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media release



Todd Webb, *Sixth Avenue between 43rd and 44th Streets*, New York, April 23, 1948 (detail). © Estate of Todd and Lucille Webb. Courtesy Todd Webb Photographs, Portland, Maine.

Picture Windows: Todd Webb

On view beginning March 21

The latest installment in the innovative *Picture Windows* project at the International Center of Photography (ICP) is an extraordinary panorama of a single New York City block taken by American photographer Todd Webb (1905–2000) in 1948. The panorama was originally comprised of eight 8x10-inch contact prints montaged together to form an image nearly seven feet long. The original print is in the ICP collection, and is enlarged and presented here through the courtesy of the Todd Webb Estate.

The enlarged panorama, 93 feet long by 11 1/2 feet high, completely fills the thirteen windows of ICP along West 43rd Street. In great detail, it shows the many small shops that existed in 1948 along the west side of Sixth Avenue between West 43rd and 44th Streets. Today, this block is home to the museum of the International Center of Photography. Many of the storefronts feature bars and record shops, but on the far left is the Hanover House hotel where, in 1940, songwriter Woody Guthrie composed his well-known ballad, “This Land Is Your Land.”

In a journal entry dated March 24, 1948, Webb wrote, “Tried my Sixth Avenue panel idea this morning and I might have missed it. It was surprisingly hard to do because of the cars and trucks that just park for a few minutes. Also the cars that come whizzing by from both directions that you must shoot between. You can’t use part of a car in one section. You must have all of it or nothing. I am just getting ready to develop the negatives and I am holding my breath.”

Sixth Avenue between 43rd and 44th Streets will be on view in ICP’s West 43rd Street windows beginning March 21.

(more)

About Todd Webb

Born in Detroit in 1905, Charles Clayton (“Todd”) Webb III came to photography late in life. In 1938, he joined the Chrysler Corporation Camera Club, where he met aspiring photographer Harry Callahan. Webb and Callahan embarked on their photographic career together, which began with a workshop from Ansel Adams. The workshop with Adams reaffirmed Webb’s interest in the sharp focus technique of “straight photography,” rejecting the popular manipulated methods of the Pictorialists.

After photographing for the Navy during World War II in the South Pacific, Webb moved to New York in the early 1940s. He soon developed his own unique style of photographing and was further encouraged by Alfred Stieglitz to immerse himself in the medium. Stieglitz introduced Webb to Georgia O’Keeffe, Berenice Abbott, Lisette Model, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Walker Evans, and Edward Steichen, all of whom became important figures in Webb’s life.

In 1946, Webb’s photographic career soared with the showing of 165 of his photographs at the Museum of the City of New York. Soon after his first exhibition, he was hired by *Fortune* and by Roy Stryker of Standard Oil, who had previously headed the Historical Section of the Farm Security Administration. After his work with Stryker and a few years of photographing in France, Webb followed the trail of the Gold Rush of 1849 across the country with the help of two Guggenheim Fellowships. During his travels out West, he remained in contact with Stieglitz’s widow, Georgia O’Keeffe. His friendship with O’Keeffe developed and endured, eventually leading Webb and his wife Lucille to join O’Keeffe in New Mexico for ten years. Upon completion of his travels in the American West, Todd Webb produced two books: *Gold Strikes and Ghost Towns* (Doubleday, 1961), and *Gold Rush Trails and the Road to Oregon* (Doubleday, 1963).

Up until the 1980s, Todd Webb photographed and produced a unique body of work that attained an important place in the annals of American photographic history. Frequently referred to as “an historian with a camera,” Webb’s wonderfully rich images document life all over the world, including New York, France, and the American West. His work has been internationally exhibited, with important shows in New York, Santa Fe, Tokyo, and London.

Todd Webb died in May 2000 at the age of 94 in Maine.

About ICP

The International Center of Photography (ICP) is the world’s leading institution dedicated to the practice and understanding of photography and the reproduced image in all its forms. Through our exhibitions, educational programs, and community outreach, we offer an open forum for dialogue about the role images play in our culture. Since our founding, we have presented more than 500 exhibitions and offered thousands of classes, providing instruction at every level. ICP is a center where photographers and artists, students and scholars can create and interpret the world of the image within our comprehensive educational and archival facilities. Visit www.icp.org for more information.

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