

For Immediate Release

The New York Public Library Acquires Photographs of Outer Boroughs by William Meyers

86 black and white prints offer rare glimpse at unsung parts of Brooklyn, Bronx, Queens, and Staten Island

The New York Public Library's Photography Collection has acquired William Meyers's *Outer Boroughs: New York Beyond Manhattan*, a series of 86 black and white prints of rarely photographed neighborhoods in the less celebrated boroughs of Brooklyn, Bronx, Queens, and Staten Island. Through compelling streetscapes and cityscapes, evocative pictures of structures, objects, interiors, group shots, and candid portraits of individuals, Meyers pays tribute to the outer boroughs and fills an important and veritable void in photography of the changing city.

Historical photographs of New York City are almost exclusively of landmarks, buildings, and streets in Manhattan. Among the names likely to be thought of as New York City street photographers, Berenice Abbott, Arthur Fellig, and Helen Levitt solely worked in Manhattan. William Meyers's photography explores unsung sections in the outer boroughs that are not extensions of Manhattan or part of the aura of Manhattan. They represent the quotidian, unsung places where most of the city inhabitants live and work. In Meyers's words, "they are the outer boroughs of the spirit as well as of the physical city. This is a terrain that is more distant from Manhattan than are certain sections of London or Paris or Rome."

All the photographs share characteristic spontaneity and frankness. Some scenes include a striking image of a woman on a bus in Glendale, Queens looking out the window onto a silent graveyard; a beautiful portrait of two houses, ivy creeping up their walls, in Riverdale, Bronx, with the river and a common garden nestled between them in the frame; fresh bread stacked solemnly at a bakery in the Belmont section of the Bronx; a woman forging through a snowstorm on a deserted street in the Vinegar Hill neighborhood of Brooklyn; a young boy riding his bike on a street of cracked

pavement staring inquiringly into the camera in Seaside, Queens, large apartment buildings looming behind him; and the curious sight of fourteen portable toilets standing side by side on Fourth Avenue in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn. By hand, Meyers notes on each portrait the date and the location of each photograph.

“Even though New York City has long been a favored subject of photography, the outer boroughs have remained relatively unexplored,” says Stephen Pinson, Assistant Director of Art, Prints and Photographs and Curator of Photography at The New York Public Library. “William Meyers at once updates and extends the essential tradition of street photography by taking it beyond Manhattan and into the mostly anonymous streets of the larger city.”

About William Meyers

William Meyers spent much of the last decade tromping around the less-visited neighborhoods of Queens, Bronx, Brooklyn and Staten Island taking photographs for *Outer Boroughs: New York beyond Manhattan*. Work from the project was included in the *New York Now 2000* exhibition at the Museum of the City of New York, and the *Jews of Brooklyn* exhibition that was displayed in several city venues. Meyers’s photographs have been published in *The New York Times*, the *New York Sun*, the *New York Press*, *ARTnews*, *City Journal*, and elsewhere. One of his photographs is on permanent display at Anshe Chesed in New York where it serves as a memorial to the dead of 1939-1945. From 2002-2008 he was the regular photography critic for the *New York Sun*. His writing on photography has also been published by the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Weekly Standard*, *Commentary Magazine*, and *Nextbook*. Mr. Meyers is presently working on a new project, *Alternate Manhattan*.

About The Photography Collection

The Photography Collection of The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs comprises approximately 400,000 photographs, including examples of almost every photographic process from the earliest daguerreotypes to contemporary digital images.

The Photography Collection was developed in 1980 when images culled from other NYPL departments and branches were brought together to form a new division. The historically stated focus of the collection has been “documentary photography,” a term originally coined in the 1930s to describe the work of photographers who attempted to document specific social conditions. The Photography Collection, which has significant holdings in this area, actually encompasses a much broader range of the medium, including images made for commercial, industrial, and scientific

application as well as images for the press and other print media, the vernacular of amateur snapshot photography, and original works intended for exhibition and/or the art market.

Future collection activity and development will focus on fulfilling the department's role as the most accessible public resource in New York City for the study of photographs and the history of photography. For more information on the Photography Collection, please visit <http://www.nypl.org/news/treasures> for a video about the collection.

About The New York Public Library

The New York Public Library was created in 1895 with the consolidation of the private libraries of John Jacob Astor and James Lenox with the Samuel Jones Tilden Trust. The Library provides free and open access to its physical and electronic collections and information, as well as to its services. It comprises four research centers – the Stephen A. Schwarzman Building, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, and the Science, Industry and Business Library – and 87 branch libraries in the Bronx, Manhattan, and Staten Island. Research and circulating collections combined total more than 50 million items. In addition, each year the Library presents thousands of exhibitions and public programs, which include classes in technology, literacy, and English as a second language. The New York Public Library serves over 16 million patrons who come through its doors annually and another 25 million users internationally, who access collections and services through its website, www.nypl.org.

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