Section 1: Street Photography

Street photography’s ability to capture an authentic human behavior in a split-second is a hallmark of Winogrand’s photographic style. An important tenet of street photography or the ‘snapshot aesthetic’ is that the images are not posed, giving the style a reputation for raw authenticity. Street photographers often work quickly and by trial-and-error until the elements of a desired composition emerge. Winogrand’s fast-paced mode of working is particularly evident in his signature tilted compositions that are found throughout the exhibition. The movement and torqued angle in many images convey the speed and energy Winogrand put forth in capturing each scene.

Winogrand’s work has had an enormous influence on the street photography genre. During the 1960s and 1970s, when street photography was at its height in New York, he emerged as a significant figure because of his ability to bridge art historical and historical significance. In 1967, Winogrand was included in an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York called New Documents alongside Lee Friedlander (born 1934) and Diane Arbus (1923–1971). This exhibition had a major impact on defining the role of street photography and was organized around artists who the curator, John Szarkowski, believed were emphasizing that “the world is worth looking at” and had “the courage to look at it without theorizing.”
Garry Winogrand: Modern Perspectives
March 9–August 5, 2018 | Meeting Room | Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art

UPDATED 03/07/2018

WORKS ON VIEW: 51

All works:
from the portfolio *Women are Beautiful*, published 1975,
gelatin silver prints, edition 61 of 80, 9 x 13 inches.
© The Estate of Garry Winogrand, Courtesy Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco

Section 1: Street Photography

*Untitled*, ca. 1969
Gift of Drs. Pio and Esther Vilar, 1997.27.14

*Untitled*, ca. 1970
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. John V. Knaus, 1997.28.14

*Untitled*, ca. 1970
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. John V. Knaus, 1997.28.13

*New York*, ca. 1970
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. John V. Knaus, 1997.28.6

*New York*, ca. 1970
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. John V. Knaus, 1997.28.11

*New York*, ca. 1968
Gift of Drs. Pio and Esther Vilar, 1997.27.2

*London*, 1967

*New York*, 1966
Winogrand’s influence extends beyond modern street photography; his snapshot aesthetic and characteristic compositions have been adopted by modern day fashion photography and advertisements. Winogrand’s interest in photographing women also resulted in interesting images of street fashion of the 1960s and 1970s. Today, fashion photographers often emulate a street photography style by photographing their models in urban settings rather than elaborate sets. Additionally, another generation of street photographers—like the celebrated The New York Times fashion photographer Bill Cunningham (1929–2016)—focus on capturing the new scenes in street fashion. This style is also prevalent in new digital arenas like Instagram, featuring budding street style aesthetics of those such as @quistyle, @atelierdore, @thesartorialist. This lineage demonstrates the impact of Winogrand’s work that can be accessed in today’s social media and advertising worlds.
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Section 2: Fashion

*Copenhagen, Denmark, 1967*

*Untitled, date unknown*
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Section 3: Spirit of the 1960s and 1970s

Winogrand arguably did his best work from the turn of the 1960s to the early ’70s, capturing the upheavals, convulsions and chaos of America in that period. Street photography's ability to capture the momentum of urban life also gives the style a unique ability to document the spirit, energy, and attitudes of a particular time period. Women are Beautiful has been interpreted and presented in several different ways: as light-hearted and fun, as capturing the effects of women's liberation and the sexual revolution, and as sexist. Many of today's viewers enjoy Winogrand's street photography with a sense of nostalgia for the period in which he worked because these images emphasize the positive aspects of the period. The women in this series are, for the most part, participating in light-hearted activities like dancing, basking in the sunshine, and gossiping. The series reflects Winogrand's particular perspective and experience of the 1960s and 1970s and the way he viewed women.

Chicago, ca. 1972
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. John V. Knaus, 1998.13.17

Untitled, ca. 1970
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. John V. Knaus, 1998.13.1

Untitled, 1960s
Gift of Drs. Pio and Esther Vilar, 1997.27.16

Untitled, ca. 1969
Gift of Drs. Pio and Esther Vilar, 1997.27.10

Untitled, ca. 1975
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. John V. Knaus, 1998.13.20

Cape Cod, 1966

Untitled, date unknown
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Section 4: Gaze

In the Women are Beautiful series Winogrand makes use of compositional tools and framing devices that draw the viewer's attention to the female body. Winogrand is routinely criticized for the way he exploits the subjects of his work, particularly in images like those in this grouping where his compositions emphasize the breasts and backsides of young adult women. Often capturing moments without his subjects' knowledge or permission and with a heightened sexualized gaze gives credence to parts of this series as objectifying imagery. As we assess Winogrand's work today, the lens with which he chose to focus on women in the 1960s and 1970s is also one that documents his personal vision. Looking at his projection of the gaze now, we have new knowledge about his reality and ours, which broadens the discussion of the gaze in his most famous series, Women are Beautiful.

Untitled, ca. 1970
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. John V. Knaus, 1997.28.15

New York, ca. 1969
Gift of Drs. Pio and Esther Vilar, 1997.27.9

Untitled, ca. 1970
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. John V. Knaus, 1997.28.17

Untitled, 1968 or 1972

Los Angeles, 1964

La Guardia Airport, New York, ca. 1968

Untitled, ca. 1969
Gift of Drs. Pio and Esther Vilar, 1997.27.11

Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1967

London, 1967

Untitled, ca. 1970
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. John V. Knaus, 1997.28.20

New York, 1967
STYLE

Garry Winogrand was a prolific photographer; when he died at the age of 56, he left behind 2,500 rolls of undeveloped film. The Women are Beautiful monograph and portfolio was organized by John Szarkowski (1925–2007), curator of photography at The Museum of Modern Art in New York at the time and an early champion of Winogrand’s work. The eighty-five images that make up the series were initially selected by Szarkowski from hundreds of Winogrand’s images. Winogrand deployed a wide-angle lens to include an array of details and perspectives in each of his images, often without a central focus. In the iconic World’s Fair New York image, for example, eight people engage in a varied range of activities, from whispering and yawning to reading the newspaper and looking outside of the frame. Winogrand’s images often tilt the horizon, creating a diagonal axis in his compositions. These characteristics are found throughout the exhibition and are identifying traits of Winogrand’s work.