090.61	
Mrs. Douglas Auchincloss Fund	100.00	1,000.00
John Parkinson III Fund	541.95	
John Spencer Fund	150.00	
Stephen R. Currier Memorial Fund	63.00	
Anonymous Fund (Grace M. Mayer)	<u>493.50</u>	
Sub Total	\$2,436.16	
Commitments Approved	<u>2,130.00</u>	
Total	\$306.16	

### SPECIAL FUNDS

Mrs. Armand Bartos Gifts	5,000.00
Mrs. E. Powis Jones Gift	500.00
The Estate of Vera L. Fraser through the offices of Arthur Bullowa	5,500.00
Osaka Exhibition Fee	3,706.00



The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series/Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

## PROPOSED ACQUISITIONS

May 2, 1972

Recommended for the Museum Collection

Edward S. Curtis:	Seven gravure prints from the volume THE NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN @25	\$175.00
Francis Frith:	Mount Hermon The Great Pyramid and Sphinx Distant View of Mount Serbal Tiberias and the Sea of Galilee The Acropolis, Athens	
	5 @15	75.00
A. Schranz (attributed to):	Mosque	15.00
Francis Bedford:	Six photographs of English scenes @5	30.00
	(Six additional for Study Collection)	
Gary L. Hallman:	Winter Fountain Cover, 1971	75.00
	Minnehaha Alley, 1971	75.00
Richard Avedon:	Brigitte Bardot, 1959	Replacement
Barbara Morgan:	Use Litter Basket Graham: Extasis Hawkins: "El Flagellante" Graham: "Letter to the World" (Kick)	
	4 @200	800.00

Gifts Offered

Barbara Morgan:	Corn Leaf Rhythm Beech Tree I Willard's Foot Spring on Madison Square
-----------------	--

FOR STUDY PURPOSES ONLY. NOT FOR REPRODUCTION.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

Acquisitions (2)

Promotion to Museum Collection

John Thomson:

Street Life in London, 1877 36 photographs

Henri LeSecq

Three "Still Life" photographs  
c.1852

Accession Number Canceled

Richard Avedon

Brigitte Bardot, 1959 366.68 Replaced by Photograp



FOR STUDY PURPOSES ONLY. NOT FOR REPRODUCTION.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

NATHAN

442-8620

GR3-3046

to do with childhood secrets, childhood fantasies. I was raised in an upper-middle-class Jewish family--my father had a large furrier/department ~~store~~ sort of thing--and we lived on Park Ave. when times were good, and during the depression we lived on Central Park West. I had a governess--the whole bit. The whole idea of my being Jewish and born rich is part of that irrationality too. And if you're born one thing

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series/Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

## ARBUS

1. KIND OF PERSON - QUALITY OR PERSONALITY + MIND
2. PHOTOGRAPHER BY ACCIDENT (?) WHO ISN'T?
3. WHAT DID SHE FIND IN IT.
4. WHO DID SHE LEARN FROM  
MODELL (TEACHER) (BRAVERY,  
BRASSAI }  
BRANDT }
5. WHAT DID SHE DO?
- 6.



The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

DEPARTMENT: Art RESEARCHER: Ann Ray Martin DATE: 3/6/67  
SUBJECT: Diane Arbus, 131 1/2 Charles. WA 4-4608 or GR 7-1848

444 Madison Avenue • New York, N.Y. 10022 • (212) 350-2000

Dick:

1 hope this note is properly designed  
to you. Anyway, the attached is an  
interview of great archival value that  
Ann Ray Martin conducted with the late  
photographer, Diane Arbus. To the best  
of my knowledge, no comparable document  
exists. I am hoping we can arrange to  
place a copy in the Photography Library  
at the Museum of Modern Art, where it  
will be of great help to students, schol-  
ars, and critics. I have spoken to  
Jack, Ann Ray, and John Szarkowski,  
curator of photography at MOMA, and  
they are all for it. Let me know what  
next to do.

