

# LARGE PRINT

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EXHIBITION

One hundred years ago, Berenice Abbott took her first photograph. She was a young American in Paris working as an assistant to Man Ray—little did Man Ray know, his assistant would soon come to be one of his greatest rivals, and ultimately, one of the greatest photographers of the twentieth century. Born “Bernice” in Springfield, Ohio in 1898, Berenice was an intense and ambitious woman. She moved to Greenwich Village in 1918 and fell in with a crowd of artists and writers who urged her to nurture her creative spirit by relocating yet again in 1921—this time, to Paris.

In Man Ray’s Parisian studio, she quickly matched his fame as a photographer of the avant-garde. After she established her own independent photography business, Abbott once again felt the call of New York City, and returned to the US in 1929. She made

capturing the evolving urban landscape her project, culminating in her most well-known work: *Changing New York*, published in 1939. Less well-known, but no less remarkable, are her photos of the broader American Northeast.

In 2007, the Clark received a gift from the A&M Penn Photography Foundation by Arthur Stephen Penn and Paul Katz of over 400 Abbott photographs taken over almost all major phases of her career, excepting her scientific photography. The negatives were selected by Abbott from her vast archive and printed under her supervision in 1982.

Unless otherwise noted, all photographs are gelatin silver prints and were gifts of A&M Penn Photography Foundation by Arthur Stephen Penn and Paul Katz.

This exhibition is organized by the Clark Art Institute and curated by Grace Hanselman, curatorial assistant for works on paper. This exhibition is made possible by Denise Littlefield Sobel.

## **Man Ray**

American, 1890–1976

### *Berenice Abbott*

c. 1925, printed 1982

Berenice Abbott moved to Paris in 1921 with a dream of becoming a sculptor. After two years with little artistic success she was destitute, and sought the help of artist and photographer Man Ray, whom she had met and modeled for back in the United States. Man Ray hired Abbott as a darkroom assistant, undeterred by her inexperience. In fact, one of his requirements for applicants was that they had no photographic experience whatsoever, so that he could mold their skills in printing and developing photos to his exact (often experimental) specifications.

2007.2.403

## **Berenice Abbott**

American, 1898–1991

*Portrait of Paul Cross*

1925–30, printed 1982

After being hired as Man Ray's darkroom assistant, Berenice Abbott quickly made herself indispensable. She performed the labor of multiple people for the wage of one, and to avoid paying her more, Man Ray "compensated" her extra work by allowing her to use his camera during her lunch break. This portrait of her friend Paul Cross was the first photograph Abbott took in Man Ray's studio. By this point she was already skilled at printing photographs, but this work marks the first time she stood behind a camera with authorial intent.

2007.2.250

## **Berenice Abbott**

American, 1898–1991

*Portrait of Julia Reiner*

1926, printed 1982

In 1926, Berenice Abbott established her own Parisian photography studio and hired Julia Reiner as her studio manager. Reiner was Abbott's partner in both business and romance before the two parted ways in the 1930s.

2007.2.384

## **Berenice Abbott**

American, 1898–1991

*Portrait of Tsugouharu Foujita*

1927, printed 1982

Known to friends as Fou Fou (“crazy” in French), artist Tsugouharu Foujita was notorious for his unconventional fashion—in this photo, take note of his hoop earrings, tortoiseshell glasses, and bowl-cut hairdo. He would also wear lampshades to events, claiming that they were traditional Japanese headgear. Abbott and Foujita shared a love of cats, the subject of Foujita’s most famous works of art.

2007.2.397

## **Berenice Abbott**

American, 1898–1991

*Portrait of Thelma Wood*

1925–30, printed 1982

Artist Thelma Wood was one of Abbott's first loves. Wood's main medium was silverpoint, a delicate drawing technique that uses silver to make marks instead of ink, graphite, or charcoal. Contrary to her somewhat demure appearance in this photograph, Wood was known for her bold nature. Though Wood left Abbott for the author Djuna Barnes in 1921, they remained friends.

2007.2.316

## **Berenice Abbott**

American, 1898–1991

*Portrait of Max Ernst*

1925–30, printed 1982

This piercing photo of Dada and Surrealist artist Max Ernst is characteristic of Abbott's direct style of portraiture. Ernst later married art collector and patron Peggy Guggenheim, who is also pictured in this gallery.

