



ROSE gallery

Susan Meiselas
Carnival Strippers

January 17, 2003 - March 6, 2003

For Immediate Release

In the early 1970s, Susan Meiselas frequented small town New England carnivals, documenting the affiliated strip shows, their performers, employees and customers. The advancing women's movement of the era is the most obvious frame through which to regard Meiselas' consideration of this inflammatory subject. Another concurrent realignment, however, equally relevant to the work but perhaps less popularly known, was the shift of documentary photographers away from pedagogic social exposition towards more personal catalogues, best exemplified in the Museum of Modern Art's 1967 show "New Documents." Meiselas' photographs share with the work of her contemporaries an ambiguity which is born not of descriptive inadequacy, but a thorough and uncompromising fidelity to her subject. Meiselas makes no reductions for the sake of indulgence or symbolic simplicity. The dramatis personae of Poverty, Oppression and Dignity are nowhere in evidence within Meiselas' bizarre microcosm. Rather the motley cast surrounding the carnivals' unglamorous stages - men, women, performers and audience - are all poor, oppressed and dignified to varying degrees within a surprisingly convoluted social network. Their expressions run a penumbral gamut from contemptuous to lewd to torpid to melancholy. The pictures are sometimes grotesque, sometimes elegiac, always complex, and the result is a more tangible and intricate pattern of humanity, antithetical to what might have been mere propaganda.

Carnival Strippers was one of Meiselas' first projects as a professional photographer, and the brilliance evinced by the catalogue garnered the attention of the illustrious Magnum Photo cooperative. Meiselas joined Magnum in 1976, and her acclaim as a documentary photographer heightened in subsequent years, primarily on the basis of her work in Central America. Her photographs have been widely published, and she is the recipient of the 1992 MacArthur Fellowship. The publication with which this exhibition coincides is the second edition of *Carnival Strippers*, revisited and revised after twenty-seven years.

Carnival Strippers - An exhibition of gelatin silver photographs by Susan Meiselas will be on view from January 17, 2003 through March 6, 2003. An opening reception will be held on Saturday, January 17, from 6 to 8 PM. The gallery is located in the Bergamot Station Art Center, 2525 Michigan Avenue, Building G-5, Santa Monica, CA 90404. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 10 am to 6 PM. For more information, call (310) 264-8440. <http://www.rosegallery.net>.