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Unforgettable Images, in Galleries and in Print

Three shows and a book illustrate how photography and art can capture a moment.

Ugo Mulas

Matthew Marks Gallery

As the official photographer of the Venice Biennale from 1954 until his death in 1973, Ugo Mulas had extraordinary access to the contemporary-art world. After the 1964 Biennale, when Robert Rauschenberg won the Golden Lion for his paintings, Mulas's artistic interests extended to American shores. Intrigued by the new generation of artists, he began to travel to New York, photographing a thriving scene.

The lavish book that resulted, "New York: The New Art Scene" (1967), inspired this show at Matthew Marks. Marked-up galleys for the book are on view in display cases, as well as photographs of a moody, gritty New York. The exhibition focuses especially on six luminaries: Rauschenberg, Roy Lichtenstein, Jasper Johns, Andy Warhol, Barnett Newman and Marcel Duchamp, a longtime New York resident who was being rediscovered by this generation of artists.

Mulas didn't speak English, but he was a canny interpreter of art and the process of making it. Some of the best photographs here function like portraits, even when the artists are not in the frame. Fragments of comic strips pinned to Lichtenstein's studio wall echo his Pop paintings. Mr. Johns, map in hand, paints a picture of it on canvas,

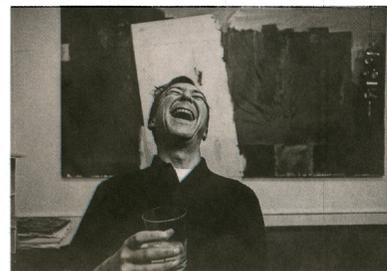


UGO MULAS HEIRS, VIA MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY

while Duchamp, a chess aficionado, sits before an empty chess board in Washington Square Park. A photograph of Thanksgiving dinner in Rauschenberg's studio suggests the art world's familial aspect; the police breaking up a dance party at Warhol's Factory reflects its more debauched one.

Mulas's project, true to its day, celebrates Great White Men. It does include, however, photographs of modern-dance pioneers like Trisha Brown and Deborah Hay, and of the sculptor Marisol, as bit players rather than protagonists. (Ms. Brown is shown nursing a baby rather than choreographing a dance.)

The show has also been organized to capture the New York of the 1960s, as well as to resonate with current events: A 1965 vintage print showing a billboard of the Statue of Liberty that reads "Keep



UGO MULAS HEIRS, JASPER JOHNS/VAGA AT ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NY, ALL VIA MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY

Top, a photograph by Ugo Mulas, whose work can be seen at Matthew Marks Gallery, shows police officers stopping a dance party at Andy Warhol's Factory in 1964. The exhibition also includes his 1964 portrait of the artist Jasper Johns, above.

"America Strong" feels like a slap in the face. Mulas found his own vibrancy in the New York art scene.

MARTHA SCHWENDENER

UGO MULAS: NEW YORK — THE NEW ART SCENE
Through Aug. 16 at 522 West 22nd Street,
Manhattan; 212-243-0200,
matthewmarks.com.

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