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PRESS KIT

VIVIAN MAIER

THE COLOR WORK

OPENING ON SATURDAY, JANUARY 19TH FROM 2 TO 7 PM

FROM JANUARY 19TH TO MARCH 30TH, 2019



©Estate of Vivian Maier, Courtesy Maloof Collection;
Howard Greenberg Gallery, New York; Les Douches la Galerie, Paris

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VIVIAN MAIER: THE COLOR WORK

One of photography's truths is that the best street photographers learn to be invisible or, at the very least, to convince themselves that they are. Over the years, I've walked the streets with Henri Cartier-Bresson, Garry Winogrand, Tony Ray-Jones, Diane Arbus, Lee Friedlander, Tod Papageorge, and some of today's younger shooters—Gus Powell, Melanie Einzig, Ben Ingham, and Matt Stuart—and we have all developed our own sleight-of-hand street act. We dodge, feint, twirl, two-step, and eye-shift our way through crowds and rallies, along avenues and backstreets, in parks and on beaches, anywhere that ordinary life draws our attention and desire. It is our invisibility that helps us get away with stealing fire from the gods.

In 2009, into the well-established history of street photography flashed the unexpected comet of Vivian Maier. In October of that year I received an email from John Maloof, a young artist I didn't know. He introduced himself and told me the story of how he had purchased a cache of negatives, slides, and some prints at a storage-warehouse auction. Knowing my work, as well as *Bystander: The History of Street Photography*, a book I coauthored with Colin Westerbeck, he had decided to write to ask whether I would be kind enough to give him my opinion on Maier's photographs.

Attached to the email were about two hundred color slides made between the late 1950s and mid 1970s, all of which John had scanned. I can't say that my immediate first impression was that they were fantastic, but as I clicked through the unedited raw work I kept getting glimpses of Maier's insights and timing; great, positive attitude; way of framing; courage of her convictions about how close she was willing to go; genuine curiosity; and undeniable, humanistic warmth, irony, and humor, all of which produced an overall sense of a coherent life view. After looking at all the images, I had that delightful sense that comes from seeing inspiring and intelligent work. I went back through the slides, cut them down to forty or fifty, and looked at them again.

Now I could really see the heart in the work. Who was this woman? Was she simply a naïf who sprang whole into midcentury American photography, or had she done her fair share of looking at other work? Before writing back to John, I wrote to Colin: "You have to see this work—an unknown woman just landed in the middle of the history of street photography." There were tender portraits and exquisite moments of frozen action; there were streetscapes and children at play; there were small details and gestures beautifully seen and framed, as well as photographs of the old, the down-and-out, and the lost souls of Chicago and New York. Above all, there was a fierce intelligence weaving its way throughout the color work. All this, in color! How courageous, and how invisible! I was sure she didn't print color, because... who did back then? Which meant that the photographs had stayed hidden in boxes and most likely hadn't played a big role in her artistic growth, yet they were—and are now—works of value to us who are alive to see her development.

Look closely at the many self-portraits Vivian Maier made, and you will see her disguises, her cloak of invisibility. She's as plain as an old-fashioned schoolmarm. She's the wallflower, the spinster aunt, the ungainly tourist in the big city... except... she isn't! She was a professional nanny, which is a great disguise in itself—because how suspicious or dangerous could a woman shepherding a couple of kids possibly be? Her line of work gave her license to be out on the streets, making any image she was interested in. You can see in her photographs that she was a quick study of human behavior, of the unfolding moment, the flash of a gesture, or the mood of a facial expression—brief events that turned the quotidian life of the street into a revelation for her.

However, my sense is that Maier preferred to shoot, and made stronger work, in black-and-white for several reasons. Black-and-white was a faster film to work with, as opposed to early Kodachrome, which was extremely slow and therefore riskier. With black-and-white, she could have prints to hold in her hand and reflect upon, which would put her more in harmony with her instincts. Her heart for the game of sight, the strength and purity of her instinct, and her deep love of photography show up more consistently in black-and-white. It was in this medium that she learned to stand her ground, to move in close to cops and drunks, punks and wise guys, and the old and infirm, yet stay connected and maintain her sense of humor in difficult situations.

But there are memorable gems in Maier's color work, and some terrific observations and characters are to be found in this book. You can see again and again the way color could entice her when a "color incident" emerged out of the flux of daily life. Take, for example, the simple image shown on the cover of this book of a hand holding a pinkie, folded on a red dress in a strangely affecting gesture behind a woman's back—an image as powerful as a nation's flag.

Maier was an early poet of color photography.

Joel Meyerowitz

Foreword, *Vivian Maier: The Color Work*, Harper Design, 2018

VIVIAN MAIER, *THE COLOR WORK*

SELECTION OF WORKS

Vivian Maier

Milwaukee, MI, 1967

Chromogenic print, printed in 2018

Print size: 16 x 20 inches

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Vivian Maier

Chicago, June 1978

Chromogenic print, printed in 2018

Print size: 16 x 20 inches

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Vivian Maier

Chicago, October 1976

Chromogenic print, printed in 2018

Print size: 16 x 20 inches

©Estate of Vivian Maier, Courtesy Maloof Collection; Howard Greenberg Gallery, New York; Les Douches la Galerie, Paris



Vivian Maier

Fontainebleau Hotel, Miami, 1960

Chromogenic print, printed in 2018

Print size: 16 x 20 inches

©Estate of Vivian Maier, Courtesy Maloof Collection; Howard Greenberg Gallery, New York; Les Douches la Galerie, Paris