2007.2.318

## THE PARISIAN CROWD

Beginning in 1925, Berenice Abbott quickly built a reputation as a top portrait photographer in Paris. In the span of about a year, she went from being an anonymous American expat to a destination in her own right; famous personalities, especially members of the artistic and literary avant-garde, began to seek Abbott out to have their portraits taken in her signature sharp style.

On the genre of portrait photography, Abbott wrote:

“The essence of the portrait is humanity, its meaning, all its thoughts, emotions, characteristics. How a person’s life speaks through his eyes, the modelling of his cheekbones, the weight of his body as he sits or stands, are subtle nuances,

without which portraiture is mechanical and lifeless.”

–Berenice Abbott, *A Guide to Better Photography* (1941)

## **Berenice Abbott**

American, 1898–1991

*Portrait of Peggy Guggenheim with  
daughter Pegeen*

1926, printed 1982

Glamorous American art collector and patron Peggy Guggenheim was a catalyst of Berenice Abbott's meteoric rise to prominence in Paris. In 1926, while Abbott was still Man Ray's darkroom assistant, Guggenheim phoned Man Ray and requested a portrait sitting—not with him, but with Abbott. Incensed and jealous that he had been upstaged by his assistant, Man Ray severed his professional relationship with Abbott. Guggenheim, feeling guilty about Abbott's firing, provided the funds for Abbott to purchase her own camera and establish an independent photographic practice.

2007.2.211

## **Berenice Abbott**

601

American, 1898–1991

1. *Portrait of Janet Flanner*  
1927, printed 1982

2. *Portrait of A'Lelia Walker*  
1930, printed 1982

3. *Portrait of Maria van Rysselberghe*  
1925–30, printed 1982

4. *Portrait of Helen Tamaris*  
1925–30, printed 1982

5. *Portrait of Renee Prahar*  
1925–30, printed 1982

6. *Portrait of Mary Torr*  
1925–30, printed 1982

Berenice Abbott's photography was frequently compared with that of her previous employer, Man Ray, especially in discussions of how the two artists represented women. While Man Ray tended to aestheticize the female form, depicting women as "pretty objects" as some critics have described it, Abbott did not adopt that approach for her own practice. Instead, her photography emphasizes the individuality and agency of each woman.

Whether the sitters are old or young, gay or straight, traditional or a 1920s "New Woman," Abbott's photographs illustrate the tremendous breadth of the feminine experience. The frankness in the eyes of the women pictured is especially powerful—even Helen Tamaris and Renee Prahar, who look away from the camera, activate the photographs with their dynamic diagonal pose and intense oblique gaze.

2007.2.399; 2007.2.295; 2007.2.366;  
2007.2.357; 2007.2.376; 2007.2.352

## THE QUEER SPINE OF LITERARY MODERNISM

Berenice Abbott believed that writing and photography had a similar aim: to study, describe, and digest the fullness of the lived experience. Perhaps this affinity is why she photographed so many avant-garde writers, many of whom were queer.

Abbott's photographs of modernist authors and publishers reveal the enormous contribution queer people made to literature. Their ability to live and love outside of the perceived heterosexual norm is reflected in the writing they produced, which fearlessly challenged standing literary conventions.

Abbott's work demonstrates the perseverance of queer joy via what she

calls “living photography,” which she described in 1951 as follows: “Living photography builds up, does not tear down. It acclaims the dignity of man. . . . It sings a song of life—not death.”

## **Berenice Abbott**

American, 1898–1991

*Portrait of Edna St. Vincent Millay*

1930, printed 1982

Winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1923, Edna St. Vincent Millay was not just one of the most important American poets and playwrights of her generation, she was also a rip-roaring good time—unabashed in her pursuit of pleasure and entertainment, with a bevy of male and female suitors. A young Berenice Abbott met Millay in Greenwich Village, traveled in her same social circles in Paris, and took this photograph after they both returned to the United States.

2007.2.315

## **Berenice Abbott**

American, 1898–1991

*Portrait of Jane Heap*

c. 1928, printed 1982

*Portrait of Margaret Anderson*

1925–30, printed 1982

American editors and publishers Jane Heap and Margaret Anderson provided a means for many budding modernist authors, several of whom are now considered literary greats, to distribute their work. The couple co-edited *The Little Review*, a literary magazine Anderson started in Chicago and then continued in New York with Heap. In it, they published the first US serialization of James Joyce's *Ulysses* in 1918, in addition to the work of T. S. Eliot, Ernest Hemingway,

Gertrude Stein, and Ezra Pound. Anderson and Heap first met Berenice Abbott in New York and reunited with her in Paris.

