<table>
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<th><strong>Diane Arbus</strong></th>
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<td><strong>Birth name</strong></td>
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| **Born**        | March 14, 1923  
New York City, United States |
| **Died**        | July 26, 1971 (aged 48)  
Greenwich Village, New York City, United States |
| **Nationality** | American |
| **Field**       | Photography |
| **Works**       | Child with Toy Hand Grenade in Central Park (1962)  
Identical Twins, Roselle, New Jersey, 1967 (1967) |
| **Influenced by** | Lisette Model |

**Diane Arbus** (ˈdai ərˈbəsː; March 14, 1923 – July 26, 1971) was an American photographer and writer noted for black-and-white square photographs of "deviant and marginal people (dwarfs, giants, transgender people, nudists, circus performers) or of people whose normality seems ugly or surreal."

Diane believed that a camera could be "a little bit cold, a little bit harsh" but its scrutiny revealed the truth; the difference between what people wanted others to see and what they really did see – the flaws. A friend said that Arbus said that she was "afraid...that she would be known simply as 'the photographer of freaks'"; however, that phrase has been used repeatedly to describe her.

In 1972, a year after she committed suicide, Arbus became the first American photographer to have photographs displayed at the Venice Biennale. Millions of people viewed traveling exhibitions of her work in 1972–1979. Between 2003 and 2006, Arbus and her work were the subjects of another major traveling exhibition, *Diane Arbus Revelations*. In 2006, the motion picture Fur, starring Nicole Kidman as Arbus, presented a fictional version of her life story.

Although some of Arbus’s photographs have sold for hundreds of thousands of dollars at auction, Arbus’s work has provoked controversy; for example, Norman Mailer was quoted in 1971 as saying "Giving a camera to Diane Arbus is like putting a live grenade in the hands of a child."

**Personal life**

Arbus was born as Diane Nemerov to David Nemerov and Gertrude Russek Nemerov. The Nemerovs were a Jewish couple who lived in New York City and owned Russek’s, a famous Fifth Avenue department store. Because of the family’s wealth, Diane was insulated from the effects of the Great Depression while growing up in the 1930s. Arbus's father became a painter after retiring from Russek’s; her younger sister would become a sculptor and designer; and her older brother, Howard Nemerov, would later become United States Poet Laureate, and the father of the Americanist art historian Alexander Nemerov.

Diane Nemerov attended the Fieldston School for Ethical Culture, a prep school. In 1941, at the age of eighteen, she married her childhood sweetheart Allan Arbus. Their first daughter Doon (who would later become a writer),
was born in 1945 and their second daughter Amy (who would later become a photographer), was born in 1954.[6]
Diane and Allan Arbus separated in 1958, and they were divorced in 1969.[16]

Photographic career

The Arbuses were both interested in photography. In 1941, they visited the gallery of Alfred Stieglitz, where Diane
learned about photographers such as Mathew Brady, Timothy O'Sullivan, Paul Strand, Bill Brandt, and Eugène
Atget.[1]:129[16] In the early 1940s, Diane's father employed them to take photographs for the department store's
advertisements.[5] Allan was a photographer for the U.S. Army Signal Corps in World War Two.[16]

In 1946, after the war, the Arbuses began a commercial photography business called "Diane & Allan Arbus," with
Diane as art director and Allan as the photographer.[5] They contributed to Glamour, Seventeen, Vogue, Harper's
Bazaar, and other magazines even though "they both hated the fashion world."[10][17] Despite over 200 pages of their
fashion editorial in Glamour, and over 80 pages in Vogue, the Arbuses' fashion photography has been described as of
"middling quality."[18] Edward Steichen's noted 1955 photographic exhibit, The Family of Man, did include a
photograph by the Arbuses of a father and son reading a newspaper.[6]

In 1956, Diane Arbus quit the commercial photography business.[5] Although earlier she had studied photography
with Berenice Abbott, her studies with Lisette Model, beginning in 1956, led to Arbus's most well-known methods
and style.[5] She began photographing on assignment for magazines such as Esquire, Harper's Bazaar, and The
Sunday Times Magazine in 1959.[6] Around 1962, Arbus switched from a 35mm Nikon camera which produced
grainy rectangular images to a twin-lens reflex Rolleiflex camera which produced more detailed square images.[19][6][20]

In 1963, Arbus was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship for a project on "American rites, manners, and customs"; the
fellowship was renewed in 1966.[21][8] In 1964, Arbus began using a twin-lens reflex Mamiya camera with flash in
addition to the Rolleiflex.[19] Her methods included establishing a strong personal relationship with her subjects and
re-photographing some of them over many years.[6][10]

