

FINDING SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR'S AMERICA AT SOUS LES ETOILES GALLERY

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Two years before she published her monumental work [“The Second Sex,”](#) [Simone de Beauvoir](#) journeyed to the United States to see what the vast expanse of land held.

Beauvoir spent the first four months of 1947 in the New World, which she navigated by train, bus and car via a route determined by a mix of personal whim and the invitations of others. Out of her road trip came the book “L’Amérique au jour le jour,” written as a retrospective journal that chronicled her time abroad and offered up both mundane insights into the daily life of a tourist and her trademark existentialist musings.



Vassar Girl, Alumnae Pub Mural, Vassar College 1947. Photo: Archives/ Collection of Vassar College and Sous Les Etoiles Gallery.

“No one here is concerned with my presence; I’m still a ghost, and I slip through the city without disturbing anything,” mused Beauvoir shortly after landing in New York City’s grid-bound landscape, relatively young with history and dotted with the pervasive smiles of postwar America. “Yet from now on my life will embrace the contour of these streets, these houses. New York will belong to me; I will belong to it.”

“America Day by Day,” the English translation of Beauvoir’s book that was published in the United States in 1999, provides the inspiration for “1947, Simone de Beauvoir in America,” a photography exhibition at SoHo’s Sous Les Etoiles Gallery.



Wayne Miller, from "The Way of Life of the Northern Negro." Chicago. (Afternoon Game at Table 2). Photo: Stephen Daiter Gallery/Sous Les Etoiles Gallery.

The exhibition, which includes works by Ansel Adams, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Rebecca Lepkoff, Louis Faurer, Ruth Orkin and others, is the first show dedicated to exploring the sights described in Beauvoir's travelogue.

"I wanted the viewer to be as close to her reality at that time, so most of the photographs exhibited are in the year of 1947," said Corinne Tapia, director of Sous Les Etoiles Gallery and curator of the exhibition.



Max Yavno, "Ferry Building," San Francisco, 1947. Photo: Sous Les Etoiles.

Displayed with Beauvoir's diary in mind, the images included in the exhibition possess a haunted quality — a glimpse into a world that, while distanced by time, remains tangible through the juxtaposition of written and visual accounts.

"This is what I saw and how I saw it. I have not tried to say more," wrote Beauvoir in her preface — a perfect echo for the representational medium depicting her travels in Sous Les Etoiles Gallery's exhibition.

"1947, Simone de Beauvoir in America" is on view at Sous Les Etoiles through Feb. 9, 2019.

📷 Top Image: Esther Bublely, "Coast to Coast, SONJ, 1947." Courtesy of Howard Greenberg Gallery/ Sous Les Etoiles Gallery.

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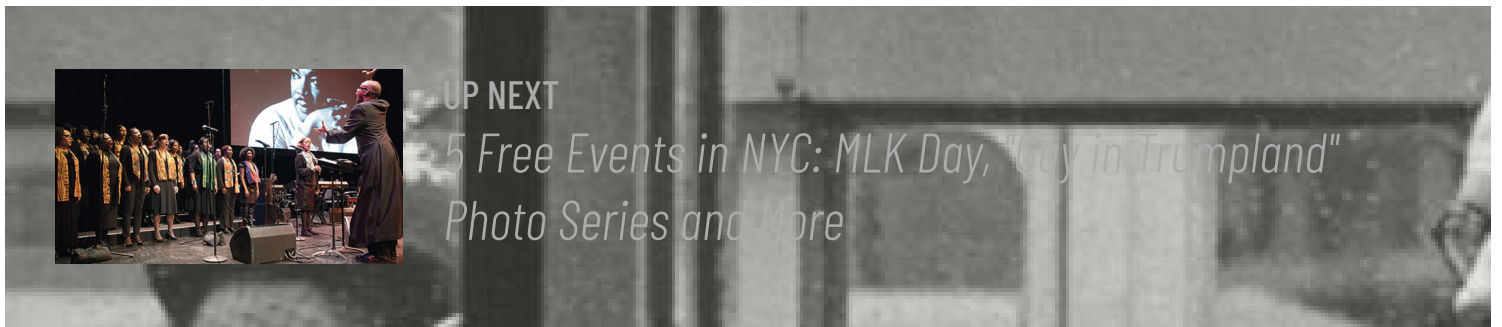
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