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photograph

JILL FREEDMAN: LONG STORIES SHORT AT STEVEN
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By Jordan G. Teicher

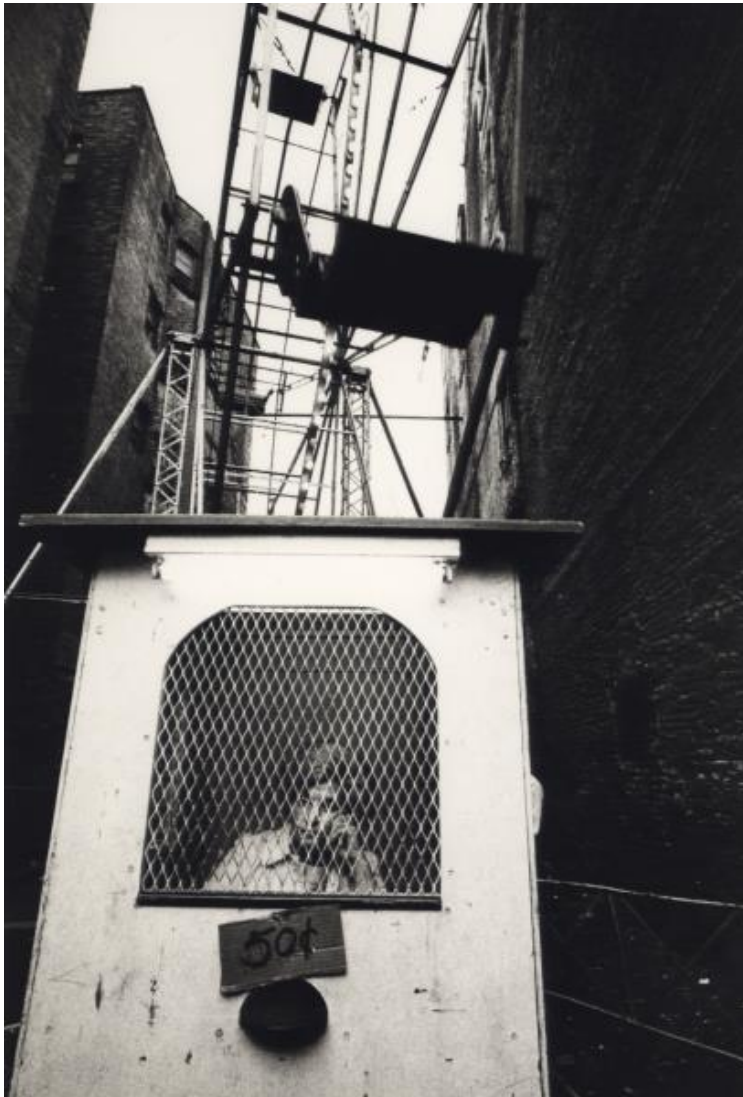


“Long Stories Short” is an apt way to describe Jill Freedman’s photographs, which are packed with an unusual amount of narrative power and a beguiling mix of humor, melancholy, and mystery.

The more than 50 black-and-white prints in the show, which is on view at Steven Kasher Gallery through October 24, are drawn from four decades worth of work, including Freedman’s book-length projects on dogs, firefighters, protestors, and Holocaust survivors, as well as many unpublished photographs selected by curator Anais Feyeux.

Freedman’s subjects may be disparate, but over the years, her vision has been consistent. She is drawn to the weird, the unexpected, and the unexplainable — the loneliness of a go-go bar, the spookiness of a circus, and the everyday enigma of the

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street. From San Francisco to London to Washington, D.C., the unrelated strangers she captures all seem like neighbors in a universal, gritty underworld.

This quality is perhaps best realized in her photos from New York, where she's lived since she was 25. Freedman picked up a camera while working as a nightclub singer soon after she moved to Greenwich Village; her comfort in the city's seedy underbelly is apparent in the complexity and honesty of the work she's produced in that realm. Whether she's photographing a cross-dressing ballerina, a solitary bar patron, or an anonymous pedestrian, it's often hard to tell whether she means them to be haunting or hilarious, crude or charming. Still, they never seem otherized, never exploited for their

strangeness. Freedman's empathy always resonates.

The ambiguity is underscored in some of Freedman's most arresting photographs. *Naked City* shows a pale, naked old man, his back to the camera, walking through a shimmering revolving door. In *Swinger*, a larger-than-life cop propels a girl through the air like a rag doll. *Little Man* pictures a man lying face down on a New York sidewalk. Who are these people? What are they doing, exactly? Should we pity them or fear them?

Like all great photographers, Freedman's work offers more questions than answers. But as you ponder it, you won't want to look away.