During the 1960s, she taught photography at the Parsons School of Design and the Cooper Union in New York City,
and the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence, Rhode Island.[14][22] The first major exhibition of her
photographs occurred at the Museum of Modern Art in a 1967 show called "New Documents," curated by John
Szarkowski. The show also featured the work of Garry Winogrand and Lee Friedlander.[11] Some of her artistic work
was done on assignment.[11] Although she continued to photograph on assignment (e.g., in 1968 she shot
documentary photographs of poor sharecroppers in rural South Carolina for Esquire magazine), in general her
magazine assignments decreased as her fame as an artist increased.[23][6] Szarkowski hired Arbus in 1970 to research
an exhibition on photojournalism called "From the Picture Press"; it included many photographs by Weegee whose
work Arbus admired.[14][16][24]

Using softer light than in her previous photography, she took a series of photographs in her later years of people with
intellectual disability showing a range of emotions.[11][25] At first, Arbus considered these photographs to be "lyric
and tender and pretty," but by June, 1971, she told Lisette Model that she hated them.[19]

Associating with other contemporary photographers such as Robert Frank and Saul Leiter, Arbus helped form what
Jane Livingston has termed The New York School of photographers during the 1940s and 1950s. Among other
photographers and artists she befriended during her career, she was close to photographer Richard Avedon; he was
approximately the same age, his family had also run a Fifth Avenue department store, and many of his photographs
were also characterized as detailed frontal poses.[19][10][26] Another good friend was Marvin Israel, an artist, graphic
designer, and art director whom Arbus met in 1959.[1]:144[26]
Death
Arbus experienced "depressive episodes" during her life similar to those experienced by her mother, and the episodes may have been made worse by symptoms of hepatitis. Arbus wrote in 1968, "I go up and down a lot," and her ex-husband noted that she had "violent changes of mood." On July 26, 1971, while living at Westbeth Artists Community in New York City, Arbus took her own life by ingesting barbiturates and slashing her wrists with a razor. Marvin Israel found her body in the bathtub two days later; she was 48 years old.

Notable photographs
Arbus's most well-known individual photographs include:

- **Child with Toy Hand Grenade in Central Park, N.Y.C. 1962** — Colin Wood, with the left strap of his jumper awkwardly hanging off his shoulder, tensely holds his long, thin arms by his side. Clenching a toy grenade in his right hand and holding his left hand in a claw-like gesture, his facial expression is maniacal. A print of this photograph was sold in 2005 at auction for $408,000.

- **Teenage Couple on Hudson Street, N.Y.C., 1963** — Wearing long coats and "worldlywise expressions", two adolescents appear older than their ages.

- **Triplets in Their Bedroom, N.J. 1963** — Three girls sit at the head of a bed.

- **A Young Brooklyn Family Going for a Sunday Outing, N.Y.C. 1966** — Richard and Marylin Dauria, who actually lived in the Bronx. Marylin holds their baby daughter, and Richard holds the hand of their young son, who is mentally-retarded.

- **A Young Man in Curlers at Home on West 20th Street, N.Y.C. 1966** — A close-up shows the man's pock-marked face with plucked eyebrows, and his hand with long fingernails holds a cigarette. Early reactions to the photograph were strong; for example, someone spit on it in 1967 at the Museum of Modern Art. A print was sold for $198,400 at a 2004 auction.

- **Boy With a Straw Hat Waiting to March in a Pro-War Parade, N.Y.C. 1967** — With an American flag at his side, he wears a bow tie, a pin in the shape of a bow tie with an American flag motif, and two round button badges: "Bomb Hanoi" and "God Bless America / Support Our Boys in Viet Nam." The image may cause the viewer to feel both different from the boy and sympathetic toward him. An art consulting firm purchased a print for $228,000 at a 2005 auction.

- **Identical Twins, Roselle, N.J. 1967** — Young twin sisters Cathleen and Colleen Wade stand side by side in dark dresses. The twin on the right slightly smiles and twin on the left slightly frowns. This photograph is echoed in Stanley Kubrick's film *The Shining*, which features twins in an identical pose as ghosts. A print was sold at auction for $478,400 in 2004.

- **A Family on Their Lawn One Sunday in Westchester, N.Y. 1968** — A woman and a man sunbathe while a boy bends over a small plastic wading pool behind them. A print was sold at auction in 2008 for $553,000.

- **A Naked Man Being a Woman, N.Y.C. 1968** — The subject has been described as in a "Venus-on-the-half-shell pose" or as "a Madonna turned in contrapposto... with his penis hidden between his legs". The parted curtain behind the man adds to the theatrical quality of the photograph.