Doug:

Best,  
*Aug*  
Douglas Davis

I have nothing against giving the Arbus interview to MOMA. It seems to me an excellent idea. I would, however, suggest checking with Lester. With his okay you'll be home free.

to do with childhood secrets, childhood fantasies. I was raised in an upper-middle-class Jewish family--my father had a large furrier<sup>5/</sup> department store sort of thing--and we lived on Park Ave. when times were good, and during the depression we lived on Central Park West. I had a governess--the whole bit. The whole idea of my being Jewish and born rich is part of that irrationality too. And if you're born one thing

FOR STUDY PURPOSES ONLY. NOT FOR REPRODUCTION.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

NEWSWEEK RESEARCH REPORT

DEPARTMENT: Art RESEARCHER: Ann Ray Martin DATE: 3/6/67  
SUBJECT: Diane Arbus, 131 1/2 Charles. WA 4-4608 or GR 7-1848

*Doug Davis*  
**Newsweek**

444 Madison Avenue • New York, N.Y. 10022 • (212) 350-2000

*2/25*

Dear Lester:

From me to Dick Lynch to you. Let me know if the proposal is OK.

*D.*  
Doug

*Doug -  
Same thing  
Lester B*

her  
Arbus fill the exhibit room in the MOMA's  
transsexuals, ~~and transvestites~~

. Asked why she's interested in the

be born in a certain place, ~~perhaps~~

n change these circumstances...and how

guise people ~~may~~ think they're present

~~in them~~. All sorts of ~~things~~ cases of

stance--the ~~guards~~. Part of the reason

it's educational--it's like if you could

ething from him that you could not ever

~~shouldn't be~~

phy--and ~~never~~ before did I do work

. A lot of the things I photograph have

to do with childhood secrets, childhood fantasies. I was raised in an upper-middle-class

Jewish family--my father had a large furrier department ~~store~~ sort of thing--<sup>1/2</sup>

we lived on Park Ave. when times were good, and during the depression we lived on Central

Park West. I had a governess--the whole bit. The whole idea of my being Jewish and

born rich is part of that irrationality too. And if ~~you're~~ you're born one thing



FOR STUDY PURPOSES ONLY. NOT FOR REPRODUCTION.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series/Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

NEWSWEEK RESEARCH REPORT

DEPARTMENT: Art RESEARCHER: Ann Ray Martin DATE: 3/6/67  
SUBJECT: Diane Arbus, 131 1/2 Charles. WA 4-4608 or GR 7-1848  
SOURCES: Diane Arbus

**Newsweek**

444 Madison Avenue • New York, N.Y. 10022 • (212) 350-2000

2/25/72

Dear Mr. Szarkowski:

As you can see from the attached slips, the interview is now yours. It is sure to provide fuel for some scholarly engine someday. And of course we would be happy to let Diane's daughter use it in any way she sees fit.

Cordially,

Douglas Davis

her  
Arbus fill ~~the~~ exhibit room in the MOMA's  
transsexuals, ~~and transvestites~~

. Asked why she's interested in the

be born in a certain place, ~~perhaps~~

in change these circumstances...and how

guise people ~~you~~ think they're present

~~in them~~. All sorts of ~~things~~ cases of

stance--the ~~dwarfs~~. Part of the reason

it's educational--it's like if you could

ething from him that you could not ever

~~old-fashioned~~ ~~concepts~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~world~~ ~~as~~ ~~it~~ ~~was~~ ~~in~~ ~~the~~ ~~past~~

phy--and ~~then~~ never before did I do work

. A lot of the things I photograph have

to do with childhood secrets, childhood fantasies. I was raised in an upper-middle-class

Jewish family--my father had a large furrier department ~~store~~ sort of thing--~~where~~

we lived on Park Ave. when times were good, and during the depression we lived on Central

Park West. I had a governess--the whole bit. The whole idea of my being Jewish and

born rich is part of that irrationality too. And if ~~you're~~ ~~rich~~ you're born one thing

FOR STUDY PURPOSES ONLY. NOT FOR REPRODUCTION.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series/Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

NEWSWEEK RESEARCH REPORT

DEPARTMENT: Art RESEARCHER: Ann Ray Martin DATE: 3/6/67  
SUBJECT: Diane Arbus, 131 1/2 Charles. WA 4-4608 or GR 7-1848  
SOURCES: Diane Arbus