2007.2.218; 2007.2.253

## **Berenice Abbott**

American, 1898–1991

*Portrait of Sylvia Beach*

1926, printed 1982

Sylvia Beach was the owner of the Paris bookshop Shakespeare & Company, which rose to prominence after Beach published James Joyce's modernist masterpiece *Ulysses* in 1922. Berenice Abbott, with her attention to texture, was delighted when Beach arrived for her portrait session wearing such a shiny leather coat. Beach described Abbott and Man Ray as the "official portraitists of 'the Crowd.' [...] To be 'done' by Man Ray and Berenice Abbott meant you rated as somebody."

2007.2.262

## **Berenice Abbott**

American, 1898–1991

*Portrait of Djuna Barnes*

1926, printed 1982

Here backlit to emphasize her delicate profile, novelist Djuna Barnes met a young Berenice Abbott in New York City and encouraged her to relocate to Paris, where they both lived for most of the 1920s. Barnes' gothic 1938 novel *Nightwood* was inspired by her tumultuous 8-year relationship with artist Thelma Wood (Abbott's former partner). Barnes was unafraid to write plainly about lesbian relationships, and her work embodied an experimental modernist spirit that pushed the limits of how a novel could be structured.

2007.2.260

## **Berenice Abbott**

American, 1898–1991

*Portrait of Pierre de Massot*

1925–30, printed 1982

Pierre de Massot was a Dada and Surrealist poet. A bisexual, he married the lesbian Lila “Robbie” Robinson and described actor Édouard de Max as the other love of his life. He wrote:

“I seek, I have always sought, the friendship of inverts of both sexes, whatever the social class to which they belong, because they benefit from an extremely acute intelligence and sensitivity, and because freedom for them is not an empty word.”

2007.2.249

## **Berenice Abbott**

American, 1898–1991

*Portrait of François Mauriac*

1925–30, printed 1982

Roughly 25 years after this photo was taken, novelist François Mauriac won the 1952 Nobel Prize for Literature. Here his pensive, crossed-arm pose reflects the complex and thoughtful nature of his narratives, which often delved into the conflicts between Catholicism and sexuality. Though married and a father, Mauriac was thought to have several friendships of a homosexual nature, as with Jean Cocteau, also pictured in this gallery.

2007.2.302

## **Berenice Abbott**

American, 1898–1991

*Portrait of Alexander Berkman*

1925–30, printed 1982

One might not guess it from his primly interlaced fingers, round spectacles, and fine velvet jacket, but Alexander Berkman was an anarchist who had previously been jailed for the attempted assassination of strike-breaking steel magnate Henry Clay Frick in 1892. His 1912 book, *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist*, is remarkable for its tender accounts of homosexuality in prison.

2007.2.263

## **Berenice Abbott**

602

American, 1898–1991

*Four portraits of Jean Cocteau*  
1927, printed 1982

Poet, novelist, visual artist, playwright, filmmaker, and eccentric Jean Cocteau was probably the most “out” gay male celebrity of the 1920s. He had a profound effect on Berenice Abbott’s career; Cocteau was one of her first sitters, and his own fame boosted Abbott’s professional reputation. He also convinced her to change her name from Bernice to the more French-sounding Berenice. Recalling this session, Abbott said, “Cocteau brought the mask with him. It was his idea; he was using it in one of his plays, I believe.”

2007.2.360; 2007.2.361; 2007.2.362;  
2007.2.394

## **Berenice Abbott**

American, 1898–1991

*Portrait of Eugène Atget*

1927, printed 1982

Eugène Atget's posthumous reputation as a photographer was carefully nurtured by Berenice Abbott. When Abbott met him, Atget was a humble Parisian street photographer, hunched from years of hauling camera equipment. He advertised his photographs not as art, but as reference documents for artists. Abbott found them remarkable. When Atget died shortly after this portrait sitting, Abbott acquired his photographic archive with a secret loan from Julia Reiner, her then-lover and studio assistant. Over the next several decades, Abbott exhibited and published Atget's work; however, she resented comparisons of her New York photography with Atget's images of Paris.