- **A Very Young Baby, N.Y.C. 1968** — A photograph for Harper's Bazaar depicts Gloria Vanderbilt's then-infant son, future CNN anchorman Anderson Cooper.
• A Jewish Giant at Home with His Parents in The Bronx, N.Y. 1970 — Eddie Carmel, the "Jewish Giant", stands in his family's apartment with his much shorter mother and father. Arbus reportedly said to a friend about this picture: "You know how every mother has nightmares when she's pregnant that her baby will be born a monster?... I think I got that in the mother's face...." The photograph motivated Carmel's cousin to narrate a 1999 audio documentary about him. A print was sold at auction for $421,000 in 2007.

In addition, Arbus's Box of Ten Photographs was a portfolio of selected 1963–1970 photographs in a clear Plexiglas box/frame that was designed by Marvin Israel and that was to have been issued in a limited edition of 50. During her lifetime, however, Arbus completed only about 11 boxes and sold only 4 boxes (2 to Richard Avedon, 1 to Jasper Johns, and 1 to Bea Feitler). One copy printed by Neil Selkirk after Arbus's death sold for $553,600 in 2005, which was an auction record for Arbus.

Notable magazine articles

• "The Vertical Journey: Six Movements of a Moment Within the Heart of the City", Esquire, July 1960. This was the first magazine article that Arbus produced without Allan Arbus.

• "The Full Circle", Harper's Bazaar, November 1961. This included 4,000 words of text and photographs of five people such as "Jack Dracula, the Marked Man."

• "Mae West: Emotion in Motion", Show, January 1965. Although Arbus's writing showed "great style and lucidity", West's lawyer wrote a letter to the publisher claiming that Arbus's photographs were "unflattering" to West.

• "La Dolce Viva," by Barbara L. Goldsmith, New York, April 29, 1968. The article included a large photograph by Arbus of actress and model Viva reclining on a sofa; her breasts are bare, and her eyes are rolled upwards as though she had taken psychoactive drugs. As a result of the photograph, Vogue magazine canceled its modeling contracts with Viva.

• "Five Photographs by Diane Arbus." Artforum, volume 9, pages 64–69, May 1971. This article contains a famous quotation by Arbus: "A photograph is a secret about a secret. The more it tells you the less you know.

Legacy

After Arbus's death, her daughter Doon managed Arbus's estate. She forbade examination of Arbus's correspondence and often denied permission for exhibition or reproduction of Arbus's photographs. The editors of an academic journal published a two-page complaint in 1993 about the estate's control over Arbus's images and its attempt to censor part of an article about Arbus. As of 2000, the estate would not release Arbus's 1957 to 1965 images of transgender people. A 2005 article called the estate's allowing the British press to reproduce only fifteen photographs an attempt to "control criticism and debate." The estate was also criticized in 2008 for minimizing Arbus's early commercial work.

In mid–1972, Arbus was the first American photographer to have photographs displayed at the Venice Biennale; her ten photographs were described as "the overwhelming sensation of the American Pavilion" and "an extraordinary achievement.

The Museum of Modern Art held a retrospective of Arbus's work in late 1972 that subsequently traveled around the United States and Canada through 1975; it was estimated that over seven million people saw the exhibition. A different retrospective traveled around the world between 1973 and 1979.

Doon Arbus and Marvin Israel edited and designed a 1972 book Diane Arbus (or Diane Arbus: an Aperture Monograph) accompanying the Museum of Modern Art's exhibition. It contained eighty of Arbus's photographs, as well as texts from classes that Arbus gave in 1971, some of Arbus's writings, and some of Arbus's interviews. The text in the book includes some of Arbus's most widely cited quotations such as:

• Page 1: "My favorite thing is to go where I've never been."
Pages 1–2: "Our whole guise is like giving a sign to the world to think of us in a certain way but there's a point between what you want people to know about you and what you can't help people knowing about you. And that has to do with what I've always called the gap between intention and effect."[19][11][47]

Page 3: "Freaks was a thing I photographed a lot . . . . Most people go through life dreading they'll have a traumatic experience. Freaks were born with their trauma. They've already passed their test in life. They're aristocrats."[19][15][30][48]

Page 15: "I do feel I have some slight corner on something about the quality of things. I mean it's very subtle and a little embarrassing to me, but I really believe there are things which nobody would see unless I photographed them."[19][13][20][49]

In 2001–2004 the 1972 book was selected as one of the most important photobooks in history.[45][50][51][52] Over 300,000 copies of the book had been sold by 2004, unusual as "independent" photobooks are normally produced in editions of less than 5,000.[45]

