

Diane Arbus

Diane Arbus – Paris Art Studies

1923. Born Diane Nemerov in New York , second child of Getrude and David Nemerov. Her father is sales director at Russek’s one of the oldest furriers in New York.

1927. Visits France with her parents, older brother Howard and a governess.

1928. Attends the Ethical Culture School, one of New York’s fashionable progressive schools in Riverdale. Birth of sister Renée.

1933. Attends Fieldston, the Ethical Culture high school.

1936. Meets Allan Arbus (born 1918) who works in the advertising department of Russek’s. They visit together exhibitions at the Museum of modern Art, notably “Walker Evans, American Photographs” in 1938.

1940. High school diploma from Fieldston.

1941. Maries at 18 Allan Arbus. He gives her as present her first camera a Grafex 6x8. Studies briefly photography with Berenice Abbott. Visits with Allan the Alfred Stieglitz gallery. She is drawn to the photos of Matthew Brady, Timothy O’Sullivan, Paul Strand, Bill Brandt and Eugène Atget.

1942. Allan is drafted into the army during WWII into the photography division of Transmissions, leaves for Ceylon.

1944. Diane photographs her own pregnancy for her husband.

1945. Birth of her daughter Doon.

1946. The young couple found their own fashion photo agency. They are frequently employed by David Nemerov.

1947. They publish many photos in the fashion magazines in the late 1940’s, Glamour, Seventeen, Vogue. In parallel, however, they read philosophy and Russian literature with a penchant for the existentialist thinkers: Schopenhauer Kierkegaard, Dostoyevsky, Rilke.

1951. They travel in Europe, France, Italy and Spain.

1954. Birth of a second daughter, Amy.

1956. Works with a 35 mm Nikon and begins numbering her negatives. Ends her professional partnership with he husband. Studies photography with the Jewish Austrian realist photographer Lisette Model, her most important apprenticeship.

1959. Separation with Allan, moves wither two daughters to Greenwich Village. Continues sharing studio and dark room with Allan. Beginning of long term love affair with Marvin Israel, painter, illustrator and former director of Seventeen.

1960. Publication of her first photographs in Esquire under the title the “Vertical Journey”. Begins working as free-lance photographer for Esquire, Harper’s Bazaar, Show, the London Sunday Times and other magazines. She frequently contributes her

own texts to accompany her photos.

1961. Marvin Israel is named director of Harper’s Bazaar. He commissions reportages.

1962. Starts using a 6x6 Rolleiflex rather than the more traditional 35mm camera she used in the 1950’s. Her object was to eliminate grain from her photos and capture the real texture of things. Photographs stars in Hollywood for Glamour. Meets John Szarkowski, Steichen’s successor as head of the photographic department of MoMA.

1963. Marvin Israel is fired from Harper’s Bazaar. Diane receives Guggenheim grant to work on “American rites, manners and customs”. She photographs contests, festivals, public and private reunions, people in costume, hotel lobbies, theater dressing rooms, all as the “extraordinary ceremonies of our times”. “All that is ceremonial and curious will with time become legendary”.

Death of her father. She photographs Sunshine Park, a nudist camp in New Jersey.

1964. Visits Hollywood for Show magazine, photographs Mae West. MoMA buys 7 photos.

1965. Begins producing square prints with black borders on 28x35 paper. Photographs in Washington Square Park. Harper's Bazaar publishes "On Marriage" and Esquire "Familial Colloquies". Gives her first courses at Parsons School of Design. Two more prints bought by MoMA.

1966. Second Guggenheim grant. Commissioned by Harper's Bazaar to photograph New York artists, Roy Lichtenstein, Claes Oldenburg, Frank Stella, and others. Photographs twins and triplets.

1967. Exhibits with Gary Winogrand and Lee Friedlander in a show organized by Szarkowski, "New Documents", at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Assists at the first pro and anti Vietnam War protests.

1968. Hired by Esquire she accompanies the militant Dr Donald Gatch in his tour of poor townships in South Carolina. Photographs prisons, psychiatric hospitals and old people's homes. Hospitalized for hepatitis. Teaches at Cooper Union. Works for Sunday Times Magazine and New York Times fashion supplement.

1969. Works for Nova magazine in London. 10 of her prints are shown in "New Photography U.S.A." at MoMA. Allan installs a new dark room for her before finalizing divorce and his departure for Los Angeles. Encouraged by Marvin Israel edits her first portfolio of 10 signed and annotated photographs. Begins seeing psychiatrist Dr Helen Boigon. Third fashion supplement for New York Times Magazine shot in the Caribbean.

1970. Moves to an artists' cooperative, Westbeth, in Greenwich Village. The Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris buys 20 of her prints. Finishes her portfolio, "a box of 10 photographs". Is hired by Szarkowski to research press photography. She discovers the work of Weegee, the now famous crime scene and gossip column photographer, and encourages Szarkowski to curate an exhibition of his work.

1971. Publishes "The Affluent Ghetto" on California leisure communities in the Sunday Times Magazine. Photographs couples for a reportage on "Love" for Time-Life Books. Teaches a master class at the Westbeth art cooperative in order to buy herself a new camera. Accompanies Israel to Hamburg for an opening of his painting exhibition in the Brusberg gallery. Exhibits 8 photos at the Fogg Museum in Harvard. Art Forum publishes 5 photos from the portfolio. Richard Avedon, Mike Nichols and Jasper Johns each buy a portfolio. In June she photographs at the White House the wedding of Tricia Nixon for the Sunday Times Magazine. Teaches in Amherst the same month. Mid July assists at the annual picnic of the Federation of the Handicapped. Commits suicide by swallowing sleeping pills and cutting her wrists in her apartment on 26 July at the age of 48.

1972. Her portfolio of 10 pictures are the first photographs by an American to be shown at the Venice Biennale.

1973. Posthumous exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, "From the Picture Press" on which she had done preparatory work before her death, draws 250 000 visitors.