



Contact Zones

Photography, Migration,
and Cultural Encounters
in the United States

Justin Carville, Sigrid Lien (eds)

LEUVEN UNIVERSITY PRESS

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Edited by
JUSTIN CARVILLE and SIGRID LIEN

Leuven University Press

Published with the support of
KU Leuven Fund for Fair Open Access
and
Terra Foundation for American Art

TERRA
FOUNDATION FOR AMERICAN ART

Published in 2021 by Leuven University Press / Presses Universitaires de Louvain / Universitaire Pers
Leuven. Minderbroedersstraat 4, B-3000 Leuven (Belgium).

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Justin Carville and Sigrid Lien (eds), *Contact Zones: Photography, Migration, and Cultural Encounters in the
United States*. Leuven, Leuven University Press. (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)

ISBN 978 94 6270 252 3 (Paperback)

ISBN 978 94 6166 357 3 (ePDF)

ISBN 978 94 6166 358 0 (ePUB)

<https://doi.org/10.1111/9789461663573>

D/2021/1869/17

NUR: 652

Layout: Crius Group

Cover design: Dogma

Cover illustration: Erich Salomon, *Blick durch die vergitterten Fenster des Internierungsgebäudes von Ellis
Island auf die Wolkenkratzer von New York* [View through the barred windows of the internment building of Ellis
Island to the skyscrapers of New York], ca. 1932, 17.9 × 24.2 cm, Erich Salomon archive Berlin, BG-ESA
462 [in, Erich Salomon. "Mit Frack und Linse durch die Politik und Gesellschaft." *Photographien 1928–1938*,
eds. Janos Frecot et al. (Berlin: Berlinische Galerie, 2004), catalog from an exhibition at Berlinische
Galerie, Berlin 2004, 245].



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Diasporic Imaginations

“First Pictures”

New York through the Lens of Emigrated European Photographers in the 1930s and 1940s

Helene Roth

Prelude

In 1932, the magazine *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* (BIZ) published a photo reportage by the German Jewish photographer Erich Salomon; this reportage was taken during his trip to New York and titled “Die Gefangenen der Weltkrise – Bei den unerwünschten Einwanderern und Deportierten auf Ellis Island im Hafen von New York” (“The prisoners of the world crisis – The unwanted emigrants and deportees on Ellis Island in New York’s harbor”) (Fig. 1). In a series of six pictures, Salomon revisits the emigrants’ and deportees’ situation on Ellis Island from different perspectives, capturing with his camera the life of the prisoners on the island.¹ The text in the reportage informs that the island not only served as a deportation processing center where mostly European, Asian, and African emigrants were held before they were granted entry into the United States, but also as detention center where emigrants who had been living in New York for several years were arrested because they had not fulfilled all legal requirements at the time of immigration.² In a photograph directly to the right of the headline, Salomon focuses on the emigrants’ view, through the barred windows, of New York. The skyline of Manhattan was considered by many arriving ship passengers to be a symbol of freedom and hope, which they first saw and had in mind after days on the open sea when they entered the harbor.³ In Salomon’s photograph, however, the skyline and the view of the skyscrapers is subdivided into the fine rectilinear structure of the barred windows and moves into the distance, behind the delicate grid of gray areas. The deserted photograph forms a counterproposal to a happy life of freedom and with hope that the emigrants expected from the new life in America. In its strict and matter-of-fact composition, it conveys the image of the distanced, unreachable goal



Figure 1: Anonymous, "Die Gefangenen der Weltkrise," photographs by Erich Salomon, in *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, vol. 41, no. 20 (22 May 1932), 630f. © Private archive Helene Roth.

of emigration. When Salomon made the reportage on Ellis Island in 1932, he could not have guessed that, in 1933, when the National Socialists came to power in Germany, the island would again gain importance for emigration from Europe in the following years.⁴ This was the case for many of his European colleagues who emigrated to New York in the 1930s and 1940s.