A half-hour documentary film about Arbus's life and work known as Masters of Photography: Diane Arbus or Going Where I've Never Been: the Photography of Diane Arbus was produced in 1972 and released on video in 1989.[53][54]

Patricia Bosworth wrote an unauthorized biography of Arbus published in 1984. Although it is said to be "the main source" for understanding Arbus, Bosworth reportedly "received no help from Arbus's daughters, or from their father, or from two of her closest and most prescient friends, Avedon and . . . Marvin Israel."[10] The book was also criticized for insufficiently considering Arbus's personal writings, for speculating about missing information, and for focusing on "sex, depression and famous people," instead of Arbus's art.[11]

Between 2003 and 2006, Arbus and her work were the subject of another major traveling exhibition, Diane Arbus Revelations, that was organized by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Accompanied by a book of the same name, the exhibition included artifacts such as correspondence, books, and cameras as well as 180 photographs by Arbus.[11][15][22] Because Arbus's estate approved the exhibition and book, the chronology in the book is "effectively the first authorized biography of the photographer."[1][121-225][6]

In 2006, the fictional film Fur: an Imaginary Portrait of Diane Arbus was released, starring Nicole Kidman as Arbus; it used Patricia Bosworth's book Diane Arbus: A Biography as a source of inspiration.[12][55] The Metropolitan Museum of Art purchased twenty of Arbus's photographs (valued at millions of dollars) and received Arbus's archives as a gift from her estate in 2007.[56]

In 2011, William Todd Schultz published a "psychobiography" of Arbus ("An Emergency in Slow Motion") focused on her inner life and the subjective, personological origins of her photographs. The book features interviews with Arbus's psychotherapist during the two years prior to her death, who felt Arbus was "schizoid" and who also expressed the belief that her suicide was not motivated by a wish to die but a wish to punish. Schultz closely interprets a number of iconic Arbus shots, rooting them in personal motives and experiences.

Reactions of critics and others

Susan Sontag wrote an essay in 1973 entitled "Freak Show" that was critical of Arbus's work; it was reprinted in her 1977 book On Photography as "America, Seen Through Photographs, Darkly."[11] Among other criticisms, Sontag opposed the lack of beauty in Arbus's work and its failure to make the viewer feel compassionate about Arbus's subjects.[57] Sontag's essay itself has been criticized as "an exercise in aesthetic insensibility" and "exemplary for its shallowness."[15][11] A 2008 essay characterized Sontag and Arbus as "Siamese twins of photographic art," because they both struggled with photography as art versus documentation (e.g., the relationship of photographer and subject).[58] A 2009 article pointed out that Arbus had photographed Sontag and her son in 1965, thereby causing one to "wonder if Sontag felt this was an unfair portrait."[57]

Other critics' opinions of Arbus's photographs vary widely, for example:
Max Kozloff wrote in 1967 that Arbus's photographs have "an extraordinary ethical conviction" because they were taken with the subjects' consent and thereby challenge the viewer.[59]

Robert Hughes praised Arbus in 1972 as having "altered our experience of the face."[46]

Hilton Kramer opined in 1972 that Arbus "altered the terms of the art she practiced" and "completely wins us over."[60]

Judith Goldman in 1974 was of the opinion that Arbus's photographs betrayed their subjects by portraying them as full of despair.[47]

David Pagel in 1992 found Arbus's pictures of women with intellectual disability "remarkable" and "intriguing."[25]

Jed Perl felt that Arbus was "master of the high-falutin' creep-out" and that her photographs were "an emotional tease" in a 2003 critique.[61]

Barbara O'Brien in a 2004 review of the exhibition "Diane Arbus: Family Albums" found her and August Sander's work "filled with life and energy."[62]

Peter Schjeldahl, while claiming in 2005 that "no other photographer has been more controversial," also felt that her work was "revolutionary."[15]

Brian Sewell dismissed Arbus's work in 2005 as unremarkable and as having gained prominence partly because of her suicide, but as "worth a second glance."[42]

Ken Johnson, reviewing a show of Arbus's lesser-known works in 2005, likened Arbus's story-telling ability to that of writer Flannery O'Connor.[63]

Leo Rubinfien in 2005 compared Arbus to Franz Kafka and Samuel Beckett in exploring absurdity and fatalism.[11]

Stephanie Zacharek wrote in 2006 "When I look at her pictures, I see not a gift for capturing whatever life is there, but a desire to confirm her own suspicions about humanity's dullness, stupidity and ugliness."[55]

