

For issue: 17 April 2018

## ***Dorothea Lange: Politics of Seeing***

Barbican Art Gallery, London, UK

22 June – 2 September 2018

Media View: Thursday 21 June, 10am – 1pm

#dorothealange @barbicancentre

**Important note:** The exhibition *Dorothea Lange: Politics of Seeing*, situated in the lower galleries of Barbican Art Gallery, is on at the same time as *Vanessa Winship: And Time Folds* on show in the upper galleries. The ticket gains entry to both exhibitions.

*The exhibition is organized by the Oakland Museum of California with support from the Oakland Museum Women's Board and the Henry Luce Foundation. The European presentation has been produced in collaboration with Barbican Art Gallery, London and Jeu de Paume, Paris.*

This summer, Barbican Art Gallery stages the first UK survey of the American documentary photographer **Dorothea Lange** (1895–1965), one of the most influential photographers of the 20th century. A formidable woman of unparalleled vigour and resilience, the exhibition charts Lange's outstanding photographic vision from her early studio portraits of San Francisco's bourgeoisie to her celebrated Farm Security Administration work (1935–1939) that captured the devastating impact of the Great Depression on the American population. The show features the iconic *Migrant Mother* as well as rarely seen photographs of the internment of Japanese-Americans during the Second World War and several post-war series documenting the changing face of the social and physical landscape of 1950s America, including a collaboration with fellow photographer Pirkle Jones. Working in urban and rural contexts across America and beyond, Lange focused her lens on human suffering and hardship to create compassionate and piercing portraits of people and places in the hope of effecting or influencing social and political reform. ***Dorothea Lange: Politics of Seeing*** is part of the Barbican's 2018 season, **The Art of Change**, which explores how the arts respond to, reflect and potentially effect change in the social and political landscape.

*Dorothea Lange: Politics of Seeing* encompasses over 300 objects from vintage prints and original book publications to ephemera, field notes, letters, and documentary film. Largely chronological, the exhibition presents eight series in Lange's oeuvre spanning from 1919 to 1957.

**Jane Alison, Head of Visual Arts, Barbican,** said: *"This is an incredible opportunity for our visitors to see the first UK survey of the work of such a significant photographer. Dorothea Lange is undoubtedly one of the great photographers of the twentieth century and the issues raised through her work have powerful resonance with issues we're facing in society today. Staged alongside contemporary photographer Vanessa Winship as part of The Art of Change, these two shows are unmissable".*

Opening the exhibition are Lange's little known early portrait photographs taken during her time running a successful portrait studio in San Francisco between 1919 and 1935. Lange was at the heart of San Francisco's creative community and her studio became a centre in which bohemian and artistic friends gathered after hours, including Edward Weston, Anne Brigman, Alma Lavenson, Imogen Cunningham, and Willard van Dyke. Works from this period include intimate portraits of wealthy West Coast families as well as of Lange's inner circle, counting amongst others photographer Roi Partridge and painter Maynard Dixon, Lange's first husband and father of her two sons.

The Great Depression in the early 1930s heralded a shift in her photographic language as she felt increasingly compelled to document the changes visible on the streets of San Francisco. Taking her camera out of the studio, she captured street demonstrations, unemployed workers, and breadline queues. These early explorations of her social documentary work are also on display.

The exhibition charts Lange's work with the newly established historical division of the Farm Security Administration (FSA), the government agency tasked with the promotion of Roosevelt's New Deal programme. Alongside Lange, the FSA employed a number of photographers, including Walker Evans, Ben Shahn and Arthur Rothstein, to document living conditions across America during the Great Depression: from urban poverty in San Francisco to tenant farmers driven off the land by dust storms and mechanisation in the states of Oklahoma, Arkansas and Texas; the plight of homeless families on the road in search of better livelihoods in the West; and the tragic conditions of migrant workers and camps across California. Lange used her camera as a political tool to critique themes of injustice, inequality, migration and displacement, and to effect government relief.

Highlights in this section are, among others, a series on sharecroppers in the Deep South that exposes relations of race and power, and the iconic *Migrant Mother*, a photograph which has become a symbol of the Great Depression, alongside images of vernacular architecture and landscapes, motifs often overlooked within Lange's oeuvre. Vintage prints in the exhibition are complemented by the display of original publications from the 1930s to foreground the widespread use of Lange's FSA photographs and her influence on authors including John Steinbeck, whose ground-breaking novel *The Grapes of Wrath* was informed by Lange's photographs. Traveling for many months at a time and working in the field, she collaborated extensively with her second husband Paul Schuster Taylor, a prominent social economist and expert in farm labour with whom she published the seminal photo book *An American Exodus: A Record of Human Erosion in 1939*, also on display in the exhibition.

