



Mexico, 1963



London, England, 1966



New York City, 1963



Paris, France, 1967



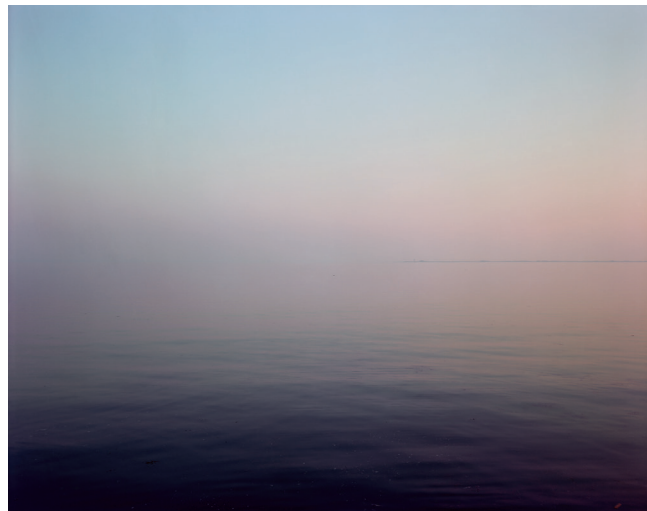
New York City, 1975



Five more found, New York City, 2001



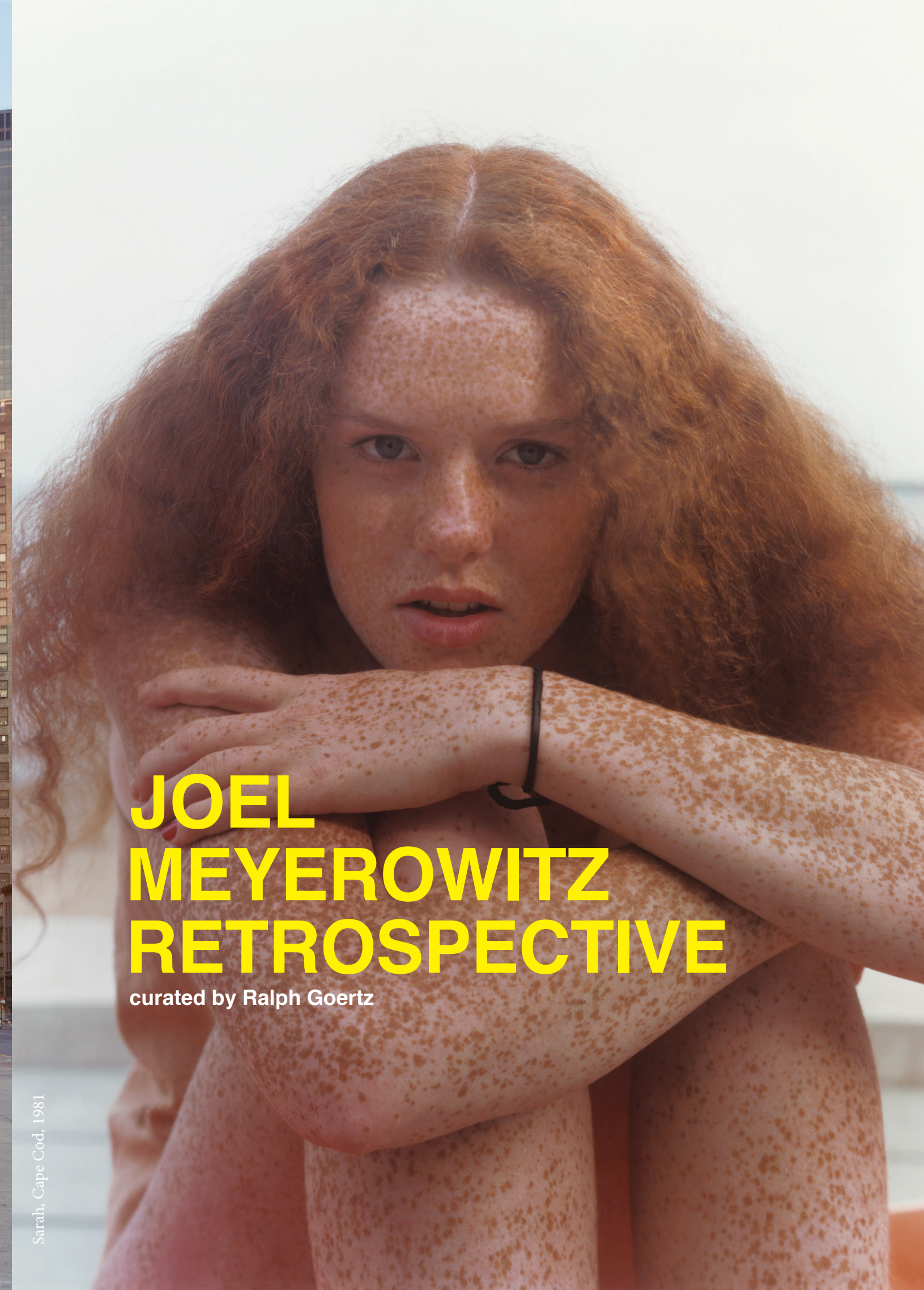
Roseville Cottages, Truro, Massachusetts, 1976



