

It's Nice That



Fred W. McDarrah's photos of Warhol and co.
before they were famous

Posted by [Maisie Skidmore](#), Wednesday 03 June 2015

Fred W. McDarrah is the kind of man I would give my right arm to have a pint and a chat with. Born in Brooklyn, New York in 1926, he first started photographing artists at the age of 23 when he met painter William Littlefield, who inducted him into a heady world of informal artist get-togethers named The Club in Greenwich Village in the early 1950s.

Over the years The Club grew to form an intrinsic part in the Abstract Expressionist movement and the New York School, hosting the likes of Robert Rauschenberg, Willem de Kooning and Lee Krasner. An occasional appearance from other contemporary intellectuals wasn't uncommon either – Jack Kerouac “did a cameo on the drums at the 1958 New Year's Eve party,” the Steven Kasher Gallery explains.

Starting out as a doorman and keeper of the mailing list, Fred quickly became familiar with many of the artists who frequented the gatherings. “Often, he would have his camera and unobtrusively document the world of artists he had become a part of,” the gallery continues. “Sensing the cultural importance of the moment, McDarrah then decided to capture all he could with his camera, which resulted in the seminal 1961 book *The Artist's World in Pictures*.” Fred was soon being sought out by up-and-coming

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artists Andy Warhol, Jasper Johns and Roy Lichtenstein, who were hoping to make their way into publications like *The Village Voice*.

Sadly Fred died in 2007, so exhibitions of his photographs are the closest I'll get to probing him about Andy Warhol's pursuit of fame or Alex and Ada Katz' marriage, but they're a rewarding and powerfully insightful archive.

Fred W. McDarrah: *The Artist's World* runs until 6 June at the Steven Kasher Gallery in New York.



Fred W. McDarrah: Franz Kline in his 14th Street studio, April 7 1961

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Fred W. McDarrah: Ada and Alex Katz, April 6 1961



Fred W. McDarrah: Jane Willson, May 3 1960

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Fred W. McDarrah: Alice Neel in her studio, February 10 1961



Fred W. McDarrah: Willem de Kooning on 10th Street stoops with novelist Noel Clad, April 5 1959

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Fred W. McDarrah: Jim Dine in his Performance Car Crash. He wears a metallic Coat and sprayed his face grey to transform himself into an aluminium car, November 1 1960



Fred W. McDarrah: Dillon's Bar on University Place Provides Setting for Shuffle Board Games with Jasper Johns Pitching. Other Participants are Bill Giles, Anna Moreska, Robert Rauschenberg, Dancer Merce Cunningham, and Composer John Cage, November 10 1959

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Fred W. McDarrah: Pat Oldenburg in the Dine Performance "Car Crash." She Plays the Ominous , Eight-Foot-Tall, "Big White Woman", November 1 1960



Fred W. McDarrah: Andy Warhol and Factory with Actresses Candy Darling, Ultra Violet and Bridged Polk, April 28 1969

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Fred W. McDarrah: Andy Warhol with Brillo Boxes, Stable Gallery, April 21 1964