The exhibition continues with rarely seen photographs of the internment of more than 100,000 American citizens of Japanese descent that Lange produced on commission for the War Relocation Authority following the Japanese attack on the American naval base at Pearl Harbor in 1941. Lange's critical perspective of this little discussed chapter in US history however meant that her photographs remained unpublished during the war and stored at the National Archives in Washington. It is the first time that this series will be shown comprehensively outside of the US and Canada.

Following her documentation of the Japanese American internment, Lange produced a photographic series of the wartime shipyards of Richmond, California with friend and fellow photographer Ansel Adams (1902–1984). Lange and Adams documented the war effort in the shipyards for *Fortune* magazine in 1944, recording the explosive increase in population numbers and the endlessly changing shifts of shipyard workers. Capturing the mass recruitment of workers, Lange turned her camera on both female and black workers, for the first time part of the workforce, and their defiance of sexist and racist attitudes.

The exhibition features several of Lange's post-war series, when she photographed extensively in California. Her series *Public Defender* (1955–1957) explores the US legal defence system for the poor and disadvantaged through the work of a public defender at the Alameda County Courthouse in Oakland. *Death of a Valley* (1956–57), made in collaboration with photographer Pirkle Jones, documents the disappearance of the small rural town of Monticello in California's Berryessa Valley as a consequence of the damming of the Putah Creek. Capturing the destruction of a landscape and traditional way of life, the photographs testify to Lange's environmentalist politics and have not been displayed or published since the 1960s.

The exhibition concludes with Lange's series of *Ireland* (1954), the first made outside the US. Spending six weeks in County Clare in western Ireland, Lange captured the experience of life in and around the farming town of Ennis in stark and evocative photographs that symbolise Lange's attraction to the traditional life of rural communities.

**ENDS**

## Notes to Editors

### Press Information

For further information, images or to arrange interviews, please contact:

**Ann Berni, Senior Communications Manager** +44 207 382 7169, [ann.berni@barbican.org.uk](mailto:ann.berni@barbican.org.uk)

**Lily Booth, Communications Officer** +44 207 382 6162, [lily.booth@barbican.org.uk](mailto:lily.booth@barbican.org.uk)

**Bréifne Ó Conbhuí, Communications Assistant** +44 207 382 7254,

[breifne.oconbhui@barbican.org.uk](mailto:breifne.oconbhui@barbican.org.uk)

### Full press pack available online from the Barbican Newsroom:

Links to all documents can be found in the 'Downloads' box on the top right-hand side of the page from [www.barbican.org.uk/DorotheaLangeNews](http://www.barbican.org.uk/DorotheaLangeNews)

### Public Information

#dorothealange @barbicancentre

Barbican Art Gallery and Gallery Shop, Barbican Centre, Silk Street, EC2Y 8DS, London

0845 120 7550, [www.barbican.org.uk/artgallery](http://www.barbican.org.uk/artgallery)

### Opening Hours:

Saturday to Wednesday, 10am–6pm (last entry 5.30pm walk up, 5pm online)

Thursday and Friday, 10am–9pm (last entry 8.30pm walk up, 8pm online)

Bank holidays: 12-6pm (last entry 5.30pm walk up, 8pm online)

### Ticket Prices:

Please note that your ticket for *Dorothea Lange: Politics of Seeing* will also gain you entry to *Vanessa Winship: And Time Folds*, exhibited on the upper floor of the main gallery.

**Standard:** £13.50 **Membership Plus:** Unlimited free entry + guest **Membership:** Unlimited free entry  
**Corporate Membership:** Unlimited free entry + guest **Young Barbican (14 -25s):** £5 (no booking fee)  
**Concessions:** £11 **Students/14-17:** £9 **Art Fund Members:** £11 **Under 14s:** Free

### Important Notes

Large bags, rucksacks and luggage are not permitted in the gallery. All bags are subject to search. Food and drink are not permitted.

### Exhibition

*Dorothea Lange: Politics of Seeing* is supported in part by the Oakland Museum Women's Board and the Henry Luce Foundation. The exhibition is organized by the Oakland Museum of California. The European presentation has been produced in collaboration with Barbican Art Gallery, London and Jeu de Paume, Paris. This exhibition was made possible with a Jonathan Ruffer Curatorial Research Grant from Art Fund. The exhibition at Barbican Art Gallery is designed by Mary Duggan. The exhibition will be presented from 15 October to 20 January 2019 at Jeu de Paume, Paris.

