



International Center of Photography

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media release



Lisette Model
Singer at the Café Metropole, New York, ca. 1946
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Arbus/Avedon/Model: Selections from the Bank of America LaSalle Collection

On view from
May 16 through
September 7, 2008

Media Preview
May 15, 2008
11:30am - 1:00pm

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Diane Arbus, Richard Avedon, and Lisette Model are regarded among the most important photographers of the twentieth century. In the 1960s, the intense creative relationships between these three artists helped to generate a new look in photographic portraiture, embodying an idiosyncratic approach to both style and subject. While challenging conventions, each of these photographers developed their own tactics and methods regarding the selection of subjects and the representation of identity. From May 16 to September 7, 2008, the International Center of Photography (1133 Avenue of the Americas at 43rd Street) will present an exhibition focused on some of their self-selected portrait work.

The fifteen now-classic works in this exhibition are drawn from the exceptional collection of photography initiated at the LaSalle Bank of Chicago by Beaumont Newhall in 1969, and recently acquired by Bank of America.

A Viennese émigré who came to New York in 1938, Lisette Model (1901-1983) was known for her stark, almost satirical realism, revealing portraits of individuals from all classes and walks of life. Among her most famous pictures are her unflattering studies of sunbathers on the Promenade des Anglais in Nice in 1934. These George Grosz-like views, first published in the French weekly *Regards*, are notable for their condescending caricature and extreme close-up perspective. Later, in the United States, she applied the same full-frame approach to swimmers at Coney Island and revelers at Sammy's Bar in the Bowery. Model had a strong effect on other photographers in New York, both through her published works and through her teaching (from 1951 on) at the New School for Social Research.

Model's most famous student was Diane Arbus (1923-1971), and it is easy to see the influence. Both favored a confrontational approach to photographic portraiture, in which the subject was presented front and center and often uncomfortably close to the lens. While Arbus's portraits were usually taken for magazine assignments in which the identity of the sitter was crucial, many have become so iconic that it is no longer possible to see them merely as portraits. Her "A Family on their Lawn One Sunday in Westchester, N.Y." (1968) is actually a portrait of Nat and June Tarnapol and their young son Paul made for an article titled "Two American Families," published in the London Sunday Times Magazine. Arbus later collected this and other images in her portfolio "A Box of Ten Photographs" (1970), published shortly before her death.

One of the first copies of Arbus's portfolio box was given to her close friend Richard Avedon (1923-2002). A successful fashion photographer, he turned increasingly—in the 1950s—to portraiture, often on assignment for magazines. Avedon developed his own direct approach, often placing his sitters against a white seamless backdrop that effectively eliminated any context or extraneous detail. This produced an unrelenting focus on the individual, which Avedon often emphasized by capturing unposed moments of inattention and lack of composure, in which the sitters closed their eyes or drifted out of focus.

Arbus/Avedon/Model: Selections from the Bank of America LaSalle Collection is organized by Brian Wallis, Chief Curator at the International Center of Photography.

This exhibition is sponsored by Bank of America Corporation.