

ARTIST ROOMS



TATE

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Identical twins, Roselle, N.J. 1967
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PRESS VIEW: Thursday 11 March, 11.30 am – 1.00 pm

DIANE ARBUS

ARTIST ROOMS

13 March – 13 June 2010

DEAN GALLERY, Belford Road, Edinburgh, EH4 3DS; 0131 624 6200

www.nationalgalleries.org

Admission free

The striking and profoundly original work of legendary American photographer Diane Arbus will be the subject of a major exhibition at the National Galleries of Scotland in Edinburgh this spring. *Diane Arbus*, which is part of the 2010 programme of ARTIST ROOMS exhibitions, will bring together some 70 black-and-white photographs, spanning the artist's career from the mid-1950s until her untimely death in 1971. This outstanding selection of Arbus's images was put together by the donor of the ARTIST ROOMS collection, Anthony d'Offay, in collaboration with the artist's estate, and is one of the finest collections of her work in existence. The exhibition will also feature a small number of additional loans from a private collection, including an early self-portrait, taken when Arbus was pregnant with her first child in 1945.

ARTIST ROOMS is the new national collection created by the curator and collector, Anthony d'Offay, and acquired by Tate and NGS in February 2008. *Artist Rooms on Tour with The Art Fund supported by The Scottish Government* has been devised to enable this collection to reach and inspire new audiences across the country, particularly young people. Following its successful launch in 2009, 21 museums and galleries across the UK will be showing 25 *ARTIST ROOMS in 2010*. To find out more information about ARTIST ROOMS on Tour please visit www.artfund.org/artistrooms.

To see the full ARTIST ROOMS collection please visit www.tate.org.uk/artistrooms and www.nationalgalleries.org/artistrooms

Diane Arbus will be the first exhibition in Scotland to be devoted to the photographer's work in almost 40 years. Occupying the top floor of the Dean Gallery, it will feature some of her most celebrated images, including **Tattooed man at a carnival, Md. 1970**, and **Young man and his pregnant wife in Washington Square Park, N.Y.C 1965**. It will also include her lesser-known early work in 35 mm, as well as a very rare portfolio of original prints, **A box of ten photographs**, which Arbus produced shortly before her suicide in 1971. This includes perhaps her most iconic image, **Identical twins, Roselle, N.J. 1967**.

Diane Arbus is one of the most significant photographers of the twentieth century, an influential figure whose compellingly honest style of photography paved the way for the work of many contemporary photographers and artists. Her distinctive approach is marked by the directness of her portraiture, and by her ability to find the familiar in the strange, and discover the unusual in the ordinary. Arbus undertook 'to photograph everybody', including circus and freak-show performers, transvestites, nudists and people with learning disabilities. The resulting portraits are bold and frank, but they also reflect the level of trust that Arbus worked hard to establish with her subjects, creating a complex, collaborative relationship that underpins the images, and invests them with much of their power.

Arbus was born in New York in 1923, and began taking photographs in partnership with her husband, Allan Arbus, in the 1940s, working for fashion magazines such as *Glamour* and *Vogue*. It was not until the 1950s that she began to work seriously on her personal interests, after studying with the Austrian photographer Lisette Model, an experience that transformed her work. During the 1960s, Arbus received two John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship grants, which allowed her to pursue projects such as her study of American Rites, Manners and Customs, and in 1967 she was one of three photographers whose work was the focus of *New Documents*, a landmark exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art in New York. A year after her death in 1971, Arbus was the first American photographer to have her work selected for inclusion in the Venice Biennale, the largest and most prestigious showcase for contemporary art in the world.

In the late 1950s Arbus was experimenting with different techniques and looking for projects that interested her. She worked in many locations around New York, and followed in the tradition of American street photography, candidly photographing her surroundings with a 35mm camera. It was at this point that she became drawn to people who worked at, and visited, the amusement parks in Palisades Park and Coney Island, representatives of a subculture or underworld that remained a rich source of fascination for her. The exhibition will include an early example, **Fire eater at a carnival, Palisades Park, N.J. 1956**, as well as more iconic images such as **Albino sword swallower at a carnival, Md. 1970**, taken much later in Arbus's career.

The latter was originally commissioned for *Esquire*, the first magazine to publish Arbus's work, in 1960. While she had mixed feelings about her commercial assignments, a period of imaginative magazine publishing in the 1960s created opportunities for Arbus to work on projects that aligned

with her own personal interests. Well-known images such as **A family on their lawn one Sunday in Westchester, N.Y.C 1966** and **A young Brooklyn family going for a Sunday outing, N.Y.C. 1966** were made for an article on 'American Families' published in the UK by *The Sunday Times Magazine*.