Bay.Sky, Provincetown, Massachusetts, 1985



Young Dancer, New York City, 1978



Sarah, Cape Cod, 1981

JOEL MEYEROWITZ RETROSPECTIVE

curated by Ralph Goertz

JOEL MEYEROWITZ RETROSPECTIVE

Joel Meyerowitz, born and grown up in New York, belongs to a generation of photographers - together with William Eggleston, Diane Arbus, Lee Friedlander, Stephen Shore, Tony Ray-Jones and Garry Winogrand - who are equipped with a unique sensitivity towards the daily, bright, hustle and bustle on the streets, who are able to grasp a human being as an individual as well as in their social context.

Starting in the early 1960s, Joel Meyerowitz went out on the streets, day in, and day out, powered by his passion and devotion to photography, in order to study people and see how photographs described what they were doing. In order to catch the vibes he ranges over the streets of New York, together with Tony Ray-Jones and later with his friend Garry Winogrand.

Different from Tony Ray-Jones and Garry Winogrand, Meyerowitz loaded his camera with color film in order to capture life realistically, which meant shooting in color for him. While his first photographs are often determined in a situational way, he starts, early on, putting the subject not only in the centre, but consciously leaving the centre of the picture space free and extending the picture-immanent parts over the whole frame. His dealing with picture space and composition, which consciously differ from those of his idols like Robert Frank and Cartier-Bresson, create a unique style. Not the framing of the picture like the perfectly designed takes of a Cartier-Bresson, but the coherences within the picture are significant. This special eye, this sensitive perception of every change in tonality, light, position or of a passing moment, signal the breakthrough of his independence as an artist.

His 12 months' stay in Europe in 1966/67 constitutes a first turning point of his photography when he shoots in both color and in black and white while carrying a pair of Leicas and making comparisons about the different ways each film describes what it records. Then, out of the moving car, he risks making pictures of the passing landscape; a couple on a motorbike, the woman behind the man, like a goddess whose scarf flutters in the wind, the dragon-like smoke of a train, drivers in their cars, and ordinary people along the footpath. These mostly black-and-white takes are particularly appropriate to capture the fine irony of the passing moment with a cool distance, and bring him his first solo exhibition in the Museum of Modern Art in New York – curated by photography legend John Szarkowski.

From then on Meyerowitz exclusively concentrates on color photography and numerous icons of street photography result up to the middle of the 1970s. Then, in 1976, in search of greater description in color, and richness of detail, he changes from 35mm to an 8x10, wooden, Deardorff plate camera and begins working on Cape Cod. This technically retrogressive step brings the next artistic breakthrough for Meyerowitz. Besides the moment, which until then meant everything to him, this is the first time he uses time and light in order to visualise the finest color and light distinction. His achromatic light examinations around the "blue hour" seem to penetrate the picture, and the light space in particular, and generate a sense of infinity. The book "Cape Light", published in 1979, becomes a photographic revelation, which influences coming generations of photographers until today. His sensitivity, and the questions he asks about photography makes him one of the most significant photographers in art history.

The „Joel Meyerowitz Retrospective“ presents with more than 260 works the most extensive selection of photographs taken by the artist between 1963 and 2014, including very rare dye transfer prints and the 40 b&w vintage prints, which were presented at the MOMA in New York in 1968. This exhibit is curated and organized by Ralph Goertz, director of the Institute for Art Documentation (IKS) in collaboration with the artist and was presented for the first time at the NRW-Forum in Duesseldorf, Germany in 2014/15.

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