Thirty-two ~~pictures~~<sup>her</sup> photographs by Diane Arbus fill ~~the~~ exhibit room in the MOMA's "New Documents" show. Her subjects range from transsexuals, ~~and transvestites~~ and dwarfs to overly wise teenage couples ~~and~~ and nudists. Asked why she's interested in the sexually unusual she said: "It's irrational to be born in a certain place, ~~period~~ sex, time--and it's irrational how much you can change these circumstances...and how much you can't. There's also a gap between the guise people ~~put~~ think they're presenting to the world and what the world actually sees ~~in them~~. All sorts of ~~strange~~ cases of identity are interesting to me--freaks, for instance--the ~~dwarfs~~<sup>little people</sup>. Part of the reason I like to ~~photograph~~ photograph them is that it's educational--it's like if you could talk to someone with two heads you'd learn something from him that you could not ever learn in any other way. ~~I didn't~~ I didn't ~~go~~ go back to photography--and ~~never~~ never before did I do work like this--until my kids were sort of grown up. A lot of the things I photograph have to do with childhood secrets, childhood fantasies. I was raised in an upper-middle-class Jewish family--my father had a large furrier department ~~store~~ store sort of thing--and we lived on Park Ave. when times were good, and during the depression we lived on Central Park West. I had a governess--the whole bit. The whole idea of my being Jewish and born rich is part of that irrationality too. And if you're ~~born~~ you're born one thing



The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series/Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

2

instead of five million other things you can, if you dare, venture to become as close as you can to being ten thousand other things. This is hard when you're young--like a woman spends the ~~first~~ first major block of her life looking for a husband and being a woman and a mother and trying to actually get those roles down pat--you don't have time to play other ~~the~~ roles--but now <sup>43</sup> because of my age, I have much less to lose

if I try to play out all these fantasies. My childhood was pretty sheltered, or buffered. I should say, by advantages. I ~~never~~ remember when the old <sup>South</sup> reservoir in the 90's was emptied there <sup>was</sup> a shanty town that sprang up there--tin, cardboard houses. I stood there with my governess on the rim looking down at it. So now I think I use my photograph to be all these ten thousand's other things--I do it in order not to be exempt or immune.

not much more than <sup>that</sup> have huge gray-ish eyes, a pert nose, Diane Arbus is <sup>5</sup> 5 feet <sup>and</sup> tall, <sup>around 86th</sup> ~~black~~ gray hair and wore a beige poplin mini-suit made along the <sup>composite</sup> lines of an <sup>fencing</sup> costume to be worn on an African safari. She obviously enjoyed watching the ~~immense~~ crowd of viewers look at her pictures. "I've been here as many times as I can get here--I love it. The show looks wonderful, ~~the~~ it's beautifully hung--and all the pictures look so...so professional. And of course it impresses me tremendously to have a show at the Museum of Modern Art, but I wouldn't have done it for anyone but John Szarkowsky--he's wonderful. I always thought <sup>I'd</sup> wait until I'm 90 <sup>to</sup> have a show or write a book, because I figured I was good for only one shot--that <sup>I</sup> wanted to wait ~~until~~ until I had it all done. But then I decided perhaps perhaps that was even more pretentious than having a ~~show~~ show now. <sup>The show</sup>

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

has a rightness. I love to overhear what people say about the show. One woman looked at all the pictures and then said to her companion: <sup>V</sup>I'd sure like to see a photo of ~~Diene~~ Diane Arbus, 'implying anyone who takes weird pictures like this has got to be weird herself. And then a mother came in with two small kids--it was obviously culture day, uplift time. She started talking to the kids in a loud voice, the way mothers do. She obviously missed seeing the first picture, which is of a transvestite, and came to the second ~~picture~~ picture --which is two children dancing in dancing class. So she said, 'Oh isn't this interesting--look, children, it's a dancing class.' Then she came to the little boy standing in the park with the toy hand grenade, and she said: 'Oh, see the boy is standing in the park holding a toy.' Then she came ~~then~~ to the picture of the transvestite with hair curlers and long fingernails, and without reading the caption she said: 'Now here a lady with her hair rolled up.' <sup>And</sup> Then she read the caption, which says 'Young Man in Curlers'. Well, very quickly she gathered the kids together and said, 'Come, children, let's go see the sculpture in the other room.' And couples are interesting. Like a man and wife came in and the husband kept saying about the ~~picture~~ pictures: 'This is great--I feel I know all the people--I've seen all these people--I know all these situations.' His wife looked at him oddly and said: 'You do?' And then another couple came through and the man ~~him~~ said: 'This is nothing--I could do all the pictures ~~myself~~ myself--she's not such a great photographer.' And his wife said: 'Well, why don't you?' And he said: 'You ~~think~~ call that good photography?' She said: ~~Yes~~ 'No.' He said: 'You call that bad photography?' She said: 'No.' And he said: 'Well then, what is it?' She said: 'It's telling it like it is, Baby.'"