2007.2.256

## **Berenice Abbott**

American, 1898–1991

1. *Portrait of James Joyce*  
1926, printed 1982

2. *Portrait of Nora Joyce (Mrs. James Joyce)*  
1926–1927, printed 1982

3. *Portrait of Lucia Joyce*  
1926–1927, printed 1982

4. *Portrait of Lucia Joyce*  
1926–1927, printed 1982

The Irish writer James Joyce received a great deal of support from enterprising lesbian publishers, such as Jane Heap, Margaret Anderson, and Sylvia Beach, pictured nearby. Berenice Abbott, too, helped fashion Joyce's reputation—her portraits of him appear on

the dust-covers of many Joyce novels today. In this photograph, Joyce, who suffered from vision problems has removed his eyepatch, leaving an indentation still visible on his forehead. Abbott also photographed Joyce's wife, Nora, and daughter, Lucia. They reportedly had a strained relationship, perhaps emblemized by the contrast between Nora's prim demeanor and Lucia's eccentric, costumed dynamism. Lucia, a talented dancer, suffered mental health difficulties and was institutionalized at the insistence of her mother and brother.

2007.2.180; 2007.2.193; 2007.2.189;  
2007.2.400

## **RETURN TO NEW YORK: THE CITY AS SITTER**

“When I saw New York again, and stood in the dirty slush, I felt that here was the thing I had been wanting to do all my life.”

Berenice Abbott left Paris in 1929, feeling the draw of another project back in the US. The urban landscape of New York City was transforming rapidly, and Abbott wanted to capture it in that ephemeral state of change and potential. Abbott’s photographs of New York can stand as individual works, but each, in fact, forms part of a larger whole—a portrait of the city as a single complex entity. In 1940, when asked to choose a favorite photograph, Abbott said: “Suppose we took a thousand negatives and made a gigantic montage; a myriad-faceted picture combining the

elegances, the squalor, the curiosities, the monuments, the sad faces, the triumphant faces, the power, the irony, the strength, the decay, the past, the present, the future of a city—that would be my favorite picture.”

## **Berenice Abbott**

American, 1898–1991

*Untitled [Watuppa, from Brooklyn  
Waterfront, New York]*

1936, printed 1982

*Untitled [Bookshop, Greenwich Village,  
New York]*

1948–49, printed 1982

In 1929, Berenice Abbott sailed once again across the Atlantic, an experience that might have influenced her later affinity for photographing means of transportation: boats (like the *Watuppa*, pictured here), trains, rail lines, cars, gas stations, and bridges. *Untitled [Bookshop, Greenwich Village, New York]* was taken after Abbott had already been back in New York for two decades, but its emphasis on the human

figure and literary subjects recalls Abbott's early career in Paris. Even after she was no longer making portraits of writers and publishers, her interest in the world of the written word remained.

2007.2.61; 2007.2.168

## **Berenice Abbott**

American, 1898–1991

*Suit Cases and Trunks,  
Lower East Side, New York*  
1929, printed 1982

*Rag Merchant, New York*  
1929, printed 1982

The first photograph Berenice Abbott ever purchased from Eugène Atget was titled *Ragpickers' Hut*, taken in 1910. Perhaps it is apt, then, that one of the first photographs she took in New York City was of a similar subject. *Rag Merchant, New York* is one of several early photos Abbott made with a handheld camera before buying her beloved 8x10 Century Universal camera in 1931. *Suit Cases and Trunks, Lower East Side, New York* is another early

photo. Abbott had assembled them into a scrapbook that might be considered a prototype of her 1939 publication *Changing New York*. Abbott made enlarged negatives for a handful of the more successful photos from the scrapbook, including these two images.

2007.2.244; 2007.2.233

## **Berenice Abbott**

American, 1898–1991

### *Flatiron Building*

1938, printed 1982

### *Fortieth Street between Sixth and Seventh Avenues, New York*

1935, printed 1982

Berenice Abbott found the variety and verticality in New York City's built environment extremely compelling: beautiful architectural landmarks sat right beside hulking monuments to efficiency. She wrote: "all these awful buildings and the good buildings. . . . The new things that had cropped up in eight years, the sights of the city, the human gesture here sent me mad with joy." In both of these photographs, we are given nothing to ground us. The jut of

the Flatiron Building from Abbott's vantage point on the street (in traffic!) seems almost infinitely tall. In *Fortieth Street between Sixth and Seventh Avenues, New York*, Abbott is on a rooftop or looking out a high window, but taller buildings still rise above and around, and the photograph gives no hint of the streets below.