These images are typical of Arbus's distinctively frontal, square-format portraiture, a style which developed after she began using a 2 ¼ inch, twin-lens Rolleiflex camera in 1962. Arbus often placed her sitters in the centre of the picture frame, intensifying the sense of an interaction or collaboration between her and the subjects she sought out. She photographed many of her subjects in New York's public parks (**Child with a toy hand grenade in Central Park, N.Y.C. 1962; Woman with a locket in Washington Square Park, N.Y.C. 1965**), but many of her portraits are of people she met, befriended and then photographed, with striking intimacy, at home, usually in their bedrooms (**Naked man being a woman N.Y.C. 1968**).

Arbus was deeply interested in gender and identity, and often photographed transvestites and transsexuals (**Two female impersonators backstage, N.Y.C 1961; A young man in curlers at home on West 20th Street, N.Y.C. 1966**). These works also reflect her broader interest in the rituals and customs of self-contained groups or mini-societies, such as ethnic minorities (**Puerto Rican women with a beauty mark, N.Y.C. 1965; Jewish couple dancing, N.Y.C. 1963**); nudists (**Retired man and his wife at home in a nudist camp one morning, N.J. 1963**); wealthy socialites (**Mrs. T. Charlton Henry in an evening gown, Philadelphia, Pa. 1965; Four people at a gallery opening, N.Y.C. 1968**); and the residents of institutions for people with learning disabilities (as seen in a series of untitled images from 1970-71).

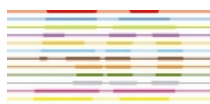
Diane Arbus's singularly humane and compellingly personal approach to her subjects helped to redefine documentary photography, bridging the gap between this most accessible medium and the 'higher' arts. Her work has been described as an uncritical 'celebration of things as they are', which explores the extraordinary variety that can be found in the lives, emotions and appearances of ordinary people. This exhibition will offer an excellent overview of a truly remarkable body of the work.

Following its showing in Edinburgh, *Diane Arbus* will be at Nottingham Contemporary from 24 July to 26 September 2010, as part of *ARTIST ROOMS on Tour with The Art Fund*. The Talbot Rice Gallery, the public art gallery of The University of Edinburgh, will be the venue for another ARTIST ROOMS display which opens this spring. Work by the American conceptual artist Jenny Holzer will be on show at the Talbot Rice from 27 March until 15 May 2010.

-ENDS-

For further information and images please contact: pressinfo@nationalgalleries.org

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Notes to Editors:

This exhibition forms part of the programme of ARTIST ROOMS, a new collection of modern and contemporary art held by Tate and National Galleries of Scotland for the nation. The collection, which comprises more than 730 works, was assembled by Anthony d'Offay, whose London galleries played a key role in the promotion and understanding of twentieth-century art in the UK over a period of more than 30 years. ARTIST ROOMS was established through The d'Offay Donation in 2008, with the assistance of the National Heritage Memorial Fund, The Art Fund and the Scottish and British Governments. The guiding principle for the creation of this national resource was the concept of individual rooms devoted to particular artists. ARTIST ROOMS is being shared with museums and galleries throughout the UK thanks to the support of independent charity The Art Fund, and within Scotland, the Scottish Government.

The Art Fund

The Art Fund is the UK's leading independent art charity. It offers grants to help UK museums and galleries enrich their collections; campaigns on behalf of museums and their visitors; and promotes the enjoyment of art. It is funded from public donations and has 80,000 members. Since 1903 the charity has helped museums and galleries all over the UK secure 860,000 works of art for their collections. Recent achievements include: helping secure Titian's *Diana and Actaeon* for the National Galleries of Scotland and The National Gallery in February 2009 with a grant of £1 million; helping secure Anthony d'Offay's collection, ARTIST ROOMS for Tate and National Galleries of Scotland in February 2008 with a grant of £1 million – and providing an additional £500,000 for the collection to be toured throughout the UK in 2009 and 2010; and running the *Buy a Brushstroke* public appeal which raised over £550,000 to keep Turner's *Blue Rigi* watercolour in the UK. For more information contact the Press Office on 020 7225 4888 or visit www.artfund.org. The Art Fund is a Registered Charity No. 209174