

ASSESSMENT 4

HISTORICAL IMAGE MAKER PRESENTATION



A Telling on Diane Arbus
and her Influence in the
Medium of Photography
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1966
*Identical
Twins,
Roselle, N.J.*

1966
*A young man in curlers
at home on West 20th
Street, N.Y.C.*



A Box of Ten Photographs

1966
*A young Brooklyn
family going
for a Sunday outing,
N.Y.C.*



A Box of Ten Photographs

1963

*Xmas tree in a
living room in
Levittown, L.I.*



1970

*A Jewish giant at home with
his parents in the Bronx, N.Y.*



1967

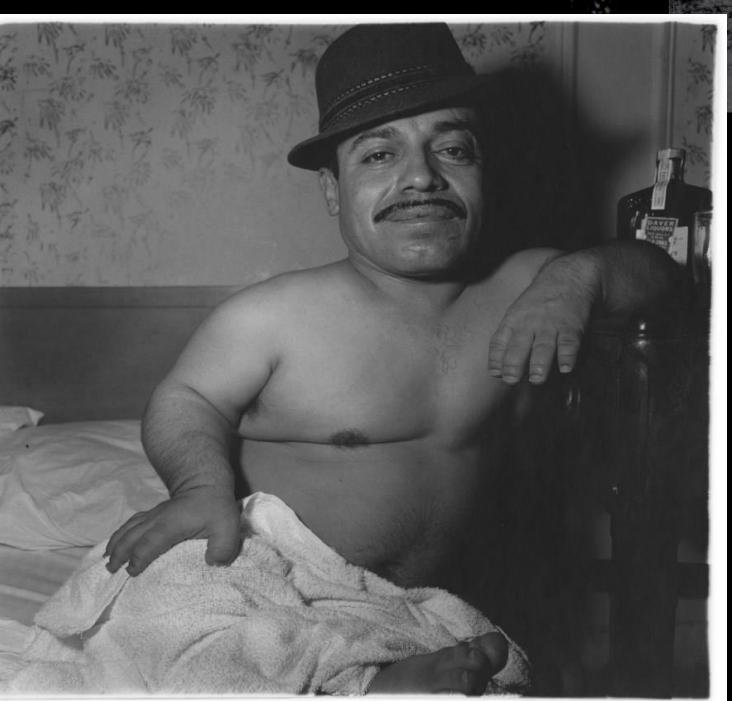
*Boy with a straw hat
waiting to march in
pro-war
parade, N.Y.C.*



A Box of Ten Photographs



1963
Retired man and his wife at home in a nudist camp one morning, N.J.



1968
A family on their lawn one Sunday in Westchester, N.Y.



1970
Mexican dwarf in his hotel room, N.Y.C.



1970
The king and queen of a senior citizens' dance, N.Y.C.



"The camera is a kind of license." - Diane Arbus
"I really believe there are things nobody would see if I didn't photograph them." - also Diane Arbus

- Square format Rolleiflex Camera
- Shots taken from the waist, looking down into the viewfinder.





The Museum
of Modern
Art, (2025).
Diane Arbus.
*A Woman With Her Baby
Monkey, N.J.*
1971



The Museum of
Modern Art, (2025).
Diane Arbus.
*Two Boys Smoking In
Central Park, N.Y.C.*
1963



Nan Goldin 1985
*The Parents at a
French
Restaurant, Cambridge*



Nan Goldin 1977
*Cookie with Max in the
hammock, Provincetown*



Thank You

Speech

1_

Diane Arbus began her career as a fashion photographer in the 1940s, and in collaboration her husband worked on commercial shoots for Vogue and Glamour, but her interests soon shifted toward portraiture; photographing not for glamour, but truth. She eventually moved into freelance photography, and her work started to turn more heads. Many found her images confronting, controversial, and even vulgar at the time, but it was through these very subjects that her influence on today's visual culture can be seen.

2_

Arbus revealed the humanity in what society had labelled as "other," and in doing so, changed how we look at people in photography and all across visual media.

3_

According to Nadja, S (2018), shortly before her death, Arbus was working as a magazine photographer and in searching for more creative freedom put together a series she named 'A Box of Ten Photographs'.

4_

When exhibited, it shocked and disgusted art audiences so much that people spat on it.

The images showed those society preferred to ignore; giants, dwarves, transvestites, and others living outcasted.

5_

This photograph from her series really captures her approach. When she was shooting a nude couple in their home, she too undressed, as a way to share the moment, to remove that invisible barrier between photographer and subject.

6_

She developed a distinct visual style, often shooting from her waist with a square-format Rolleiflex camera. Looking down into the viewfinder allowed her to stay at eye level with her subjects, creating an intimacy, sharing vulnerability from both sides of the lens.

Arbus once said that everything she photographed "would never have been seen if I hadn't photographed it." She saw her camera as a license to enter everywhere; into the lives of the unseen, the ignored, and the misunderstood.

Speech Cont.