2007.2.7; 2007.2.69

## **Berenice Abbott**

American, 1898–1991

*Untitled [John Wanamaker Building,  
New York]*

1933, printed 1982

*Penn Station*

1935–38, printed 1982

In the top image, taken between the John Wanamaker department store buildings, the undulating glazed “roof” we see is actually just a single-story street awning, cleverly made to look as though it connects with the facade of the building across the street. The photograph below involves no such illusion. Penn Station, with its soaring glass ceilings and elegant steel skeleton, was very real but no longer exists as it originally did. Built in 1910, the initial structure was demolished

in the 1960s. Berenice Abbott later said of her Penn Station photos:

“I had to obtain all sorts of permission to make these photographs, but I knew I had to capture this magnificent building. . . . It was absolutely wicked to tear the building down; it was cheating America, denying Americans their cultural heritage.”

2007.2.48; 2007.2.33

## **Berenice Abbott**

American, 1898–1991

*Barclay Street Station, New York*

1932, printed 1982

*Untitled [El, Second and Third Avenue  
Lines, New York]*

1936, printed 1982

Berenice Abbott waited patiently beneath roaring trains and shuddering tracks until a pedestrian unknowingly stepped into the bright center of the bottom image. The Elevated Railway system, or “El,” was a network of raised railway tracks that allowed cars and pedestrians to pass underneath the trains. It was criticized for being excessively loud and blocking the sunlight, but Abbott used the shade to her advantage,

highlighting the geometric shadows cast by the tracks. She found the above-ground stations particularly charming, comparing them to Swiss chalets. Demolition for the EI lines began in 1938 and was completed in 1973.

2007.2.103; 2007.2.170

## **Berenice Abbott**

American, 1898–1991

*New York at Night*

c. 1932, printed 1982

*Gasoline Station at Night,*

*New York*

1931, printed 1982

*New York at Night*, also called *Nightview*, is one of Berenice Abbott's most famous and striking images. It required precise planning to execute, as this photograph was only possible on the shortest day of the year (December 21). Taken from the Empire State Building, it captures the brief moment after darkness has fallen but before the office workday has ended—the lights in all the buildings are still shining bright, transforming the city into a glittering

starfield. *Gasoline Station at Night, New York* explores the same liminal, mystical feeling of an artificially-illuminated nighttime, but with a more modest, human-scale subject. The ghostly forms of moving people and cars are artifacts of the long-exposure photography process.

2007.2.178; 2007.2.42

## **Berenice Abbott**

American, 1898–1991

*Hoboken Railroad Yards Looking Towards  
Manhattan*

1935, printed 1982

If one zooms out to look at Berenice Abbott's New York photographs as a group, each image serves to highlight a different aspect of the city. They come together as a whole in much the same way that the distinct buildings in the background of this photograph each constitute an essential part of the Manhattan skyline. Abbott's interest in photographing transit lines between cities foreshadows her 1954 project in which she drove along Route 1. Then, her project was taking pictures of American cities and towns as they were changed by newly constructed highways.

2007.2.101

## **Berenice Abbott**

American, 1898–1991

*From Elizabeth McCausland's Window  
at 50 Commerce Street, New York*  
c. 1935, printed 1982

Berenice Abbott had two enduring loves in her lifetime: photography, and art historian/critic Elizabeth McCausland. The pair met in 1934 when McCausland tracked Abbott down, eager to contribute her writing to the federally-funded photography project she had heard about. That project would eventually become *Changing New York*, a book documenting the dramatic transformations New York City underwent in the 1930s. The two women were devoted partners for the next thirty years, until McCausland's death in 1965. Friends knew them to live privately at 50 Commerce Street with an indeterminate number of cats.

2007.2.243

## **Berenice Abbott**

American, 1898–1991

*Untitled [Studios: 51 West 10th Street,  
New York]*

c. 1948, printed 1982

Abbott's choice to photograph the studios at 51 West 10th Street was an addition to the building's already impressive artistic heritage. Designed specifically to house artists by the architect William Morris Hunt, its walls saw many famous faces over the years, including Frederic Edwin Church, Albert Bierstadt, and Winslow Homer. The studios were demolished and replaced with an apartment building in 1956.