"First pictures": Through New York with the camera

When the National Socialists came to power and major private and professional restrictions were imposed in Germany, Great Britain and neighboring France, especially in their capitals London and Paris, offered a first place of refuge for persecuted photographers. A second wave of emigration with destinations overseas and to the United States of America, especially to New York, began with the occupation of France during World War II.⁵ The entry to the harbor of New York City was one of the most commonly desired destinations at this time—it was the symbol for the "New World" and a new home for the émigrés. Erwin Blumenfeld, a German Jewish photographer, who also emigrated to New York in the 1940s, describes this important moment of arrival in the harbor of Manhattan in his autobiography *Eye to I*:

On the seventh day, after passing the Ambrose lightship, the steamer slowed down. Seagulls screeched, passport officials, pilots and reporters clambered on board. For the second time I watched excited the passengers jostle each other impatiently with their binoculars on the rails, each watching to be the first to spot the first skyscraper. As the veils of the Gulf stream mist thinned, a strip of land emerged, silvery green in the distance, a line of dunes rising from the Atlantic: the New World! Roofs of disappointingly pretty-pretty toy houses began to appear, one beside the next in childish old lady's colours: pink, mauve, light blue, beige, all alike. Behind them rose pointless iron constructions from some gigantic Meccano set: Coney Island, New York's amusement park. [...] Only at the very last, under the watchful eye of the verdigris Miss Liberty, did the immense backdrop of the Manhattan skyscraper with their greyish-mauve glaze (every city has its own colour, New York has a purplish tinge), rise up into the inhuman August sky [...].⁶

After successfully arriving in New York City, the paths of European emigrant photographers took different directions. In many cases, the photographers already had contacts with other emigrated family members, friends living in New York, or American colleagues. Mostly without employment, commissions for magazines, or their own photography studios, the exiled photographers undertook this urban exploration in private. They were overwhelmed and impressed by the spatial dimension of skyscrapers, vanishing points, light conditions, and the big avenues of the metropolis. While emigrated writers and journalists were often confronted with professional problems caused by the new language, photographers could use their cameras as a transnational and universal medium. In the period after their arrival, many explored their new hometown by taking pictures of this fascinating metropolis.⁷

This phase of arrival represents an interesting topic and starting point for an analysis: on the one hand the escape from Europe was only a short time ago, but on the other hand the physical arrival on American soil had already begun with the docking of the ship. The transcultural oscillation between the old, familiar, and the abandoned and the new, future, previously unknown country becomes particularly clear in the first visual impressions of the metropolis. The camera served as a medium to articulate a new urban vision and the personal feelings of exile. It is remarkable that also European fashion and portrait photographers focused their first pictures of New York on urban and architectural views.

Although many of these images can be classified as modern street and city photography, there remains a lack of analysis of these images in the context of emigration movements from Europe in the 1930s and 1940s, and in migration and photography studies.⁸ It is in this framework that I will put a particular focus on

the photographic productions of New York by the Jewish European photographers Josef Breitenbach, Hermann Landshoff, and Lisette Model.⁹ These three photographers are connected by their self-taught access to photography, as well as their first experiences of exile in Paris in the 1920s and 1930s. In Paris, Breitenbach had his own portrait studio, Landshoff specialized in fashion photography, and Model studied music and voice before she recommitted herself to studying visual arts and photography. Due to their Jewish descent, they were forced to leave Europe and emigrated from France via different routes to New York in the late 1930s and early 1940s.¹⁰ In 1939, Lisette Model emigrated with her husband, the painter Evsa Model, to New York; Hermann Landshoff and Josef Breitenbach arrived in 1941.¹¹ After their arrival in New York, they took their first divergent, experimental, and creative approaches to the process of encountering the metropolis through photography. Each of the three emigrants photographed first impressions and encounters with the metropolis in a unique artistic language, utilizing different techniques and compositions.¹² In this essay I therefore want to discuss the significance of these first pictures of Landshoff, Breitenbach, and Model in the context of exile, migration, and photography studies. Can photography serve as a visual medium for ameliorating exilic experiences and approaching new homelands and cultural encounters? To what extent do these first pictures of artist émigrés negotiate personal emotions and cultural exchanges? What image of the metropolis do these photographs convey? Building on Vilém Flusser's analyses of the creativity of exile and Marie Louise Pratt's concept of contact zones, my paper will analyze in a second step if the first pictures can be examined as creative results of their emigration within urban and cultural contact zones.¹³

