

*Lee Miller**You Will Not Lunch In Charlotte Street Today**Private View Wednesday 22 November, 18.00 - 20.00**Exhibition continues 23 November 2023 - 20 January 2024**Lee Miller, You Will Not Lunch In Charlotte Street Today, 1940, copyright Lee Miller Archives*

TJ Boulting is proud to announce our forthcoming exhibition in association with the Lee Miller Archives *You Will Not Lunch In Charlotte Street Today*. The title is taken from one of Lee's images of Charlotte Street in London during World War II, a street which is a stone's throw from where TJ Boulting is situated in Fitzrovia. The exhibition serves as a parallel to the forthcoming film on the life of Lee Miller *LEE* starring Kate Winslet, and also follows a recent publication of Lee's first photobook by her son Antony Penrose, published by Thames and Hudson. *You Will Not Lunch In Charlotte Street Today* presents various themes from across Lee Miller's prolific photographic output, from the 1930s in France and her beginnings in surrealism and her circle of artist friends, to the 1940s and London during the War, to her time in Germany at its close in 1945. In particular the exhibition highlights Lee's portraits of women, as iconic and inspiring as Lee herself, from artist Leonora Carrington to war reporter Martha Gelhorn.

Lee Miller's career was as diverse as her talent, she moved effortlessly from her early days as a model in front of the camera to artist and photographer behind it. Not content with gracing the pages of her native US Vogue she moved to Paris in her twenties and designated herself as assistant to the artist Man Ray. What followed was an important relationship both personally and professionally. Whilst on the streets of Paris Lee also discovered her affinity for the 'found image' and its inferences for surrealism – a female hand reaching for a handle of a scratched glass door became under Lee's interpretation *Exploding Hand*. With Man Ray she also discovered the technique of 'solarisation', which gave a striking dark halo around the edge of figures in photographs. By the time Lee went back to New York and set up her own successful studio a few years later, she found her style much in-demand, with society lady Dorothy Hill demanding a solarised portrait of her own in 1933 as her pre-wedding picture.

Several years later and back in Paris, Lee met her second husband, British surrealist artist Roland Penrose, and moved back with him to London on the first day of World War II in 1939. As an American she was not 'officially' allowed to work, but enrolled as a freelance photographer at Vogue Studios, and so began one of the most successful working relationships and friendships of her life with editor Audrey Withers. Contrary to what one might expect, the war-damaged London landmarks proved fertile ground for Lee's surrealist imagination, and combined with her fashion assignments she

produced images that merged all three – surrealism, fashion and war. With studios often out of action because of power cuts, Lee took her shoots onto the London streets. Alongside elegant models against a backdrop of bombed out destruction, one of her most famous images is taken in the garden of her home in Hampstead, with two models (one of them Vogue’s fashion editor) posing wearing protective fire masks. In the show and book this is paired with a portrait of her close friend and collaborator David E Scherman wearing a gas mask, taken in Dean Street, Soho in 1942. Scherman famously was with Lee when they entered Hitler’s apartment in Munich at the close of the war in 1945, and photographed each other in the bathtub.

Keen to pursue the experience of ‘Women at War,’ and encouraged by Audrey Withers, Lee photographed everyday women and their war efforts, including an image of women searchlight operators, jovially lined up in big furry coats moments before a raid happened. Later Lee needed little encouragement to photograph one of her heroes, Life photographer Margaret Bourke-White, at a US air base in Northamptonshire in 1942, and the following year Martha Gelhorn, a pioneering war correspondent like Lee, in London.

Even without an inspiring subject, Lee’s eye was always being drawn to these ‘found images’ with her irreverent wit and commentary often making its way into her titles. A London terrace that had a huge blown out cross-section she called *Bridge of Sighs* after the Venetian landmark, and two geese in front of a huge inflated ovoid balloon is called *Eggceptional Achievement*. Similarly *You Will Not Lunch In Charlotte Street Today* shows a police danger sign and the road, usually full of bars and restaurants, eerily quiet. Vogue Studios was based not far away in Rathbone Place, so it must have been of personal significance for Lee and her colleagues to have their local haunts out of action, her title taking a wry, tongue in cheek approach to its plight. The image was one of several published by Lee in *Grim Glory - Pictures of Britain under fire* in 1941, which featured photographs by Lee and others.

The Vogue Studios were also where she took more portraits of women, including of the ballerina Margot Fonteyn and the novelist Ivy Compton Burnett. On location Lee photographed Jill Craigie, the director of the film *Out of Chaos*, which looked at artists at work. One them being Henry Moore, who Lee photographed at Holborn Underground station in 1943, drawing sleeping civilians for the film during the war.

After witnessing the end of the war and its aftermath on the continent in 1945, Lee was left with PTSD. Before she put her camera and her images away completely (to become a gourmet cook), she often turned to pictures of her artist friends in happier times, including a very youthful Eduardo Paolozzi in 1948, illustrator Saul Steinberg being put to work at her home Farley Farm in 1953, and a playful Joan Miro at London Zoo in 1964. Lee died aged 70 in 1977, and shortly after that her incredible archive of images was rediscovered, and her groundbreaking life and work first began to be put out into the world. Her son Antony Penrose’s 1985 book *The Lives of Lee Miller*, has formed the basis for the film *LEE*, and Antony himself says of Winslet in the role “I thought, That’s Lee! It’s real. That’s Mum. It’s really her.”

The prints being shown are all modern silver gelatin prints, produced by Carole Callow for the Lee Miller Archives from the 1980s until her retirement in 2017. After 36 years of Carole being their estate printer, and only printer, the archives decided to not have more silver gelatin prints produced, besides from what Carole had made. Six images form part of a box set *Quintessential Lee*, an iconic retrospective of images curated by Mark Haworth Booth when he was senior curator of photography at the V&A, to coincide with Lee Miller’s centenary exhibition at the V&A in 2007. Since the 90s the Lee Miller Archives has also printed small platinum palladium edition prints made by 31 Studio, one of which is the beautiful self-portrait taken by Lee in her New York studio in 1932, a detail of which is on the cover of Antony’s book.

All prints are available for sale, please speak to the gallery for a list of all available prints and editions.

Related links:

Vogue US, October 2023 “Kate Winslet on War Photographer Lee Miller, and the Film She Was Born to Make”
Words Wendell Steavenson. Photography Annie Liebovitz
<https://www.vogue.com/article/kate-winslet-lee-miller-october-cover-2023-interview>

Lee Miller: Photographs (Thames and Hudson, 2023)
<https://thamesandhudson.com/lee-miller-photographs-9780500025925>

