

The New York Times

NEW YORK, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2006

WEEKEND Arts FINE ARTS
LEISURE

Fred W. McDarrah

Artists and Writers of the 60s
and 70s

*Steven Kasher Gallery
521 West 23rd Street, Chelsea
Through Jan. 6*

Despite the title, this wonderfully absorbing show of more than 100 vintage photographs by the former Village Voice photographer and picture editor Fred W. McDarrah is a visual encyclopedia of the era's cultural scene. Mr. McDarrah was everywhere and seems to have known everyone who lived in or passed through New York, capturing them all on film.

The show opens with a shot of Jack Kerouac and some frolicsome women at a 1958 New Year's Eve bash. It is hastily grabbed and opportunistic, like much of Mr. McDarrah's work, for he operated independently, rarely working on assignment.

There are groupings of artists in their studios (Alice Neel, Philip Guston, Stuart Davis, Robert Smithson, Jasper Johns, Franz Kline), actors (Dustin Hoffman, Robert De Niro on the set of "Taxi Driver"), musicians (Janis Joplin, Alice Cooper, Bob Dylan) and documentary images of early happenings and performances (Yayoi Kusama, Charlotte Moorman, Al Hansen, Jim Dine, Nam June Paik). The many images of Andy Warhol include the well-known one with his Brillo boxes at the Stable Gallery in 1964.

Mr. McDarrah is more of a photo-journalist than an artist. The shots have few frills; the subject is depicted head-on or in a three-quarter pose, frequently from waist up. They are printed without too much attention to detail, mostly on standard 10-by-8-inch paper, which he sometimes cut in half to print two small images as a cost-cutting measure. Typically the prints are a little dark, perhaps because of the varied environments and the quality of film stock back then.

Mr. McDarrah's best known image may be his close-up of Bob Dylan, shot in Sheridan Square Park in 1965 to illustrate a music review in *The Voice*. Mr. Dylan is dressed all in black and saluting, his countenance as earnest as that of a battle-hardened marine. It is an enduring symbol of the era's antiwar protests, rebellion and counterculture.

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