Some of my favourite works of hers capture the preserved absurdity of life, moments that feel both ordinary and strange. *Lady with Her Monkey*, where a woman and her pet monkey stare back at the lens, or *Two Boys Smoking in Central Park*, are perfect examples of her surreal yet deeply human portraits. They're funny, a little sad, but completely real.

These images remind us that the world she photographed wasn't extraordinary but was the everyday world we often choose not to see; glimpses of life behind closed doors.

Arbus's influence still echoes strongly in photography today.

The honesty and intimacy she captured redefined what we considered beautiful or acceptable in imagery. By photographing those outside conventional standards, she challenged the idea that photos should only capture perfection.

7

We can see that same raw honesty today in the work of **Nan Goldin**, who explores human vulnerability with empathy and truth. Goldin's series *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency* for example, mirrors Arbus's fascination with the fringes of society; capturing her friends, lovers, and outsiders in unfiltered, emotional detail.

Modern documentary and fashion photography now celebrate imperfection and individuality; the wrinkles, scars, and quirks that make people real. That acceptance of difference can be traced back to Arbus's rejection of idealized beauty.

8

Her work continues to spark important conversations about ethics and representation, who gets to tell whose story, and how we capture vulnerability with care, questions that shape how we communicate visually today.

Ultimately, Diane Arbus changed the way we understand photography. She showed that an image isn't just about aesthetics, it's a conversation between the subject and the viewer, a challenge to how we see normality, beauty, and truth.

In-text and Photographic References

Nadja S,
(2018). *Diane Arbus' daring early work: 'It was a story that went untold, until now'*. [online] the Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2018/apr/09/diane-arbus-smithsonian-museum-box-of-ten-photographs>

First Slide

Nadja Sayej
(2018). *Diane Arbus' daring early work: 'It was a story that went untold, until now'*. [online] the Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2018/apr/09/diane-arbus-smithsonian-museum-box-of-ten-photographs>

Second, Third and Fourth Slide

Fraenkel Gallery.
(2024). *A box of ten photographs*, Fraenkel Gallery. [online] Available at: <https://fraenkelgallery.com/portfolios/diane-arbus-a-box-of-ten-photographs>.

Fifth Slide

Clifford, B. (2019). *Diane Arbus / MoMA*. [online] The Museum of Modern Art. Available at: <https://www.moma.org/artists/208-diane-arbus>.

Golay, J.
(2020). *Rolleiflex Cameras: Get to Know these Iconic Film Cameras!» Shoot It With Film*. [online] Shoot It With Film. Available at: <https://shootitwithfilm.com/rolleiflex-cameras-get-to-know-these-iconic-film-cameras>

Sixth slide

The Museum of Modern Art. (2025). *Diane Arbus. A woman with her baby monkey*, N.J., 1971. 1971. [online] Available at: <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/89198>

The Museum of Modern Art. (2025). *Diane Arbus. Two boys smoking in Central Park, N.Y.C.*, 1963. 1963. [online] Available at: [http://www.moma.org/collection/works/89224](https://www.moma.org/collection/works/89224)

Seventh Slide

O'Hehir, A.
(2023). *Nan Goldin's The ballad of sexual dependency* (1986). [online] National Gallery of Australia. Available at: <https://nga.gov.au/stories-ideas/nan-goldins-lens-on-relationships/>

Eighth slide

The Museum of Modern Art. (2025). *Diane Arbus. Al bino sword swallower at a carnival, Maryland*, 1970. 1970. [online] Available at: <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/89201>.

The Museum of Modern Art. (2025). *Diane Arbus. Transvestite with torn stockings*, N.Y.C., 1966. 1966. [online] Available at: <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/57356>

The Museum of Modern Art. (2025). *Diane Arbus. Two female impersonators backstage*, N.Y.C.. 1960. [online] Available at: https://www.moma.org/collection/works/57778?artist_id=208&page=1&sov_referrer=artist

Eighth slide Cont.

The Museum of Modern Art. (2025). *Diane Arbus. Triplets in their bedroom*, N.J., 1963. 1963. [online] Available at: https://www.moma.org/collection/works/57360?artist_id=208&page=1&sov_referrer=artist

The Museum of Modern Art. (2025). *Diane Arbus. Child with a toy hand grenade in Central Park, N.Y.C.*, 1962. 1962. [online] Available at: https://www.moma.org/collection/works/57781?artist_id=208&page=1&sov_referrer=artist

The Museum of Modern Art. (2018). *Diane Arbus. Lady bartender at home with a souvenir dog*, New Orleans, 1964. 1964. [online] Available at: <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/89211>

The Museum of Modern Art. (2025). *Diane Arbus. Nudist lady with swan sunglasses*, P.A., 1965. 1965. [online] Available at: <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/43899>

The Museum of Modern Art. (2025). *Diane Arbus. Girl in a shiny dress*, N.Y.C., 1967. 1967. [online] Available at: <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/89206>