Vivian Maier

Chicago, 1959

Chromogenic print, printed in 2018

Print size: 16 x 20 inches

©Estate of Vivian Maier, Courtesy Maloof Collection; Howard Greenberg Gallery, New York; Les Douches la Galerie, Paris



Vivian Maier

Chicago, 1962

Chromogenic print, printed in 2018

Print size: 16 x 20 inches

©Estate of Vivian Maier, Courtesy Maloof Collection; Howard Greenberg Gallery, New York; Les Douches la Galerie, Paris



VIVIAN MAIER

Piecing together Vivian Maier's life can easily evoke Churchill's famous quote about the vast land of Tsars and commissars that lay to the east. A person who fit the stereotypical European sensibilities of an independent liberated woman, accent and all, yet born in New York City. Someone who was intensely guarded and private, Vivian could be counted on to feistily preach her own very liberal worldview to anyone who cared to listen, or didn't. Decidedly unmaterialistic, Vivian would come to amass a group of storage lockers stuffed to the brim with found items, art books, newspaper clippings, home films, as well as political tchotchkes and knick-knacks.

The story of this nanny who has now wowed the world with her photography, and who incidentally recorded some of the most interesting marvels and peculiarities of Urban America in the second half of the twentieth century is seemingly beyond belief.

An American of French and Austro-Hungarian extraction, Vivian bounced between Europe and the United States before coming back to New York City in 1951. Having picked up photography just two years earlier, she would comb the streets of the Big Apple refining her artistic craft. By 1956 Vivian left the East Coast for Chicago, where she'd spend most of the rest of her life working as a caregiver. In her leisure Vivian would shoot photos that she zealously hid from the eyes of others. Taking snapshots into the late 1990's, Maier would leave behind a body of work comprising over 100,000 negatives. Additionally Vivian's passion for documenting extended to a series of homemade documentary films and audio recordings. Interesting bits of Americana, the demolition of historic landmarks for new development, the unseen lives of ethnics and the destitute, as well as some of Chicago's most cherished sites were all meticulously catalogued by Vivian Maier.

A free spirit but also a proud soul, Vivian became poor and was ultimately saved by three of the children she had nannied earlier in her life. Fondly remembering Maier as a second mother, they pooled together to pay for an apartment and took the best of care for her. Unbeknownst to them, one of Vivian's storage lockers was auctioned off due to delinquent payments. In those storage lockers lay the massive hoard of negatives Maier secretly stashed throughout her lifetime.

Maier's massive body of work would come to light when in 2007 her work was discovered at a local thrift auction house on Chicago's Northwest Side. From there, it would eventually impact the world over and change the life of the man who championed her work and brought it to the public eye, John Maloof.

Currently, Vivian Maier's body of work is being archived and cataloged for the enjoyment of others and for future generations. John Maloof is at the core of this project after reconstructing most of the archive, having been previously dispersed to the various buyers attending that auction. Now, with roughly 90% of her archive reconstructed, Vivian's work is part of a renaissance in interest in the art of Street Photography.

VIVIAN MAIER

EXHIBITIONS (SELECTION)

2018

Vivian Maier: Street Photographer, Art Gallery of Hamilton, Hamilton , Canada

Vivian Maier, Willy Brandt Haus, Berlin , Germany

Vivian Maier: The Color Work, Howard Greenberg Gallery, New York NY, United States

Vivian Maier: Living Color, KP Projects, Los Angeles CA, United States

Vivian Maier: The Founded Photographer, Palazzo Pallavicini, Bologna BO, Italy

Vivian Maier: Photography's Lost Voice, International Photography Hall of Fame, St. Louis MO, United States

2017

Vivian Maier, KP Projects, Los Angeles CA, United States

Vivian Maier, Palazzo Ducale di Genova, Genoa , Italy

Vivian Maier, Howard Greenberg Gallery, New York NY, United States

Vivian Maier, The Center of Art in Tarnow, Tarnow , Poland

Vivian Maier, Museo di Roma in Trastevere, Rome , Italy

Vivian Maier, FoLa Fototeca Latinoamericana, Buenos Aires , Argentina

2016

Vivian Maier, Berenice Abbott, Les Douches la Galerie, Paris

Vivian Maier, Dunkers Kulturhus, Helsingborg, Sweden

Taking The Long Way Home : Vivian Maier, Photobastei, Zurich, Switzerland

Vivian Maier, Arlington Museum of Art, Arlington Texas

Vivian Maier, Fundación Canal Isabel II, Madrid

2015

Vivian Maier, Merry Karnowsky Gallery, Los Angeles CA

Vivian Maier, Forma Meravigli, Milan

Photo Beijing, Beijing, China

Through The Lens of Vivian Maier, HarperCollins Booklab, New York

Vivian Maier, Sungkok Art Museum, Seoul, South Korea

Behind the Image : Portrait and Self Portrait in Contemporary Art, Bernal Espacio Galeria, Madrid

Vivian Maier, Sao Paulo Museum of Image and Sound, Sao Paulo, Brazil

Vivian Maier, Willy Brandt Haus, Berlin

2014

Vivian Maier, Fifty One Fine Art Photography, Antwerp, Belgium

Vivian Maier, Beetles + Huxley, London

Vivian Maier, Lumiere Gallery, Atlanta GA

Vivian Maier, Les Douches la Galerie, Paris

In Her Own Hands : Vivian Maier, Howard Greenberg Gallery, New York

Fotofocus Biennial, Cincinnati OH

Melbourne Festiva, Centre for Contemporary Photography, Fitzroy Victoria, Australia

Vivian Maier, Foam Fotografiemuseum, Amsterdam

Vivian Maier, Street Photographer, Hasselblad Foundation, Gothenburg, Sweden