The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series/Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

4

In walking around her exhibit room, Diane was reluctant to discuss the people or the situations in her pictures because she prides herself in getting people to open up their secrets to her and her ability to keep those secrets. She's very anxious to remain anonymous so people won't immediately recognize her and shy away from her but before she can even think into letting her photograph them---so, she asked that her picture not be used in the show story. She did discuss some of the subjects in general, though: Standing before a picture of a <sup>trio</sup> of Russian circus performers who were <sup>midgets</sup> she said: "The freaks were an early interest for me. I started to go to carnivals, circuses, fairs--things I'd never done as a child. Freaks were among the first circus people that impressed me. I like them and find them extraordinary because they've already passed their test. Most people know <sup>much</sup> that sometime in their life they're going to have to face some monumental, traumatic experience--so they sort of have this dread hanging in ~~front~~ front of them all through life. But the freaks are born with a ~~traumatic~~ situation that is <sup>half</sup> traumatic--they know that nothing much worse or more frightening can happen to them, so <sup>half</sup> don't have to go through life dreading what may happen. It's already happened. They've passed their test. They're aristocrats.

"As I told you, I've spent the past eight years <sup>s</sup> which is how long I've been devoting my full time to my photography --exploring, daring, doing things I'd ~~can~~ never done before, things I'd fantasized about as a child,--like all children do. I've taken risks, and I've never gotten into any serious trouble. I'm a little fool-hardy

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

Bo 98563

in rushing in to explore all these things--transvestites down in the Village, burlesque houses in New Jersey, things like that. Others don't take pictures like these, and I don't have to, but that's what makes me like I am.

"And back to the freaks--you can't become a freak, but you can be a fan of freaks--  
I am. I'd much rather be a fan of freaks than of movie stars, because movie stars get bored with their fans, and freaks really love for someone to pay them honest attention--not making fun of them, of course; I could never do that---I really am a fan. I think they're aristocratic."

About the pictures made in the nudist camps: "I've been to three nudist camps--  
I'm a nudist. I don't think they'd like me photograph them like this if they thought I was just there as a photographer--I really like nudism, it's great. I admit I happened upon nudist camps because I thought they'd be in line with the sort of pictures I was doing, but it turned out I really liked it for its own sake. The reasons I photograph freaks on the one hand and nudists on the other is that they're both apart from the norm, but I can't be a freak and I can be a nudist--there's the knowledge of possibility of taking on a new role as a nudist, not just fantasizing.  
There's a quality of legend about freaks. Like a person in a fairy tale who stops you and demands that you answer a riddle. You see, I can enact my childhood fantasies."

She has photographs of twins and triplets--identical, in both cases. Why? "I thought



The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

6

how absolutely ordinary is a charming pair of twins, although we make over them. Can you imagine a society in which twins were considered <sup>?</sup> ~~taboo~~ ~~abominable~~ ~~and in which people who were abnormal~~

It's strange strange which aberrations ~~are~~ societies choose to honor and dishonor. In some cultures mongoleid children are consid

gods, in others ~~madwomen~~ madwomen are thought to be witches. These triplets? They remind me

of myself, my own adolescent self--lined up in three images, each with a tiny difference

"The Burlesque Comedian"--a blawzy, chubby blonde sitt'ng before ~~her~~ her cluttered dressing table backstage: "I went to a burlesque show a couple of years ago--I'd never been to one when I was a kid. This comedian looks <sup>changing</sup> like she stopped when burlesque died--in the 1940's--with her Betty Grable hair and mouth, and platform shoes."

