

The Museum of Modern Art

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THE YOUNG REBEL IN AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHY, 1950-1970

July 23 - October 13, 1992

An exhibition of photographs at The Museum of Modern Art explores new roles of nonconformity created by American youth in the era of postwar prosperity. **THE YOUNG REBEL IN AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHY, 1950-1970** presents approximately forty black-and-white prints, drawn primarily from the Museum's collection. Organized by Edward Robinson, Newhall Fellow, Department of Photography, the exhibition is on view from July 23 to October 13, 1992. It is made possible by a grant from Giorgio Armani Corporation.

In the 1950s the films of Marlon Brando and James Dean put America's rebellious youth on the cultural map. In photography, as in film, the young rebel was both a compelling subject and a model of independence. Following the lead of Robert Frank (b. 1924), whose book *The Americans* (1959) was a passionate indictment of American life, adventurous photographers abandoned photojournalism's posture of objectivity. Young themselves, these photographers often identified with their subjects. Their pursuit of young America's struggle for self definition helped to create a new vocabulary for photography, which emphasized the subjectivity of personal experience.

Photographers such as Bruce Davidson (b. 1933) and Danny Lyon (b. 1933) recorded the lives of gangs, among the more insular and enigmatic of counter-culture groups. Shot on excursions to Coney Island, Davidson's *Teenagers* series (1959) depicts a Brooklyn gang who called themselves "The Jokers."

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Conveying a similar sense of immediacy, Lyon's *The Bikeriders* (1968) portrays the *Chicago Outlaws*, a motorcycle gang with whom he rode.

The exhibition also features a group of photographs by William Gedney (1932-1989), which documents the indolent lifestyle of San Francisco hippies in the 1960s. A selection of prints from the series *Tulsa* (1971), by Larry Clark (b. 1943), provides an unblinking look at the self-destructive world of the drug culture.

In addition to these four bodies of work, by Davidson, Lyon, Gedney, and Clark, the exhibition includes photographs by Diane Arbus, Lee Friedlander, Larry Fink, and Allen Ginsberg, among others.

Mr. Robinson comments, "Today, the rebel that appears in these photographs intrigues us as a figure drawn from life, even as we recognize him as a familiar icon, thoroughly recycled into cultural myth. The exhibition ultimately invites us to consider the forces that shape our myths, the play between individual aspirations and the needs of a broader audience for models of experience."

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