

PICTO

November 14, 2018
By Jonas Cuenin

Fred McDarrah, photographer of New York's post-war counterculture

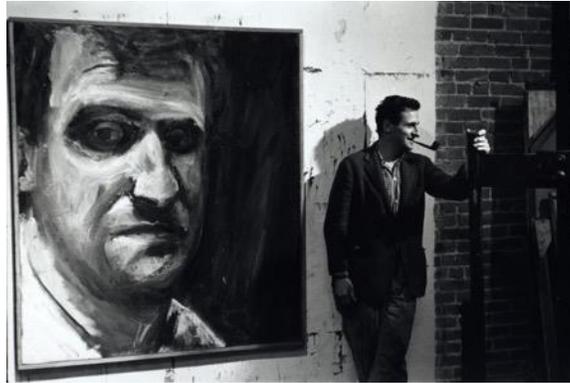


For more than 50 years, photographer Fred W. McDarrah (1926–2007) told the story of artists and writers who made New York the center of post-war culture through his images published in the *Village Voice*, where he was the only staff photographer and was its first picture editor.



Carolee Schneeman in a Private Performance in Ashawagh Hall, East Hampton, 1975 © Fred W. McDarrah
Willem de Kooning, East Hampton, 1978 © Fred W. McDarrah

These pictures were the graphic expression of the United States' first, largest and most spirited alternative weekly as it recorded — and helped create — the most vibrant decades of this city. Through the medium of *The Voice* many of his images are lodged in our collective memories of bohemia and the counterculture. He covered New York City's diverse downtown scenes, producing an unmatched and encyclopedic visual record of people, movements, and events.



Paul Georges With Self-Portrait Painted in His Broadway Loft, 1961 © Fred W. McDarrah

McDarrah frequented the bars, cafés, and galleries where writers, artists, and musicians gathered, and he was welcome in the apartments and lofts of the city's avant-garde cultural aristocracy. He captured vital moments, from Jack Kerouac reading poetry to Bob Dylan hanging out in Christopher Park to Andy Warhol filming in the Factory (often little known when he shot them), to the Stonewall rebellion. The mostly candid photographs show these artists at storied New York gathering places, at exhibition openings, and in their studios as well as well as on the East End of Long Island, where McDarrah and many of his subjects lived and worked.



Dennis Oppenheim "Search for Clues", ca. 1976 © Fred W. McDarrah
Frank Stella at Leo Castelli Gallery, 1960 © Fred W. McDarrah

A generation of artists, including pop icons Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, Claes Oldenburg, Jasper Johns, or Frank Stella, often sought out McDarrah and coverage in *The Village Voice*. For instance, Warhol would call McDarrah at home, hoping he would take his portrait and use it in the *Voice*, one of the few periodicals giving serious early coverage to the pop genre — and to women artists. McDarrah's

archive also includes classic images of Marisol, Eva Hesse, Yayoi Kusama, Carolee Schneemann, Rosalyn Drexler, Hanna Wilke, Alice Neel or Marjorie Strider.



Mike Goldberg in His East 10th Street Studio, ca. 1960 © Fred W. McDarrah

A new exhibition entitled “Into the Artist’s World: The Photographs of Fred W. McDarrah” and currently on view at the Parrish Art Museum in Water Mill, NY, presents a series of his photographs dating from 1959 to 1979. Works by the artists themselves, juxtaposed to the prints, bring their portraits alive: Robert Motherwell’s lyrical 1966 ink drawing, Spontaneity No.3, points to the gestural sweeps in oil paintings seen behind him in McDarrah’s image. The photograph of Norman Bluhm spraying arcs of paint across the canvas in his studio echoes his drawing from the same year.



David Hare and Frederick Kiesler, 1959 © Fred W. McDarrah
James Brooks, Charlotte Park, Conrad Marca-Relli, Ludwig Sander, 1959 © Fred W. McDarrah

In the newly published book “Fred McDarrah: New York Scenes”, historian Sean Wilentz vividly describes how the photographer recorded the transformation of Greenwich Village from a local bohemian scene into a worldwide movement. “Fred left behind an unprecedented body of work from inside that movable site as it existed in mid-century Greenwich Village, when, for a while anyway, it shook the nation and the world. Nobody had ever come close to depicting what Fred did, and any future bohemian chronicle is bound to be shot differently from the way Fred did it. He was in the right place at the right time, and when the chance came for him to make the most of it, he didn’t blow it. So as long as there are those who will pay attention, Fred W. McDarrah’s spirit, the spirit inside these pictures, will tell its magical stories.”



Lester Johnson Demonstrates His Technique in His 10th Street Studio, 1961 © Fred W. McDarrah



Norman Bluhm in His 4th Avenue Loft Studio, 1961 © Fred W. McDarrah

Into the Artist's World: The Photographs of Fred W. McDarrah

November 11, 2018 – October 3, 2019

Parrish Art Museum
279 Montauk Highway
Water Mill, NY 11976
<https://parrishart.org>