

CREATIVE BOOM

Inspiration / Photography

Simone de Beauvoir's photographic journey inspired by her diary, *America Day by Day*

Written by
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This month, Sous Les Etoiles Gallery in New York presents, *1947, Simone de Beauvoir in America*, a photographic journey inspired by her diary, *America Day by Day* published in France in 1948. Curated by Corinne Tapia, director of the Gallery, the show aims to illustrate the depiction of De Beauvoir's encounter with America at the time.

In January of 1947, the French writer and intellectual, Simone de Beauvoir landed in New York's La Guardia Airport, beginning a four-month journey across America. She travelled from East to the West coast by trains, cars and even Greyhound buses. She has recounted her travels in her personal diary and recorded every experience with minute detail. She stayed 116 days, travelling through 19 states and 56 cities.

"The Second Sex", published in 1949, became a reference in the feminist movement but has certainly masked the talent of diarist Simone de Beauvoir. The careful observer, endowed with a chiselled and precise writing style, travelling was central guidance of the existential experience for her, a woman with infinite curiosity, a thirst for experiencing and discovering everything.

In 1929, she made her first trips to Spain, Italy and England with her lifelong partner, the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre. In 1947, she made, this time alone, her first trip to the United States, a trip that would have changed her life: "Usually, travelling is an attempt to annex a new object to my universe; this in itself is an undertaking: but today it's different. I feel I'm leaving my life behind. I don't know if it will be through anger or hope, but something is going to be revealed – a world so full, so rich and so unexpected that I have the extraordinary adventure of becoming different of me."

After WWII, in 1947, and in the context of the Cold War, the United States took the lead of the "free world", while Europe was just beginning to recover from its wounds. Invited by

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"America Day by Day is at the same time a book of travel, of politics and sociology on this time period," explains Corinne Tapia, owner and director of Sous Les Etoiles. In fact, De Beauvoir decorticates everything she sees, immersing herself in the New World. She seems completely open and delighted to explore the vertigo of New York, to enjoy the beauty of the landscape of Arizona, to examine the segregation in the South, to be seduced by Chicago and to be intrigued by the College girls.

It is also most certainly a very photographic book. As you read it, you can easily imagine the footsteps of Simone de Beauvoir in places she discovers for the first time, the atmosphere of the night, of the cabarets and their music of this period, impressed by the American way of life that begins to take effect. "I wanted the viewer to be as close to her reality at that time, so most of the photographs exhibited are in the year of 1947," said Corinne.

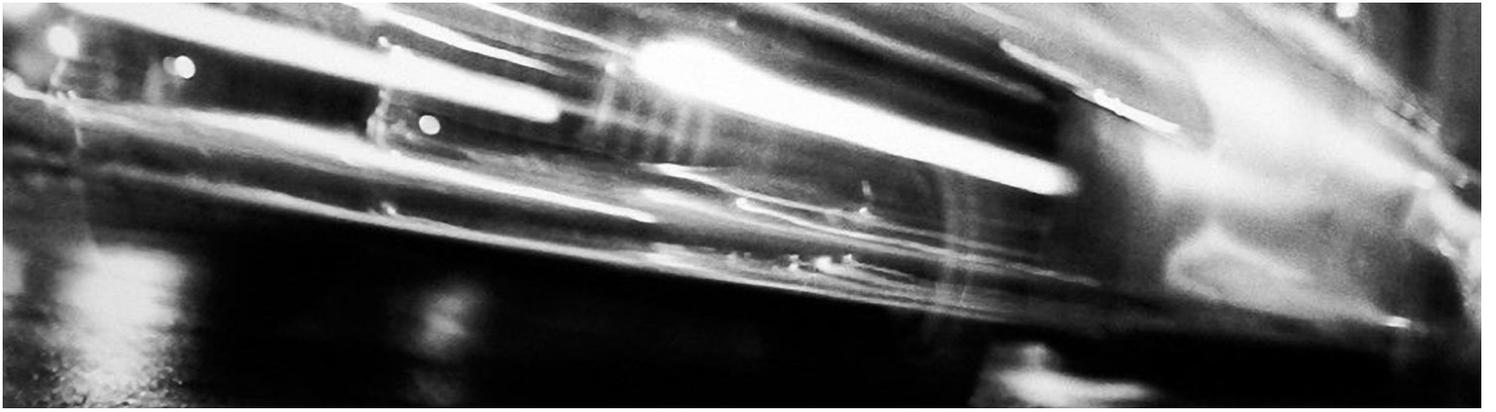
Their shades and different tones catch the spontaneous energy of everyday American life. Much of the photographers were street photographers working often for publications like Life Magazine, Ted Croner with his haunting night photography, Louis Faurer and his double exposure, Ferenc Berko giving an abstract geometry to Chicago, Wayne Miller and his daily life series about the black community in Chicago, and Esther Bublely with her Bus Series.





Wayne Miller, From "The Way of Life of the Northern Negro," Chicago (Afternoon Game at Table 2), 1946-1948. Courtesy Stephen Daiter Gallery / Sous Les Etoiles Gallery





Ida Wyman, Looking East on 41st Street, New York, 1947. Courtesy Stephen Cohen Gallery / Sous Les Etoiles Gallery



Max Yavno, Ferry Building, San Francisco, 1947. Courtesy Scott Nichols Gallery / Sous Les Etoiles Gallery



Ted Croner, Taxi, New York at night, 1947-1948. Courtesy Peter Fetterman / Sous Les Etoiles Gallery



Alumna Pub Mural, 1947. Courtesy Archives and Special Collections, Vassar College / Sous Les Etoiles Gallery

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