We New Yorkers: Josef Breitenbach's experimental skyline visions

In 1942, Breitenbach made a photogram-photomontage titled *We New Yorkers* (Fig. 2). Two skyscrapers were photographed at night and combined with a colorful diagram of the human nervous system. The diagram is represented in red and refers to the blood circulation system of veins and arteries. The bright red color in the foreground contrasts with the darkened city and appears like a red signal of an electric light sign or billboard. At first glance, this photogram perhaps seems peculiar and unapproachable. Breitenbach made this photogram during his first year in New York.¹⁴ It symbolizes the symbiotic and mutual relationships between the city and its inhabitants. Breitenbach refers to the vibrant life in the city, where people move in the labyrinth of skyscrapers while the mechanisms of the city allow them a dynamic and vivacious life. The picture illustrates the atmosphere of New

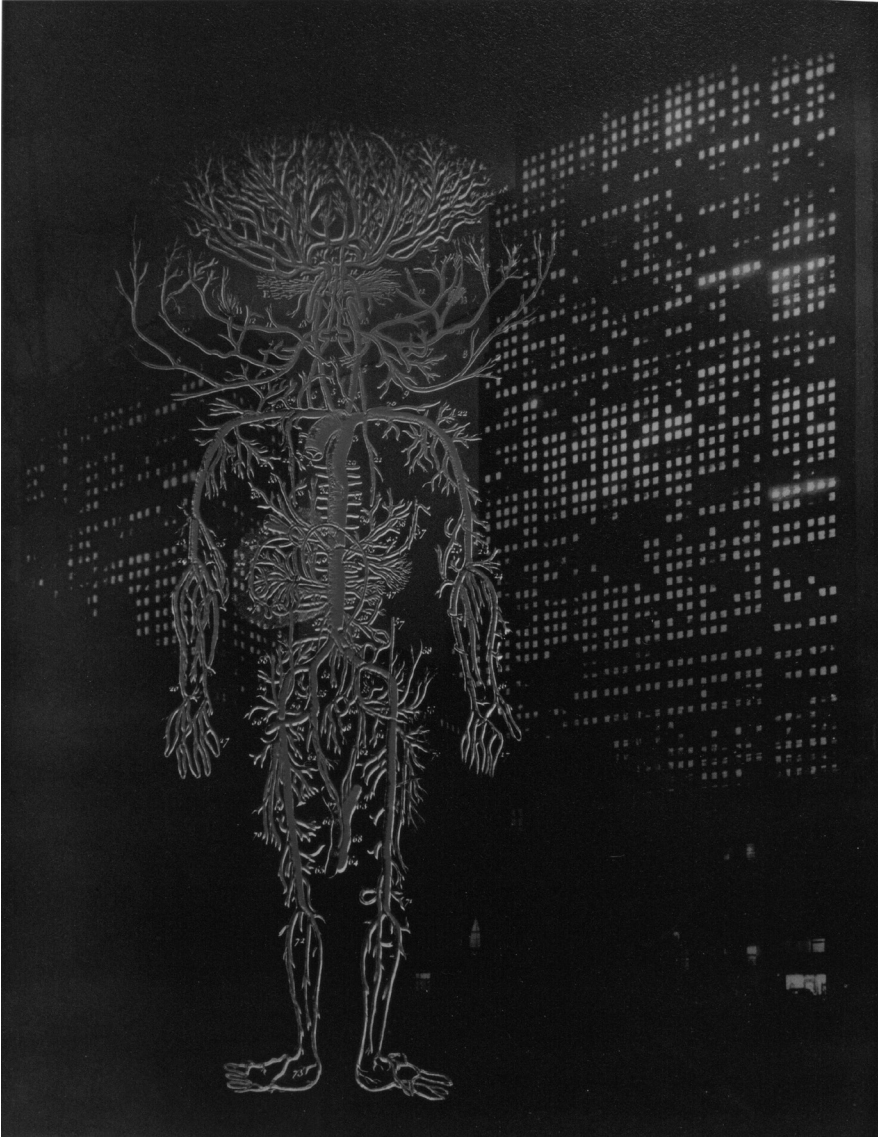


Figure 2: Josef Breitenbach, *We New Yorkers*, 1942, 38.4 × 30.5 cm (Plate 10, p. 336). inv.-no. FM 96/3-33 © The Josef and Yaye Breitenbach Charitable Foundation, Courtesy of the Munich City Museum.