2007.2.74

## **Berenice Abbott and Elizabeth McCausland**

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### *Changing New York*

New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, 1939

The 1939 publication *Changing New York* reproduces many of Berenice Abbott's best-known images, representing the culmination of ten years of photography in New York City. The book was a collaborative venture financed by the Federal Art Project, a division of the Works Progress Administration that provided funding to the arts during the Great Depression. Abbott made the photographs, and her partner Elizabeth McCausland wrote the accompanying captions.

Describing New York City, Abbott wrote that "The tempo of the metropolis is not of eternity, or even time, but of the vanishing

instant.” Few images capture that sense of blink-and-you’ll-miss-it urgency better than this photograph of the tower of St. Mark’s Church embellished with lacy, looping skywriting. It’s a near-perfect juxtaposition of old and new, and Abbott had to be in precisely the right place at precisely the right time to photograph it.

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## BERENICE ABBOTT'S AMERICAN NORTHEAST

Berenice Abbott's attention was by no means focused exclusively on the Big Apple. She was doing photographic work in other cities and states up to five years prior to the 1939 publication of *Changing New York*, and she continued to work in the Northeast long after she moved out of New York City.

In 1934, while on a trip with the architectural historian Henry-Russell Hitchcock, she shot for two projects: *The Architecture of H. H. Richardson*, a MoMA exhibition with an accompanying publication, and *The Urban Vernacular of the Thirties, Forties, and Fifties: American Cities Before the Civil War*, an exhibition at Wesleyan University. This trip took her to Albany, Boston, Hartford, and other

cities. In 1954 Abbott traveled the length of US Route 1, taking photos from Maine all the way down to Florida, focusing on how the automobile was changing the American landscape. She moved to Maine in 1965, where she would live and work until her death in 1991.

## **Berenice Abbott**

American, 1898–1991

*City Hall, Albany, New York*

1934, printed 1982

*Brick Houses with Wooden Porches,*

*264–266 North Pearl Street, Albany, NY*

1934, printed 1982

When photographing structures designed by others, Abbott had to balance her own creative impulse with the need for an accurate document. City Hall in Albany, New York is the design of the architect H. H. Richardson, but the spectacular framing of the building, with the tower nestled in the leaves of a nearby tree, is all Abbott. In the other Albany photograph shown here, Abbott could have waited for the street to

clear, but her inclusion of the single proud postman adds a neighborly warmth to the image, implying the community that the architecture serves.

2007.2.82; 2007.2.54

## **Berenice Abbott**

American, 1898–1991

*Untitled [Broadway and the Adelphi Hotel,  
Saratoga Springs, New York]*

1934–35, printed 1982

*Untitled [White Horse Tavern,  
East Avon, NY]*

c. 1935, printed 1982

“Natural light outdoors is tricky business,” wrote Abbott in her 1941 book *A Guide to Better Photography*. Even so, she was an expert at manipulating and capturing natural light to create drama and atmosphere. Broadway Avenue in Saratoga Springs looks cheery and warm, with the sun shining overhead and the trees casting dappled shadows. In contrast, the White Horse Tavern in East Avon is set against a

backdrop of electric tension as the gray sky threatens a storm. The tavern opened around 1812 and burned in 1955. The white horse statue survived and stands today in front of a gas station.

2007.2.18; 2007.2.25

**Berenice Abbott**

American, 1898–1991

*Allyn House, Allyn and  
Trumbull Streets, Hartford, CT*  
1934, printed 1982

2007.2.46

**Berenice Abbott**

American, 1898–1991

*Cheney Building, Hartford, CT*

1934, printed 1982

2007.2.47

## **Berenice Abbott**

American, 1898–1991

*Untitled [Boston Arena]*

c. 1930, printed 1982

Many of the structures Berenice Abbott photographed have since been demolished or irrevocably transformed, the grand entrance to the historic Boston Arena included. The Boston Arena was purchased by Northeastern University and renamed the Matthews Arena in 1979, and the original facade was entombed in brick. Today, due to the building's structural instability, there are plans to demolish it.