Diane said she used to be a fashion photographer with her ~~husband~~ husband, and their work appeared mostly in Seventeen, Glamour, Mademoiselle. She's done ~~work~~ work since she been <sup>in</sup> on her serious art-photography phase, for Harper's Bazaar and Esquire. She uses either a 35 millimetre or a two and a-quarter camera and prints the pictures at whatever size appeals to her based on the subject. For the exhibit ~~she~~ she blew some ~~of~~ of them up to life-size at John Szarkowsky's suggestion. Her photos--most of them--and those of the two other photographers in the show are on sale. Her prices are \$50-75, depending on size.

(more)

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

Asked if she deliberately uses distortions in her work she said: "The process of photographing itself is a little bit of a distortion, but I'm not interested in distortion itself. Photography is different from painting--in lots of ways, of course--but one of the ways is that the camera is recalcitrant--it's determined to do one thing and you may want to do something else--you have to fuse what you want and what the camera wants. I think my pictures are often too narrowed, too zeroed in."

Bio: "I was born in Manhattan, as I said, of upper-class Jewish parents. I was a surly child but I was certainly happy enough, I suppose. I went to Ethical Culture school--Fieldston. Then I got married and I have two children--a twenty-two-year-old daughter, Deon, and a twelve-year-old, Amy. My husband and I are now separated, but we're very good friends and he helps me with photography problems sometimes. I studied photography with Lisette Model. She helped me a great deal. For years I'd gone along thinking about photography more than doing it. Lisette told me I had been feeling guilty about being a woman and not understanding machinery. Painters have to render every line that ends up on their canvas and they experience the thing more, whereas it always bothered me that all I had to do was snap. Lisette talked to me about how ancient the camera was and she talked about light and that if light really stains the silver or what the heck that stuff on a film is--that memory can stain too--that I could experience just as fully the scene I was shooting as a painter could in painting it. And she shook any puritan hang-ups about things that are



The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series/Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

S

fun should shouldn't be good and important. She told me to take pictures when I felt like it, to enjoy it. She told me to take photographs when it was fun and when it was easy. So, that way I enjoyed it and I learned from working--fun--<sup>Wo</sup>working--<sup>So</sup>so much, that I wanted to shoot pictures all the time. I recently bought an old car for \$20 and now I drive all over Jersey and Brooklyn. I work from an awkwardness, whereas Dick Avedon works from ~~grace~~ grace. By that I mean, I don't like to arrange things. If I stand in front of something, instead of arranging it I arrange myself. It's important to go take bad ~~picture~~ pictures--it's the bad ones that have to do with what you've never done before. Sometimes looking in a camera frame is like looking in a kaleidoscope and you shake it around and sometimes it just won't shake out right. I'm not a virtuoso. I can't do <sup>just</sup> anything I want. In fact I can't seem to do anything I want. Except be a spy. ~~Since~~ I've got incredible power locked in my closet--not power to do harm--just the feeling that I have captured pictures of people who since have died and people who will never look that way again. I love secrets and I can find out anything. ~~Since~~ I'm clever--I don't mean I can always match wits with people, ~~because~~ 'cause I certainly can't, but I can figure myself into any situation. I choose ~~my~~ photography projects that are somewhat Mata-Hari<sup>Hari</sup>ish. "I'll not risk my life, but I'll risk my reputation or my virtue--but I don't have so much left," she laughed. "Everyone suffers from the limitation of being only one person."

(more)

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series/Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

*Everyone does I suppose.*  
 "I love to go ~~down~~ into other people's houses. I think that's part of the thrill of seduction for a woman--to see how he lives, the pictures on the walls, his wife's slippers in the bathroom. But ~~I'm not~~ *I'm not* vicarious --I really am involved. And all the time I'm photographing I'm having a terrific time."

"I found fashion photography frightening, but dangers of violence--rape, murder--are more moving and not as dangerous in my way of thinking. I can't think of anything quite as frightening as having to make a living or having to take a good picture. And about fashion--I hate fashion photography because the clothes don't belong to the people who are wearing them. When the clothes do belong to the person wearing them they take on a person's flaws and characteristics and are wonderful."

She's won two Guggenheim's, both for ~~artistic~~ *artistic* work in this country. The first, in 1963, she devoted to "American Rites"--trying to do comprehensive pictures of hundreds of people. The beauty contest picture is from that time. The public, the masses, the social vagaries--not individual ones--interested me ~~then~~ *then* them. But I got tired--and also mass happenings are hard to condense into one picture and I hate photo essays. The current ~~Guggenheim~~ Guggenheim, I got it in 1966, I'm using to explore--to learn about anything I don't know about: sex, secrets--~~just~~ *just* for pictures. Avedon has a criticism of my pictures which is that formally they're in the tradition of the 19th century in that they're unarranged--but I hate to arrange."



