

*Sophia Loren, Rome, 1955.*

## GEORGE DANIELL

Photographer, painter, documenter of the renowned and the anonymous, George Daniell has spent a good part of his creative existence holding a small but powerful recording apparatus up to the world. "A Life in Pictures" Daniell has called it, and so it has been: from the remarkable early portraits of himself and his parents at their home in Yonkers, New York, to the light-filled photographs of his adopted downeast Maine, this consummate camera-artist has captured with clarity and grace (not to mention humor) the goings-on of a charmed planet.

Daniell's mastery of black-and-white photography is celebrated in this exhibition of 15 prints. The images carry the viewer around the world, with stops in New York City, Tahiti, Maine, Key West and, finally, Daniell's favorite home away from home, Italy. At the same time, these photographs tell stories: the daily routine of herring fishermen; a master painter at his easel; a day at a crowded beach. Most of all, Daniell gives us insight into the human face, be it the alert nonchalance of Audrey Hepburn, or the half-smiling visage of an impish Greek, looking out at us from the fo'c's'le of a steamer.

Alexander Liberman once likened the camera to a "third eye," wherein the taking of a photograph becomes "as instinctive as the act of seeing." We find this kind of true sight at work in so many of Daniell's images, a result of his enormous respect for untainted reality. Look, for example, at his clear-eyed handling



of the New York City skyline, an oft-photographed subject which, nonetheless, seems born anew through Daniell's lens. On a tugboat in New York Harbor Daniell found the perfect remove from which to record the busy metropolis.

In contrast, Daniell boarded a dory to document the seaborne life of fishermen on Grand Manan, a rugged island off the eastern coast of Canada. Living in a lighthouse overlooking the North Atlantic, Daniell photographed the herring fishermen in the fall of 1938; "I had to be a fisherman, going out at 4 am to get the pictures," he recalls. These powerful images, and the text Daniell wrote to accompany them, were syndicated in newspapers throughout the United States and Canada. The Grand Manan series calls to mind the photo essays of Walker Evans and the portraits of Nova Scotian fisherfolk by Marsden Hartley.

Technical prowess and a responsive eye are key ingredients in taking great photographs. Daniell's stunning image of Danielle Scotti strolling by Doney's cafe on the sidewalk of the Via Veneto in Rome clearly points this up. Thanks to Daniell, we are allowed to relive the drama and comedy captured so well in the expressions of the onlookers gazing at the mannequin-perfect Scotti, purse and script clutched in her white-gloved hand.

The same time and place—Rome's Cinema City, 1955—provided the occasion for what is possibly Daniell's greatest celebrity portrait: Sophia Loren among the statues. Loren's look of fearless assurance juxtaposed against a lifeless statue makes this single photograph say more about her than an entire film.

Sometimes a photographer takes a picture which becomes timeless in its significance. Daniell could not have known the fate of the *Andrea Doria*—which sank in 1956—when he aimed his camera at her from the docks of New York City. In the foreground, a hot-dog vendor reaches for a frank, while his customer, a sailor, helps himself to a napkin. This mundane transaction, taking place in the shadow of the ill-starred liner, lends the photograph an eerie quality.

Likewise, when Daniell photographed a man and a boy standing naked on the banks of the Hudson River in 1935, he could not have foreseen how, years later, simple nudity would raise the hackles of America's morality-watchers. Daniell's image is simple, yet stately, a strong expression of masculine beauty.

Edward Steichen, one of America's most renowned photographers, said of the art of photography that it "records the gamut of feelings written on the human face in its contrasts of hope, serenity, or despair." Steichen recognized Daniell's gift for chronicling such emotions; as head of the Department of Photography at the Museum of Modern Art, he included Daniell's work in two of his major exhibitions, "America's Many Faces," in 1961, and "Then and Now," in 1962.

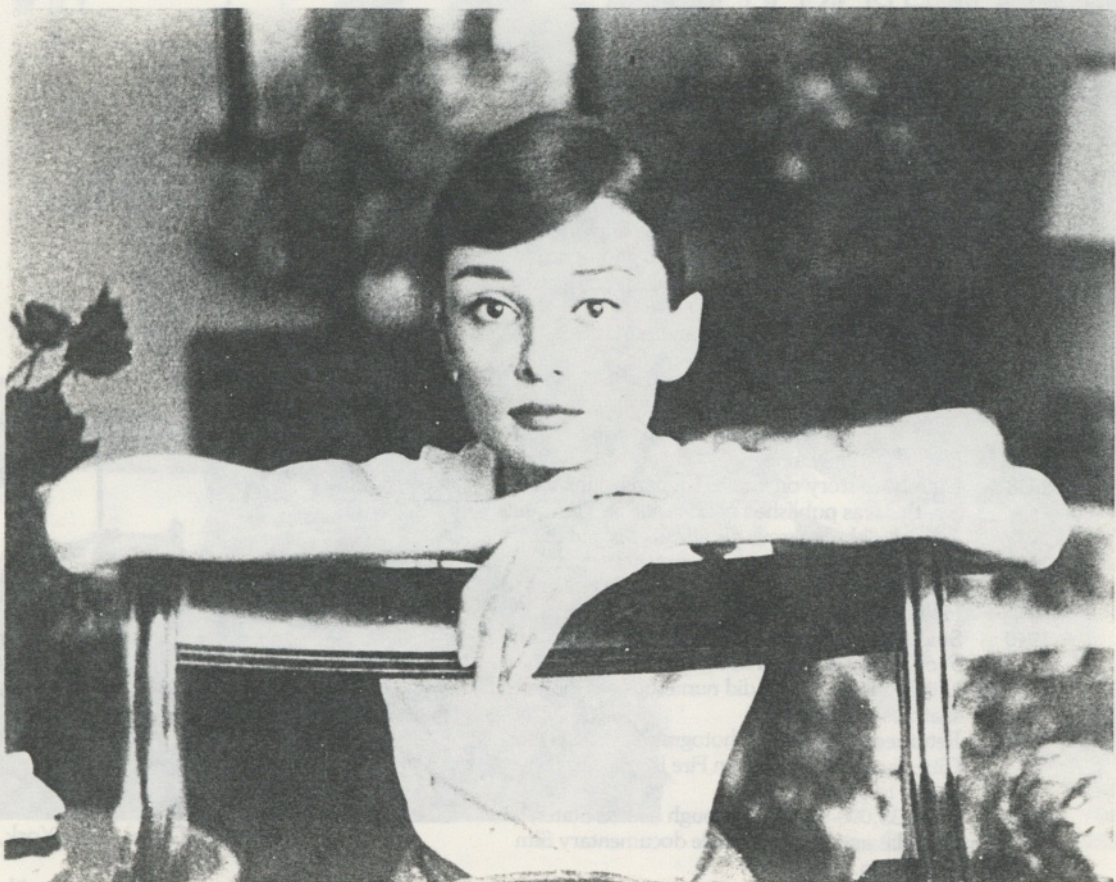
Daniell's photograph of John Marin, taken in 1951 at the painter's home in Cliffside, New Jersey, exemplifies the photographer's particular genius at capturing countenance. Even in shadow, Marin's determination comes through as he leans forward from his seat to put brush to paper.