York, which probably overwhelmed and impressed the photographer upon his arrival. Instead of crowded streets, he shows blood circulation, which generally represents human life. The key to this photomontage lies in the title and the word *We*. It indicates that Breitenbach already felt settled in New York in the first year

Figure 3: Josef Breitenbach, *Victory Day Parade, New York*, 1945, 35.3 × 28 cm. inv.-no. FM 93/346-6 © The Josef and Yaye Breitenbach Charitable Foundation, Courtesy of the Munich City Museum.



after his emigration—and consequently saw himself as an American. Instead of speaking of a certain group such as *The New Yorkers*, Breitenbach underlines his affiliation with the city through the word *We*.¹⁵ Therefore, the picture can be read as a manifestation of his

readiness to identify with the metropolis of New York and with American society. At the same time, the image also reproduces the impression of anxiety by losing the individuality in the anonymity of the city. “Surrounded by night, the skyscrapers take on a disquieting presence. Man, facing these, appears highly vulnerable. He is skinned alive, so to speak, disrobed of his individual identity, reduced to a mere network of lines.”¹⁶

In addition to *We New Yorkers*, further photographs of the artist’s first years in the metropolis exist, which also show complex experimental perspectives on his new home and can be read as a reference to surrealism. During his time in Paris, Breitenbach had contact with Surrealist artists and photographers (such as Man Ray) and was able to collect and implement inspirations for his own photographic work.¹⁷ On May 8, 1945, he took several images on the occasion of the Victory in Europe Day (V-E Day).¹⁸ On the same day, the photographer Alfred Eisenstaedt also created a series of images of cheering and kissing people in Times Square; Breitenbach, however, stayed away from the crowded avenues and turned his attention to the traces of the festivities amidst the skyscrapers from a city graveyard (Fig. 3). A guidebook of the Trinity Church describes that the cemetery is one of the few places in central Manhattan that retains the original and historic character of old New York: “Here in fair weather the office workers come at noon to rest in the

green and sunlight of God's Acre. Strangers to the city stroll about the paths trying to identify the great names of the past."¹⁹ Breitenbach thus stood at a historical site in American history and referred to this fact by integrating the national flag and the statue into the image motif. Due to the combination with the waving paper flags and ticket ribbons, this photograph has a dynamic moment as well as an aesthetic quality.²⁰ The photo theorist Kelly George wrote that "even if the image is realistic in the sense that the scene is not manipulated or constructed, it can be classified as surrealistic."²¹ In Breitenbach's image, as in much surrealistic photography mostly constructed by photograms, the paper strips of light buzz weightlessly across the paper. This impression is reinforced by the choice of the remarkable location. By using photographic techniques or collage-like compositions of several elements (as in *We New Yorkers*), different levels of reality and multilayered experimental perspectives on the cityscapes of New York arise in one of Breitenbach's first pictures. Characterizing both of Breitenbach's photographs is a lack of people captured in the city views; rather, the artist represents them in symbolic forms through diagrams and surrealist techniques.

Going with the flow: movement and dynamics in Lisette Model's *Running Legs*

The network of European emigrated photographers also included Lisette Model, who arrived in New York in 1938, and who was a colleague of Breitenbach at the New School of Social Research as of 1951.²² Lisette Model was also struck by her new home and the vibrant urban life in the city. This fascination can be seen in two series created in the first years after her emigration. Until 1939, Model explored the city and photographed urban shop windows in a modernist aesthetic. The photographs produced for the series *Reflections* were taken either inside or outside of shop windows and reflected the comings and goings of passersby as well as the architecture of the skyscrapers and shops. The result is a multilayered picture in which the window display and the street scenes reflect and represent the complex urban life that overwhelmed her. Simultaneously, the inside and outside of this dynamic street scene becomes visible to the viewer in an entangled palimpsest. One can feel the fascination for the wide avenues, skyscrapers, billboards, and shop windows where the pedestrians pass by. In contrast to the window displays of the photographer Eugène Atget or Bernice Abbot, Model sought a creative and artistic image. She deliberately works with different levels of reality and experiments with light, shadows, angles, and perspectives, depending on which objects are more or less pronounced. In her series *Reflections*, the viewer and the observed passersby flow together into one image, whereby the gaze can be

