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PM NEW YORK DAILY: 1940-48 AT STEVEN KASHER
GALLERY

January 21, 2016

Steven Kasher Gallery announces PM New York Daily: 1940-48, the first exhibition about the upstart New York tabloid that challenged the entrenched conservatism of every other newspaper of its day. PM featured a unique no-advertising policy, innovative graphics, Weegee as star photographer, and a stable of the most engaged writers. PM crusaded for racial justice, for union power, for entry into the war against Hitler, and for the New Deal policies of Roosevelt. Way ahead of its time, PM fought against income inequality, racist violence, Republican demagoguery, political corruption funded by oligarchs, foreign ideologies seeking world domination. Sound familiar?



The exhibition features over 75 black and white vintage photographs from staff and freelance photographers including Weegee, Helen Levitt, Morris Engel, Margaret Bourke-White, Lisette Model, Mary Morris, Irving Haberman, and Arthur Leipzig. PM published what have become some of the most iconic photographs of the 20th century. Also included in the exhibition will be vintage copies of the newspaper itself.

The paper made its mission clear in its first issue: “PM is against people who push other people around. PM accepts no advertising. PM belongs to no political party. PM is absolutely free and uncensored. PM’s sole source of income is its readers — to whom it alone is responsible. PM is one newspaper that can and dares to tell the truth.” Photography was crucial to this mission. PM sought to emulate the visual punch of Life magazine, publishing full-page photographs by important photographers with the most expensive printing and paper ever used for a daily tabloid.

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Founded by Ralph Ingersoll, the former managing editor of Time-Life publications, the man who built Fortune, PM's bold mission attracted important writers I.F. Stone, Ernest Hemingway, Dashiell Hammett, Dorothy Parker, Lillian Hellman, Erskine Caldwell, and future Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill. Also engaged were cartoonists Theodore Seuss Geisel (Dr. Seuss), Al Hirschfeld, Crockett Johnson, and future Abstract Expressionist Ad Reinhardt. The Sunday issue, PM Weekly, featured a groundbreaking, extremely influential photographic portfolio edited by renowned photographer Ralph Steiner.

Weegee was one of the great photographers of New York – some would say the greatest. He began his six-year relationship with PM with the publication of a car-wreck image in the second issue, June 19, 1940. The picture bore the crusading caption "PM hears that there has been persistent agitation to correct this dangerous curve, responsible for many accidents; will try to find out if anything is being done to eliminate the hazard." The three most famous of all Weegee's images were shot for PM and are featured in our show with their original captions: "Coney Island... Temperature 89 ... They Came Early, Stayed Late," "The Critic," and "Their First Murder" (with the accompanying "Here He is as He Was Left in the Gutter... He Got a DOA Tied to His Arm, That Means Dead on Arrival").

Margaret Bourke-White was also part of the first-year staff, but she soon quit because she could not handle daily newspaper deadlines. Bourke-White and Mary Morris were

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the first female press photographers on staff at any daily newspaper in the U.S. Prominent in our exhibition are works by Morris Engel depicting an integrated school, children on New York streets, Coney Island scenes, and pictures of workers organizing to strike.



Despite the devotion of its readers the paper never managed to sell the 225,000 issues needed to break even. In June 1948, PM Daily published its final issue. But its influence continues. PM is considered the model for the counterculture independent journals of the 60s. Many of its unique features and stylistic innovations can be found in today's press, including the New York Times. Marshall Field, the publisher of PM took note of how the weekend photographic supplement increased readership. He copied it for a magazine he syndicated nationally as Parade, which remains to this day the most widely read periodical in America, though one very different in politics.

I.F. Stone summed it up: "[He] would say we were a bunch of do-gooders, bleeding hearts and worse. The paper was often sloppy, screwy and exasperating. But it wasn't dull. It got people mad, sometimes mad enough to get results."

The gallery will host a panel discussion on PM on Saturday, February 6th from 3-5pm. Panelists include Brian Wallis, Curator of the Walther Collection and former Chief Curator of the ICP; Paul Milkman, scholar and author of PM: A New Deal in Journalism 1940-1948; Jason Hill, Assistant Professor of Modern and Contemporary Art and Visual Culture at the University of Delaware and author of the forthcoming book Artist as Reporter: Weegee, Ad Reinhardt, and the PM News Picture and Laetitia Barrere, Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Curatorial Fellow at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The panel will be moderated by our Curatorial Director Anais Feyeux.