

# AnOther Magazine

GREENWICH VILLAGE IN ITS GOLDEN AGE, AS CAPTURED BY  
FRED W. MCDARRAH

By Miss Rosen – September 26, 2018



For half a century, Fred W. McDarrah (1926-2007) was Greenwich Village's poet-photographer laureate, penning subversive verse in black and white silver gelatin prints. As the sole staff photographer for *The Village Voice* for decades, and its first photo editor McDarrah centred himself at the heart of the New York's downtown scene when it was a bohemian paradise filled with artists, activists, musicians, writers, and performers.

McDarrah's chronicle of life recalls when the Village was just that: a community of iconoclasts ready to take on the world. In light of the closing of *The Village Voice* earlier this month, the comprehensive new survey exhibition Fred McDarrah: *New York Scenes* at Steven Kasher and catalogue from Abrams provides a timely, well-considered compendium of McDarrah's impressive oeuvre.

McDarrah's New York is a comet casting through space, a fiery mass of humanity in the final decades of the second millennia. Whether documenting Carolee Scheneemann's first performance of *Interior Scroll* or shooting firefighters rushing into a townhouse after the Weathermen accidentally set off a bomb, McDarrah was on the scene with camera in hand, ready to capture it all. Here, his son Tim McDarrah takes us on a magical trip back in time.

# STEVEN KASHER GALLERY

## **On the golden age of Greenwich Village...**

"My dad was born in Brooklyn and came to Greenwich Village because of its bohemian history. As a kid, I had no idea -- who is the crazy naked lady wrapped in Saran Wrap playing the cello? Why is this man playing the same key on the same instrument over and over again for an hour?"

"There's a classic picture of my brother with Andy Warhol and Viva because my dad would drop by so we could play with art supplies. In 1968, Warhol was significant but nothing like today. He was just another guy who would call the house at six o'clock and say, 'Ohh is Freddy there? I'm going to this. Do you want to come take my picture?' and I was like, 'Dad, it's Andy again!'"

## **On the world of the Village Voice...**

"Tom Wolfe and the folks at New York magazine get a lot of credit for New Journalism but the Village Voice was doing that 20 years before them. The Voice was fuelled by World War II vets: Dan Wolf, Ed Fancher, my dad, and Jerry Talmer. They were patriots but realized the insanity of war and how things had to be different. They saw the ways to achieve their goals were free speech, free thought, and giving everyone and opportunity to air their work.

"The Voice's mandate was inclusion. No one paid attention to women artists back then. My mother had a strong personality and would always nudge him to see women artist exhibitions. My dad was very progressive and open-minded."

## **On documenting the avant-garde...**

"The main way he did that was by showing up and paying attention. There is a new exhibition that just opened at the MoMA on the Judson Dance Theater, an alternative performance D.I.Y. space in the basement of the Judson Church on Washington Square South. The pastors saw there were all these people like Twyla Tharp, Lucinda Childs, Claes Oldeneberg, and Jim Dine doing things and they needed a space to do it. The show documents one of the most creative experiences and groups of people ever, but only three people have pictures in it because no one was paying attention to it.

"In the 1950s, culture for the New York Times was Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, and the Metropolitan Opera House. A bunch of freaks from below 14 Street, that wasn't going to be in the Times! The Voice was covering all of these people with dignity and respect. My dad knew it was important and he wanted to document it for people who were not as lucky as him to see this. If you look at the names of all these then-unknowns from the MoMa show, it's an insane list of people who are now cultural icons. But in those days it was a small community, and The Voice was the neighborhood paper. My dad got lucky for 50 years in a row, as he would say."