Wayne Koestenbaum asked in 2007 whether Arbus's photographs humiliate the subjects or the viewers.[64]

Arbus's subjects and their relatives also have differing views:

The father of the twins pictured in "Identical Twins, Roselle, N.J. 1967" felt that the photograph "was the worst likeness" of the girls he had ever seen.[27]

Anderson Cooper considers Arbus's photograph of him as an infant "great."[27]

Writer Germaine Greer, who was the subject of an Arbus photograph in 1971, criticized it as an "undeniably bad picture" and Arbus's work in general as unoriginal and focusing on "mere human imperfection and self-delusion."[48]

A taxi driver in New York who was the subject of the photograph "Boy With a Straw Hat" reportedly said to Arbus about the photograph, without knowing her identity, "Picture of me! What a thrill! Wish I knew who the photographer was. Like to thank him."[10]

One study published in 1985 examined the opinions of eighteen women viewing eight Arbus photographs.[65] The subjects tended to agree with statements based on Arbus's own words such as "These photographs show the gap between intention and effect," and tended to disagree with statements based on critics' views of Arbus such as "These photographs show the world only as a meaningless place of ugliness, horror and misery."[65]

Notable solo exhibitions

- 1972 *Diane Arbus Portfolio: 10 Photos*. Venice Biennale.[43]
- 1972–1975 *Diane Arbus* (125 photographs, curated by John Szarkowski). Museum of Modern Art, New York; Baltimore; Worcester Art Museum, Massachusetts; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; Detroit Institute of Arts; Witte Memorial Museum, San Antonio, Texas; New Orleans Museum of Art; Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, California; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Florida Center for the Arts, University of South Florida, Tampa; and Krannert
Art Museum, University of Illinois, Champaign.\[9\]
• 1974 "Hommage à Diane Arbus" by Jean-Marc Bustamante, Arles' Théâtre Antique, Rencontres d'Arles festival, France.
• 1973-79 *Diane Arbus: Retrospective* (118 photographs, curated by Doon Arbus and Marvin Israel). Seibu Museum, Tokyo; Hayward Gallery, London; Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, England; Scottish Arts Council, Edinburgh, Scotland; Van Abbe Museum, Eindhoven, The Netherlands; Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam; Lenbachhaus Städtische Galerie, Munich, Germany; Von der Heydt Museum, Wuppertal, Germany; Frankfurter Kunstverein; 14 galleries and museums in Australia; and 7 galleries and museums in New Zealand.\[9\]
• 1984–1987 *Diane Arbus: Magazine Work 1960–1971*. Spencer Museum of Art, Lawrence, Kansas; Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minneapolis; University of Kentucky Art Museum, Lexington; University Art Museum, California State University, Long Beach; Neubergmuseum, State University of New York at Purchase; Wellesley College Museum, Massachusetts; and Philadelphia Museum of Art.\[9\]
• 1986 Seattle Art Museum.\[17][67\]
• 1991 *Diane Arbus: Photographs*. Edwynn Houk Gallery, Chicago.\[68\]
• 1991 *Diane Arbus*. Ydessa Hendeles Art Foundation, Toronto.\[35][69\]
• 1997 *Diane Arbus: Women*. Photology Gallery, London.\[10][72\]
• 2003–2006 *Diane Arbus: Revelations*. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum Folkwang, Essen, Germany; Victoria and Albert Museum, London; CaixaForum, Barcelona; and Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.\[11][22\]
• 2004–2005 *Diane Arbus: Family Albums*. Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, South Hadley, Massachusetts; Grey Art Gallery, New York; Portland Museum of Art, Maine; Spencer Museum of Art, Lawrence, Kansas; and Portland Art Museum, Oregon.\[73][74][75][76\]
• 2005 *Diane Arbus: Other Faces Other Rooms*. Robert Miller Gallery, New York.\[63\]
• 2007 *Something Was There: Early Work by Diane Arbus*. Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco.\[77\]
• 2009 *Diane Arbus*. Timothy Taylor Gallery, London.\[79\]
• 2009–2010 *Artist Rooms: Diane Arbus*. National Museum Cardiff, Wales; and Dean Gallery, Edinburgh, Scotland.\[79][80\]
• 2010 *Diane Arbus: Christ in a Lobby and Other Unknown or Almost Known Works*. Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco.\[81\]
• 2011–2013 *Diane Arbus*. Galerie Nationale du Jeu de Paume, Paris;\[82\]; Fotomuseum, Winterthur;\[83\]; Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin;\[84\]; and Foam, Amsterdam.\[85\]
Notes

Diane Arbus


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