

# Diane Arbus's 1960s

*Auguries of Experience*

Frederick Gross

In any decade the work of a very few artists offers a template for understanding the ideas of their time. Photographer Diane Arbus is one of these rare artists, and in this book Frederick Gross returns Arbus's work to the moment in which it was produced and first viewed to reveal its broader significance for analyzing and mapping the culture of the 1960s.

Gross considers Arbus less in terms of her often mythologized biography—a “ Sylvia Plath with a camera ”—but rather looks at how her work resonates with significant photographic portraiture, art, social currents, theoretical positions, and literature of her times, from Robert Frank and Richard Avedon to Andy Warhol and Truman Capote. For Arbus, “ auguries ”—as in “ Auguries of Innocence ,” her 1963 photographic spread in *Harper's Bazaar*—conveyed the idea that whoever was present in her photograph could attain legendary status.

By shifting critical attention from the myths of Arbus's biography to the mythmaking of her art, this book gives us a new, informed appreciation of one of the twentieth century's most important photographers and a better understanding of the world in which she worked.

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