The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series/Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31

10

Told that her pictures, particularly "The <sup>Widow</sup> ~~Widow~~" reminded me of Joseph Cornell's ~~little~~ boxes, Diane was very pleased: "I love his secrets, all these little secrets in little boxes. And I adore Steinberg, and I adore Pinter's 'The Homecoming.' Pinter has such secrets in his use of language."

The name of the show is "New Documents", what does that mean to you? "The word 'document' had a sense of literalness. I like it that in part ~~the~~ fantasy can be literal."

"I like danger. And when you face things that scare you and you survive you've conquered your anxiety, which is worse ~~than~~ than the danger could ever be."

About the gap between guise and truth: "One's whole guise is like giving a sign to the world to think of you in a certain way, but there's a point between what you want people to know about you and things you can't help people knowing about you."

The camera is cruel. And although I think people have to ~~betray~~ betray each other, I feel the camera is so cold that I try to be as good as I can to make things even. The poetry, the irony, the fantasy are all built in."

About Avedon: "I do terribly admire Avedon's work—it's influenced me terrifically."

And he has personally been helpful to me."

Her abiding passion is to discover secrets—and I feel she is gentle with them: "When I walk along the streets I look up at buildings and see all those windows and"

I think, behind each window is a room and I think of myself like 'The Little Match Girl'—pressing my nose to all those windows."

#1

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	1015.31



Arbus label (draft)

Diane Arbus's pictures challenge the basic assumptions on which <sup>most</sup> documentary photography has been thought to rest, for they deal with private rather than social realities, with psychological rather than historical facts, with the prototypical and mythic rather than the topical and temporal. Her photographs record the outward signs of inner mysteries.

Often, though less often than is thought, ~~her~~ the nominal subject matter of her pictures was exotic. Among her best portraits are many of transvestites, nudists, other ideological specialists, freaks, and the mentally retarded. The meaning of these pictures has been missed by those who have not <sup>seen</sup> ~~realized~~ that in them (as in those that she made of the rest of us) her true subject was no less than the unique interior lives of those she photographed. Her ~~most~~ ~~favorite~~ ~~most~~ ~~favorite~~ ~~most~~ most frequent subject was in fact children, perhaps because their individuality is purer, less skillfully concealed, closer to the surface.

She was not a theorist but an artist. Her concern was not to buttress philosophical positions but to make pictures. She loved photography for the miracles it performs each day by accident, and respected it for the precise intentional tool that it <sup>can</sup> ~~must~~ be, given talent, dedication, intelligence, and discipline. Her interest in the medium's tradition was broad and generous, but her own favorite predecessors were those whose work nourished her own: August Sander, Brassai, Weegee, and Bill Brandt. She revered these photographers for the precision of their feeling, the economy of their description, the blunt immobility of their imagery, and surely also for their knowledge of darkness. In their photographs she found an unornamented truthfulness that was resonant with her own guesses.



The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	MoMA Exhs.	105 31

Arbus-2

Her life as a <sup>serious</sup> photographer spanned scarcely more than a decade. At forty seven <sup>?</sup> at the end of her life, she resembled at first glance a game but slightly worried child. Both the youth and the uncertainty were doubtless in part cultivated, designed to create a precisely measured suggestion of amateurism, that might partially conceal both her superior intelligence and her fierce ambition. The ambition was of the most demanding kind, since its object was not applause or money or power, but personal excellence.

Arbus knew that honesty is not a gift, endowed by a native naivete, nor a matter of style, or politics, or philosophy. She knew rather that it is <sup>a</sup> reward bestowed for bravery in the face of the truth. Those who have been news reporters, and have been required by their role to ask the unforgivable question, know the sense of relief with which one averts one's eyes, once perfunctory duty is done. Arbus did not avert her eyes. She stuck with her subjects, exploring their secrets (and thus her own) more and more deeply. She was surely aware of the danger of this path, but she believed that her bravery would be equal to the demands she made of it.