directed from inside to outside or vice versa. The images are also reminiscent of a collage of photographs, which “were all on the same plane, showing the bustle and the commercial activity, and at the same time the grandeur and the chaos of the city.”²³

After her emigration, Model started a second series that also articulates these experimental and creative ways of seeing and her first impressions of this metropolis. From 1940 on, for at least two years, she followed the hectic and dynamic life of the newly experienced city with great perseverance and consistency in a series named *Running Legs* (Fig. 4). In close-up pictures, the photographer focused her camera on the passersby. Instead of a full portrait, she decided to take only the view of the running legs. In these pictures, we can see high heels, shoes of business men, and groups or individuals rushing by as quickly as possible. The dynamic moments are also captured in the blurred and fuzzy photographic technique. The cropping of the subjects as well as the blurring evokes a dynamic movement extending beyond the edge of the photograph.²⁴ The series of photographs has a cinematographic rhythm and gesture to the anonymous and crowded life of the metropolis, which expressed Model’s own anxieties about New York urban life. In this context, it is important to explain the artist’s photographic technique and camera type. Model used a Rolleiflex camera, which hangs in front of the upper body.²⁵ To frame a picture, the photographer uses the finder on the top of the camera. Therefore, Model must have been very flexible and mobile to capture the running legs and must have held her camera in a very unique position—perhaps squatting on the edge of the sidewalk next to a building. It is remarkable how the photographs were taken, and the process also feels somewhat mysterious as nobody appears to have noticed her actions—again underlining the anonymity of the big city. Consequently, Model has visually not only captured the perceived dynamics of the street, but also operated dynamically herself in active photographic gestures behind the camera as well as in movements such as stooping, bowing, and lowering her gaze.

For Model it was crucial, she explained in an interview, “that a photograph must be a product of the present, not of the past. It must refer to everything that holds meaning for us in life at this time.”²⁶ For her, the camera was therefore “an instrument for detection: it shows us not only what we know, but also explores new aspects of a world in constant change.” In the context of exile, which can also be read as a state of liberated existence, these images also reflect moments of the fugitive, the unstable, and the overwhelming.²⁷ Thus, Model used patterns that can also be transferred to life immediately after the arrival in the new home. In contrast to Breitenbach, who photographed the monumental and architectural framework of the metropolis, Model stood in the midst of the metropolitan, documenting microcosms of New York. Model’s special and unusual point of view also aroused great interest among American photo experts.²⁸ Finally, through the contact and



Figure 4: Lisette Model, *Running Legs*, New York, 1940, 81 × 101.6 cm. © The Lisette Model Foundation, Inc. (1983). Used by permission.

help of the art director Alexey Brodovitch, an image of the *Running Legs* series was published in *Harper's Bazaar*.²⁹

Day or night? The infrared photographs of Hermann Landshoff

Hermann Landshoff is also connected with the previous two photographers by a similar emigration route to New York.³⁰ Likewise, Hermann Landshoff wrote about this important moment of arriving securely in New York in his autobiography: "Great desire to pass the Statue of Liberty at the entrance to New York Harbor. It has once again become a living symbol for many inhabitants of the Old World, something concrete, a lifestyle."³¹ Because he was unable to immediately find work as a fashion photographer, he dedicated himself to documenting urban architecture in his first months of exile in New York, creating photographic portraits of the city. Although he limited his work to the glamorous side of New York and its impressive high-rise architecture, he also explored the city with a creative way of seeing. In his archive, I found three pictures taken during his first year in New York. With their

