

HUXLEY-PARLOUR

3-5 Swallow Street, London, W1B 4DE / gallery@huxleyparlour.com

Berenice Abbott

27 October - 21 November 2015

During a career spanning the best part of the twentieth century, Berenice Abbott (1898-1991) produced one of the most significant and varied bodies of photography ever made. Although widely regarded as one of the most important American documentary photographers, the exhibition will be the first career encompassing retrospective to be mounted in the UK.

Born in 1898 in Springfield, Ohio, Abbott dropped out of college and moved to New York at the age of nineteen where she befriended poets, artists and anarchists in Greenwich Village. Deciding to become a sculptor, she left for Paris in 1921 where she was charmed by the glamorous avant-garde. Impoverished by her lack of success as a sculptor, she took a job as a darkroom assistant to the acclaimed photographer, Man Ray. Realising her own talent with the camera, she subsequently opened her own studio where artists and writers would come to have portraits taken. The exhibition will include a selection of these early portraits, revealing the influence of Man Ray and the Surrealists. The famous sitters include James Joyce, René Crevel and Eugène Atget. Returning to New York in 1929 as a successful portrait photographer, Abbott found her home country spiralling into the depths of the Depression. Work for a portrait photographer was short and Abbott saw the photographic potential in the urban sprawl and devoted herself to capturing the fantastic contrasts of the rapidly changing city. After several impoverished years and in need of work, the Federal Arts Project, an arm of the New Deal Works Progress Administration tasked with employing millions of unemployed people, employed her to photograph the city.



*Oyster Houses, South Street and Pike Slip,
1931-32*

Becoming known as *Changing New York*, Abbott's project is a colossal testament to the dizzying scale and extreme contrasts of the most advanced metropolis in the world. Abbott conceptualised the project as a photographic portrait of the city and worked with the same fastidious documentary precision as her contemporaries, Walker Evans and Dorothea Lange, photographers also employed under the auspices of the New Deal administration.

A selection of science photographs will represent the body of work on which Abbott focused during her later career. Abbott finally received the opportunity to undertake a long-pursued project to photograph scientific experiments when she was employed by a United States government programme aiming to improve science education in an effort to keep pace with the Russian space programme which had just launched the first artificial satellite, Sputnik. Whilst aesthetically unique from her earlier work, Abbott's science work persisted with her belief that photography should always have a purpose and that it should always teach.

The exhibition will also show photographs from Abbott's lesser-known US Route 1 series. Taken during a road trip through the small towns and holdings down the Eastern seaboard, from Maine to Florida, the photographs are Abbott's account of the American Scene.

For more information and images please contact
Thea Gregory: 0207 434 4319 / thea@huxleyparlour.com

Website: www.huxleyparlour.com
Facebook: @huxleyparlour
Twitter: @huxleyparlour
Instagram: @huxleyparlour