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Two Visual Tales of New York

By ALEX VADUKUL APRIL 17, 2015



The two photographers were born just two years apart and grew up poor in Brooklyn in the 1920s and '30s. The war awakened them creatively. Their subject was New York.

Although they became two of their city's most voracious visual chroniclers, their similarities mostly ended there. It is possible that Jerome Liebling (1924-2011) and Fred W. McDarragh (1926-2007) never even met. But they were drawn to documenting the same streets, if in notably different styles.

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Mr. Liebling was renowned for capturing the city's poetic and fleeting moments with a social-minded sensibility. Mr. McDarrah, for decades the only staff photographer at The Village Voice, had a knack for being at the right place at the right time. His intimate photos of the downtown scene offer a remarkable peephole into the city's bohemia.

Starting April 24, [the Steven Kasher Gallery](#) in Chelsea will pair these photographers' works in two exhibitions. One will focus on Mr. McDarrah's candid images of artists: Andy Warhol at a thrift shop in Manhattan, Robert Rauschenberg reading a newspaper in a vacant lot. The other showcases five decades of Mr. Liebling's serendipitous street scenes.

Despite their different approaches, Steven Kasher, the gallery's owner, considers them complementary. Mr. Liebling, he said, was "trying to find the meaning behind everyday New Yorkers"; Mr. McDarrah "was all about 'Just get it, get the moment.' "

"But they met on the streets of New York," he continued. "There's that rapport. They had an allegiance to the working people, the struggling people and to an America that was growing and to a New York that was becoming the center of the world."