

STEVEN KASHER GALLERY

Laura Levine

"Laura Levine's photos are as vividly alive as the music of her subjects. Sometimes when you catch them out of the corner of your eye you'd swear they actually move." - Luc Sante

If you followed the music and cultural scene of the 1980's, chances are you're familiar with the work of Laura Levine. She photographed hundreds of young musicians - as well as entire genres of music - just as they were starting to emerge. Levine documented many of the punk, New Wave, No Wave, alternative, indie, post-punk and early hip-hop artists who either lived in or passed through downtown Manhattan; some unknown, and others future superstars, from the Ramones to Madonna, R.E.M. to the Clash, Iggy Pop to Bjork. Levine is primarily known for her deeply intimate one-on-one portraits taken in her Chinatown tenement apartment, Soho loft, or on the streets of New York City.

Laura Levine's photographs have been exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), the Smithsonian Institution's National Portrait Gallery, the Brooklyn Museum, the Portland Museum of Art, the Museum of the City of New York, Museo Colecciones ICO (Madrid), and the Annenberg Space for Photography. Collections include the Museum of Fine Arts (Houston), the Smithsonian Institution's National Portrait Gallery, the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, the Michael Zilkha Collection, the John Demsey Collection, the Nion McEvoy Collection, and the Samuel Rudin Foundation.

Levine, who grew up in Chinatown, became obsessed with photography after seeing Diane Arbus' work at MoMA when she was fourteen. She borrowed her dad's Konica, made up a fake press pass and wandered her own Lower East Side neighborhood as a teenage street photographer in the Seventies. She learned the basics of darkroom work at an after-school photography class at the Henry Street Settlement down the street and would temporarily convert the family's bathroom into a darkroom. (Enlarger on the toilet, trays in the bathtub). After a summer internship as a photojournalist at the Washington Post, then graduating from Harvard, Levine immersed herself in documenting the nascent Downtown scene, in particular the music. She became the Chief Photographer and Photo Editor of the influential music paper, New York Rocker. Her work was frequently published in the Village Voice, the New York Times, Sounds (UK), Spin, Trouser Press, Details, and Rolling Stone, and she shot for many artists and record labels. Levine's love of music, low-key approach and friendships with many of the artists allowed her to capture private and spontaneous moments, revealing the people she knew beyond their stage personas.

In the mid-90s Levine put down her camera to explore other visual arts as a self-taught painter, illustrator, video director and filmmaker. Projects have included creating several illustrated children's picture books (including a collaboration with the B-52's), developing an animated pilot for MTV, and a Sundance-nominated documentary.

Selected Exhibitions

2018

AIPAD, Steven Kasher Gallery, Performance/Politics, New York, NY

2017

Museum of Contemporary Art, Hip Hop: A Golden Age 1970-1995 (La MAC, Musée d'Arts Contemporain de Marseille/Hip-Hop, Un Age d'Or), Marseille, France

Shelburne Museum, Backstage Pass: Rock & Roll Photography, Shelburne, VT

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2016

DZINE Gallery, Laura Levine: ALTHIPHOPINDYPUNK Picture Show: Intimate Portraits of the Music Scene, 1980 – 1994, San Francisco, CA (solo exhibition)

2015

Howl! Happening, Secrets of the Great Pyramid: The Pyramid Cocktail Lounge as Cultural Laboratory, New York, NY
Art Rocks Athens, I'll Be Your Mirror, Athens, GA
Photoville, Down and Dirty, Brooklyn, NY
Institut du Monde Arabe (Arab World Institute Museum), Hip-Hop, du Bronx au rues arabes, Paris

2013

Steven Kasher Gallery, Slaves of Mimesis: Nine Years on 23rd Street, New York, NY
National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, American Cool, Washington, D.C

2012

The Annenberg Space for Photography, Who Shot Rock and Roll: A Photographic History, 1955 to the Present, Los Angeles, CA
Harper's Books, Open for the Stone, Volume 2, East Hampton, NY
Allentown Art Museum, Who Shot Rock and Roll: A Photographic History, 1955 to the Present, Allentown, PA

2011

Currier Museum of Art, Backstage Pass: Rock and Roll Photography, Manchester, NH
Tucson Museum of Art, Who Shot Rock and Roll: A Photographic History, 1955 to the Present, Tucson, AZ
Steven Kasher Gallery, Laura Levine: Musicians, New York, NY (solo exhibition)
The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, Women Who Rock: Vision, Passion, Power, Cleveland, OH
Adris Gallery, Fifty Years of Rock 'n Roll: Women Who Made Rock, Rovinj, Croatia (curated by Gail Buckland)
The Museum of Modern Art, Looking at Music 3.0, New York, NY (curated by Barbara London)
The Museum at FIT, Vivienne Westwood: 1980 - 1989, New York, NY
Columbia Museum of Art, Who Shot Rock and Roll: A Photographic History, 1955 to the Present, Columbia, SC
The Grammy Museum, Hip-Hop, A Cultural Odyssey, Los Angeles, CA

