

Arnold Newman

The Early Works: 1938-1942

Sitters and Signatures

Autographed Portraits by Arnold Newman

18 January – 17 March, 2007

Reception with the Artist's Family
Wednesday, 17 January, 2007, 6-8pm



New York - Howard Greenberg Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of photographs by Arnold Newman. Conceived with the artist prior to his death on June 6, 2006, this exhibition will feature a remarkable group of virtually unknown photographs that pre-date Newman's celebrated career as a portraitist. The south gallery will feature classic portraits by Newman that have the particular virtue of having been signed and inscribed by the sitters. The early work is revelatory, the portraiture a powerful reminder of the artist's legacy as one of the most accomplished and revered photographers of his generation.

Of these early photographs Newman said, "I had worked very deliberately on my paintings and the direction in my photography followed the same concept. I was building a photograph. I wasn't taking one." This precept is made manifest in all of Newman's photographs but particularly so in the work he produced in Florida in the late 1930's. With the money he made in the studio he was able to purchase a Speed Graphic camera with a high-quality lens and with his new equipment began to "build" photographs of a highly experimental nature. Incorporating many of the aesthetic principles of Cubism, Newman produced straight images that border on abstraction. By isolating shapes and objects, emphasizing linearity, and maximizing the visual effects of light and shadow, he created images of remarkable beauty and compositional rigor. He also experimented with cutouts and collages in his quest to explore unconventional

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photographic techniques. These works, avant-garde at the time that they were made, have unquestionably withstood the test of time and exist today as enduring examples not only of Newman's innate artistic ability but also his willingness to take artistic risks.

The highly disciplined aesthetic that Newman established in his early work is consistently reiterated in the portraits he made throughout his career. He is frequently referred to as the pioneer of the style of portrait photography that came to be known as the "environmental" approach. By situating his subjects in settings that are reflective of their vocation or spirit, Newman made portraits that transcend the descriptive. And the portraits in this exhibition are further enhanced by the sitter's signatures and, in many cases, inscriptions. Some of the inscriptions are amusing, like Man Ray's: "for Arnold who first photographed me when I was six." (Man Ray was six-years old in 1896, twenty-two years before Newman was born.) Many contain laudatory praise from prominent figures: "To Arnold Newman—Well done Mr. Craftsman. Lyndon B. Johnson." And others re-confirm the reputation and enduring legacy of the artist: "Dear Arnold, it was an honor & a pleasure to have my portrait done by you—I feel like a part of history..." Love Matthew Broderick."

Born in New York City in 1918, Arnold Newman began his artistic studies in 1936 at the University of Miami where he immersed himself in the fundamentals of drawing and painting. But by 1938, his financial circumstances forced him to leave school and through an acquaintance of his father's, found a position in a photographic studio in Philadelphia. In 1939 Newman's employment in Philadelphia ended and again, through his father, found a job with a photographic studio, this time in West Palm Beach, Florida. It was there, over the course of the next several years, that Newman produced his extraordinary body of early work. On a visit to New York in 1941, he arranged to show his work to Dr. Robert Leslie who owned a typography house called The Composing Room where exhibitions of graphic arts were held. It was there that Newman was given his first exhibition. At that time Newman re-located to New York but World War II forced him back to Miami where he set up what was to become a very successful portrait studio. An exhibition of these portraits at The Philadelphia Museum of Art in 1946 resulted in assignments from *Life Magazine* and *Harper's Bazaar* and allowed him to permanently settle in New York where he went on to have an enormously successful career. Exhibited widely in both the U.S. and abroad, Newman is recognized as being one of the most influential portrait photographers of the twentieth-century.

For further information, or to request visuals for press,
contact Ali Price at 212 334 0010 or ali@howardgreenberg.com
Starting January 17th, the exhibition can be viewed at www.howardgreenberg.com