Daniell's photographs of Georgia O'Keeffe and D.H. Lawrence's three women—Frieda Lawrence, Dorothy Brett and Mabel Dodge Luhan—are marked by solid shadows and brilliant whites. We can distinguish every crease in O'Keeffe's daunting face, while Lawrence's trio of muses seem pinned to an adobe wall by cold, Santa Fe radiance.

When at last we turn to study Daniell's self-portrait from 1936, we find a young man full of confidence. His sight is fixed on his own camera, shooting him from the shadows. The accoutrements of a portrait photographer surround him—high-wattage lamps and a bulky shrouded camera. The photograph is a well composed portrait of the artist—a man who later wrote in his autobiography, "So many people and places have haunted me." Here, George Daniell is the haunting one; something in his half smile and clear-eyed vision tells us he is camera-ready.

Carl Little  
Mount Desert, Maine  
April, 1991





Audrey Hepburn, New York City, 1955.

Photographer painter documenter of the modern world, the photographer's eye is always looking for the new, the different, the unusual. It is this sense of discovery that has made the photographer's work so vital to the world of art and culture. The photographer's eye is always looking for the new, the different, the unusual. It is this sense of discovery that has made the photographer's work so vital to the world of art and culture. The photographer's eye is always looking for the new, the different, the unusual. It is this sense of discovery that has made the photographer's work so vital to the world of art and culture.



# CHRONOLOGY

- 1911 Born in Yonkers, New York.
- 1925 Started taking photographs with a folding Kodak.
- 1926-30 Attended Barnard School for Boys, Fieldston, New York.
- 1927 Did cast drawing at Grand Central Art School, New York City.
- 1930-34 Attended Yale University and received BA in Liberal Arts with concentration in drawing.
- 1933 First trip to Europe; began 35mm photography; England, France, Switzerland, Germany, and the Austrian Tyrol.
- 1934-40 Did freelance photography and portraits in New York City.
- 1937 Studied at the Art Students Leauge, New York City.
- 1938 Painted and photographed on first trip to Monhegan Island, Maine.
- 1938 Did photo story on Grand Manan fishing industry; this was published nationwide and in Canada; also did numerous paintings of island life.
- 1939 Worked on and acted in documentary film, *Light for the Traveller*, New York City; went to Hollywood to photograph Ramon Novarro.
- 1940 Studied art under Carl Nelson at the American People's School, Bronx, New York.
- 1942-44 United States Army; did numerous paintings and sketches of army life.
- 1944 Returned to freelance photography in New York City; purchased house on Fire Island and continued to paint.
- 1946 Took 35,000-mile trip through United States, Canada, and Mexico; made documentary film of this trip.
- 1948 Photographed Georgia O'Keeffe on Fire Island; travelled to Europe on the freighter *Topa Topa* with Tom Heggen, author of Broadway play *Mister Roberts*; toured Hamburg, Amsterdam, Paris, Rome, French Riviera and Capri.
- 1950-70 Spent winters in Key West.
- 1951 Photographed John Marin at Cape Split, Maine and Cliffside, New Jersey.
- 1952 Photographed O'Keeffe, and D.H. Lawrence's three women—Mabel Dodge Luhan, Frieda Lawrence and Dorothy Brett—in New Mexico.
- 1955 Spent two-months photographing at Cinecitta Movie Studios in Rome; portraits of Sophia Loren and Audrey Hepburn in Rome and W.H. Auden on the island of Ischia.
- 1956 Took around-the-world trip: Japan, Hong Kong, Bangkok, India, Greece, Egypt, Italy, France, England.
- 1957 Began association with Photo Researchers in New York City; established Dorland Gallery in Greenwich Village.
- 1958 Went on second around-the-world trip: Tahiti, Australia, India, Yugoslavia, Austria and Spain; photo-essay on Italy published by *Coronet*.
- 1960 Moved to Trenton, Maine.
- 1965-80 Contributing photographer for *Down East* magazine.
- 1967 Finished portfolio of photographs of Key West.
- 1970 Photographed Harold Acton at La Pietra, Florence, Italy.
- 1973 Photographed Tennessee Williams in Key West.
- 1960-91 Working as photographer and painter in Maine.



*Andrea Doria, New York, 1949.*

Carl Little  
Mount Desert, Maine  
April, 1971