2007.2.108

## **Berenice Abbott**

American, 1898–1991

*Washington Street at Adams Square,  
Boston, MA*

1934, printed 1982

At first glance this photograph may appear to depict a gray, wintry day in Boston, but it was actually taken in the middle of summer. The bright sunlight reflecting off the pavement gives the illusion of a street blanketed in snow. This street scene was exhibited in the 1934 exhibition “American Cities Before the Civil War: The Urban Vernacular of the Thirties, Forties and Fifties,” a collaboration between Abbott and Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Jr., a professor of architecture at Wesleyan.

2007.2.156

## **Berenice Abbott**

American, 1898–1991

*Stonehurst, Robert Treat Paine House,  
Waltham MA*

1934, printed 1982

*Stairway, Stonehurst, Robert Treat Paine  
House, Waltham, MA*

1934, printed 1982

*Stonehurst, Robert Treat Paine House,  
Waltham, MA*

1934, printed 1982

Berenice Abbott photographed Stonehurst, the country home of the philanthropist Robert Treat Paine, for the book *The Architecture of H. H. Richardson*. The two photographs of Stonehurst's interior rooms are relatively unusual within Abbott's

architectural photography; after she left Paris and significantly reduced her portrait photography practice, Abbott took the majority of her photographs outdoors.

2007.2.15; 2007.2.113; 2007.2.174

## **Berenice Abbott**

American, 1898–1991

*Way Street and Harrison Avenue,  
Boston, MA*

1934, printed 1982

In 1934 Abbott was having trouble securing funding for her New York City photography, so she brought her talents in photographing architecture to other American cities.

She visited Boston with the architectural historian Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Jr.

on a trip that also included Baltimore, Charleston, and Philadelphia. Just out of view in this photo, below the street barrier, are train tracks.

2007.2.28

## **Berenice Abbott**

American, 1898–1991

*22 Louisburg Square, Boston, MA*  
1934, printed 1982

Berenice Abbott frequently utilized lampposts and other sidewalk features as compositional devices. In this photograph the post is just slightly off-center, almost like a figure standing next to a doorway, beckoning you inside. This corner townhome stands today almost wholly unchanged from its appearance in the photograph.

2007.2.81

## **Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Jr.**

*The Architecture of H. H. Richardson  
and His Times*

New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1936

When Abbott was struggling to find financial support for her developing New York City photographic project, she supported herself with commissioned work. In 1934, she worked for the Museum of Modern Art on a book project documenting the buildings of the American architect H. H. Richardson.

Not all the photographs Abbott took of the buildings made it into the book, and sometimes the photos that were selected were cropped or altered to isolate the architecture. Even with these changes, Abbott's unique vision and skill in capturing essential details shines through.

Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Jr., the author of *The Architecture of H. H. Richardson*, wrote of Abbott's crucial contribution to the book: "The photographer may well be so important a collaborator that, when the work is completed, the original initiator must . . . recogniz[e] that the quality of the achievement is ultimately wholly due to the photographs."

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**Berenice Abbott**

American, 1898–1991

*Walter Channing House,  
Brookline, MA*

1934, printed 1982

2007.2.133

**Berenice Abbott**

American, 1898–1991

*Untitled [Walter Channing House, Brookline,  
MA]*

1934, printed 1982

2007.2.22

## **Berenice Abbott**

American, 1898–1991

*Untitled [Weathervanes outside Rubinstein's  
Antiques, Rockland, ME]*

1954–59, printed 1982

This photograph was taken on a 1954 road trip down the U.S. 1 national highway from Fort Kent, Maine, to Key West, Florida. Berenice Abbott produced over 1,000 photographic negatives on the trip, intending to publish a book called *U.S. 1, U.S.A.* Her aim was to capture the distinct American spirit that existed outside of large cities. Abbott never secured funding to produce the book, so the photographs have received relatively little attention.

2007.2.23

## **Berenice Abbott**

604

American, 1898–1991

*Portland Head Light,  
Cape Elizabeth, ME*  
1967, printed 1982

After visiting Maine for the first time in the 1950s, Berenice Abbott decided to relocate there from New York City in 1966, the year after her partner Elizabeth McCausland died. She lived first in Blanchard, then in Monson, and published her final book project, *A Portrait of Maine*, in 1968.

*Portland Head Light, Cape Elizabeth, ME* was not included in that publication, for Abbott often preferred to feature everyday subjects over landmarks. Abbott died at her Monson home in 1991, at the age of 93.

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