Exhibited in the gallery at the same time is British contemporary photographer *Vanessa Winship: And Time Folds*, the first major UK solo exhibition in a public gallery. The recipient of the prestigious Henri Cartier-Bresson prize in 2011, Winship's poetic gaze explores the fragile nature of our landscape and society, how memory leaves its mark on our collective and individual histories. The exhibition brings together an outstanding selection of more than 150 photographs, many never been seen before in the UK.

Also coinciding with *Dorothea Lange: Politics of Seeing*, is the sixth of the changing foyer displays ***The Hull of a Large Ship*** (18 May – November 2018) which explores the Barbican Art Centre original drawings with contributions by five architecture practices.

### **Catalogue**

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully-illustrated catalogue published by Prestel featuring over 180 beautifully reproduced photographs by Dorothea Lange. Edited by Barbican curator Alona Pardo and assistant curator Gilke Golbach, it includes contributions from Drew Heath Johnson, curator at the Oakland Museum of California, and writers David Company and Abigail Solomon-Godeau.

Price: £35 ISBN: 978-3-7913-5776-8

### **Events**

A rich programme of talks and events accompanies the exhibition. Check the website for full listings: [www.barbican.org.uk/artgallery](http://www.barbican.org.uk/artgallery)

### **Symposium at Whitechapel Gallery, London**

#### **Killed Negatives: Study Day**

**Saturday 23 June, 11.30–6pm**

Photographs are the embodiment of social relations between the photographer, the subject, editors, mass media and historians. Theorist John Roberts, curators Drew Johnson and David Company, and artist Lisa Oppenheim respond to the archive exhibition *Killed Negatives: Introducing America to Americans* at the Whitechapel Gallery.

In collaboration with the Barbican Centre, to coincide with the exhibition *Dorothea Lange: Politics of Seeing*.

Tickets £12.50/ Concessions £10.50

### **Barbican Art Gallery Shop**

In addition to the official exhibition catalogue the Gallery Shop also feature a wide selection of the featured photographers' books and other related titles plus prints, stationery, postcards, photographic gifts and more. The best of the Barbican Shop ranges can be found online at [www.barbican.org.uk/shop](http://www.barbican.org.uk/shop)

### **The Art of Change at the Barbican 2018**

The Art of Change presents bold artistic responses to vital global issues including feminism, climate change and human rights, while providing a platform for voices currently underrepresented in the arts. The season includes world-class music, theatre, dance, film, visual arts and learning and runs throughout 2018. [barbican.org.uk/whats-on/series/the-art-of-change](http://barbican.org.uk/whats-on/series/the-art-of-change)

### **Barbican Art Gallery and The Curve**

Our visual arts programme embraces art, architecture, design, fashion, photography and film.

Many of our exhibitions explore the interconnections between disciplines, periods and cultures, and aim to imagine the world in new ways. Designers, artists and architects are our collaborators in this process.

We invest in the artists of today and tomorrow; The Curve is one of the few galleries in London devoted to the commissioning of new work. Through our activities we aim to inspire more people to discover and love the arts. Entrance to The Curve is free. Through Young Barbican we offer £5 tickets to 14-25 year olds for our paid exhibitions, children under 14 are free.

Our exhibitions are complemented by comprehensively researched catalogues and a full range of public events. We develop engaging online content for audiences and offer special tours for schools. In partnership with renowned museums and art galleries, many of our exhibitions travel to reach both national and international audiences.

## About the Barbican

A world-class arts and learning organisation, the [Barbican](#) pushes the boundaries of all major art forms including dance, film, music, theatre and visual arts. Its creative learning programme further underpins everything it does. Over 1.1 million people attend events annually, hundreds of artists and performers are featured, and more than 300 [staff](#) work onsite. The architecturally renowned centre opened in 1982 and comprises the Barbican Hall, the Barbican Theatre, The Pit, Cinemas One, Two and Three, Barbican Art Gallery, a second gallery The Curve, foyers and public spaces, a library, Lakeside Terrace, [a glasshouse conservatory](#), conference facilities and three restaurants. The City of London Corporation is the founder and principal funder of the Barbican Centre.

The Barbican is home to Resident Orchestra, [London Symphony Orchestra](#); Associate Orchestra, [BBC Symphony Orchestra](#); Associate Ensembles the [Academy of Ancient Music](#) and [Britten Sinfonia](#), Associate Producer [Serious](#), and Artistic Partner [Create](#). Our Artistic Associates include [Boy Blue](#), [Cheek by Jowl](#), Deborah Warner, [Drum Works](#) and [Michael Clark Company](#). The [Los Angeles Philharmonic](#) are the Barbican's International Orchestral Partner, the [Australian Chamber Orchestra](#) are International Associate Ensemble at Milton Court and [Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra](#) are International Associate Ensemble.

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