



International Center of Photography

## City of Abstractions: Brett Weston in New York, 1944–45

1285 Avenue of the Americas Art Gallery between 51st and 52nd Streets  
September 30–January 10



Brett Weston (1911–1993) is widely regarded as one of the leading photographers of the 20th century. He is known primarily for his bold compositions based on Western landscapes and natural forms, and for his extraordinary printing style. Weston was among a small group of California photographers in the 1930s, known as the Group f/64, who favored large-format view cameras, straight and uncropped images, and stark black-and-white prints, often contact printed. This group included Ansel Adams and Brett Weston's father, Edward Weston. But Brett

Weston's style became even more radical when he was drafted into the army during World War II, and, in 1944, sent to the Army Pictorial Center in New York. There, in addition to routine Army work, Weston explored the streets of New York with his large 8x10 view camera. Over the next two years, Weston took over 300 photographs, each distinguished by an attention to the formal values of linearity, depth, and contrast. Turning away from the documentary style that characterized much of the photography of New York in the preceding decade, notably Berenice Abbott's project "Changing New York" (1939), Weston pioneered a highly subjective and abstract view of the city, often focusing on details such as the finial on an iron railing or ivy on the side of a building. In pictures like *Air Vents* (1944) and *Whelans Drugstore* (1944), Weston flattened and abstracted the deep space of the New York cityscape creating rich, two-dimensional black-and-white images. This approach would govern the most prolific period of Weston's work in the late 1940s and 1950s, when he utilized this highly polished style to photograph Western dunes, beaches, rocks, and vegetation.

This exhibition includes over 100 photographs, drawn largely from the collection of the International Center of Photography. The exhibition is a collaboration between the International Center of Photography, the Brett Weston Archive, and the host Gallery of the Americas. It is organized by Brian Wallis, Chief Curator at the International Center of Photography, and Julie Maguire, Director of the Brett Weston Archive.