2010

Akron Art Museum, Who Shot Rock and Roll: A Photographic History, 1955 to the Present, Akron, OH
Memphis Brooks Art Museum, Who Shot Rock and Roll: A Photographic History, 1955 to the Present, Memphis, TN
Eric Firestone Gallery, Warhol: Dylan to Duchamp, East Hampton, NY
Worcester Art Museum, Who Shot Rock and Roll: A Photographic History, 1955 to the Present, Worcester, MA

2009

The Brooklyn Museum, Who Shot Rock and Roll: A Photographic History, 1955 to the Present, Brooklyn, NY
The Portland Museum of Art, Backstage Pass: Rock and Roll Photography, Portland, ME

2008

KS Art, No Wave: 1976 - 1980, (curated by Thurston Moore and Byron Coley), New York, NY

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2007

Musician Photo Gallery/Duncan Miller Gallery, solo exhibition, Los Angeles, CA
Morrison Hotel Gallery, New York, NY

2006

The Museum of the City of New York, Black Style Now, New York, NY

2005

Museo Colecciones ICO, Keith Haring Urban Memory, Madrid, Spain, June 2005
Lynn Goldsmith Gallery, Rock Legends, Basalt, CO, July 2005

2003

The Kodak Rock Photography Collection/Rock X - Posed, Las Vegas, NV

2002

Georgia Music Hall of Fame, Macon, GA

1997

Thread Waxing Space, New York, NY

1996

The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, permanent collection/travelling exhibition, Cleveland, OH
Earl McGrath Gallery, The Cool & The Crazy, New York, NY
Candace Perich Gallery, Ridgefield, CT
Govinda Gallery, Washington, DC

1992

Staley Wise Gallery, Summer Pleasures, New York, NY

1991

Pictures Gallery, Woodstock, N.Y.
Staley Wise Gallery, Music: 1930-1990, New York, NY

1990

Commune di San Giovanni, Valdarno, Italy
Cortland Arts Council, Pictures of My Generation, Cortland, N.Y.
Cascina Grande, Rozzano, Italy

1988

Photographic Resource Center, Around Sound, Boston, MA
Suzan Cooper Gallery, Mt. Vernon, NY
Bridgewater Gallery, New York, NY
Pictures Gallery, Woodstock, N.Y.

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1986

Limelight, New York, NY

1985

The Photographer's Gallery, London, England
Danceteria, New York, NY

1984

Fun Gallery, New York, NY
Fun Gallery West, San Francisco, CA
Open Eye Gallery, Liverpool, England
Watershed Gallery, Bristol, England

Collections

The National Portrait Gallery/Smithsonian Institution
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum
Rudin Foundation/Beth Rudin DeWoody
Nion McEvoy Collection
John Demsey Collection
Michael Zilkha Collection
Luc Sante
Keith Haring
Jonathan Alter and Emily Lazar
Mark Whitaker and Alexis Gelber
Elissa Leonard
Molly Lazar
Jerome de Noirmont
Jonathan Glickman/MGM
Donick Cary
Sylvia Reed
Alice and Gary Calamar
Museum of International Folk Art
Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and Museum
House of Blues
Viacom/MTV Networks
Lloyd Cotsen Collection
Cher
Laurie and Larry David
Liz Rosenberg
Ellen and Stephen Dubner
Evie and Stephen Colbert
Nora Ephron
Fred Seibert
Judith Owen and Harry Shearer

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Kelly Kuhr and Malcolm McDowell
Lisa Bonet
Rob Morrow
Randall Jahnson
Hale and Annie Milgrim
Robin Hurley
Greg Escalante
Jenette Kahn/DC Comics
Randy Ezratty and JoAnn Corkran
Loren Chodosh and Jezz Harkin
Amanda Rubin
Archie Gottesman
Chauncey Upson
Drew McCoy and Amy Aquino
Meegan McMillan
Byron Coley and Lili Dwight
Sylvia Stein and Mark Philips
John Reynolds and Christine Ecklund
Nic Harcourt
Lisa Cortes
Tom Barber and Marina Grossi
Bob Bortnick
Michael Kushner
Susan Drew
Jonathan McHugh
Alan Braverman