high black-and-white contrast and detailed clear depth of field, these pictures differ from Landshoff's later works. In one picture, the edges on the right and left side are framed by two high-rise buildings (Fig. 5). The middle is framed by the cityscape and a cloudy sky. By broaching the two buildings at the top and the side, Landshoff evoked and emphasized the impressive height of these monuments, which extend beyond the picture. The artist wasn't standing in the middle of nowhere or on the outskirts of the city, but in the center of Manhattan. The building on the right side is St. Patrick's Cathedral, and the building on the left side is probably Rockefeller Center. He took this picture from a slightly raised perspective, perhaps standing on a rooftop terrace. This very dense and heterogeneous picture is underlaid by the special technique of infrared photography, a complex photographic process in which infrared-sensitive recording material and a special filter are used.³² Through this technological feature, the film, which is normally sensitive to visible light, can block the visible light spectrum with the filter, making possible a new way of seeing. The artist and photographer Raoul Hausmann explains that

a photographer [must] be different, more comprehensive and more specialized at the same time than before. He has to get to know many things and materials in their effect on the photochemical layers. [...] Here, above all, the photographer has to learn: the best means of representation is the detailed contrast range.³³

In addition to application in science and medicine, this photographic technique is also used for cityscapes. Because of the special filter and the red light, disturbing effects such as fog and haze can be converted into a detailed, clear picture. This example of Landshoff's first picture and urban vision can be seen as a very good result of this infrared process. The photo also meets the criteria described by Hausmann for a high-contrast image that also achieves a graphic character through backlighting. It can be claimed that Landshoff not only experimented with cutting-edge technologies but also evoked a new way of urban seeing in this new home and a different perspective to visualize the fascinating skyscrapers. The "new" New Yorker Hermann Landshoff opted for a photographic process through which he could feel his new hometown in a different way. He tried to emphasize the vertical architecture of the metropolis while focusing on the ambivalence between modern and historical buildings. It seems interesting that Landshoff used infrared technology only in his first pictures in New York. In this respect, the terms of arrival and experiment should be considered interrelated.

During his first two years in his new home, Landshoff took pictures not only street scenes but also portraits, which originated in private settings. Until now, these portraits have received little attention in art, photography, and exile studies and represent a little-recognized research topic. This area also includes the extensive portrait series



Figure 5: Hermann Landshoff, *New York*, 1941, 29.4 × 24.2 cm (Plate 11, p. 337). inv.no. FM-2012/200.99 © bpk, Münchner Stadtmuseum, Sammlung Fotografie, Archiv Landshoff.

of various predominantly European exiled artists who, after emigrating, attempted to reestablish themselves in the New York art scene and to get in touch with American colleagues. In 1942, Landshoff created a photo series of the exiled Surrealist art scene in New York. He took two group portraits and several individual portraits in Peggy Guggenheim's house, which was a meeting point for the Surrealist circle.³⁴

creative art scene of the Surrealists is positioned above. They are standing more or less above the art and give the image of a lofty and pseudo-spiritual touch. With the exception of Guggenheim, John Ferren, and Berenice Abbot, this photograph shows only European emigrants who had recently arrived in their new American home—the metropolis of New York. But even Ferren, Guggenheim, and Abbot were familiar with Europe, as they themselves had lived on the continent for many years: Abbot lived in Berlin from 1921 to 1929, and had later lived in Paris, where she worked as an assistant to the photographer Man Ray and had even portrayed numerous intellectuals of the Parisian art and culture scene of the 1920s.³⁵ Thanks to Peggy Guggenheim, Abbot opened her first studio in Paris in 1927. Guggenheim also spent the 1920s and 1930s in Paris, where she had close contact with famous artists such as Man Ray and the Surrealists. Because of her Jewish descent, she fled to New York in 1941 with her complete art collection.³⁶

Apart from the two prominent group portraits attesting to the Surrealists' meeting in New York, other Landshoff recordings made in Peggy Guggenheim's townhouse testify to the community connection, such as portraits of Max Ernst or Leonora Carrington.³⁷ In the following years, Landshoff not only portrayed emigrated artists and creative networks but also photographers.³⁸ All images share common traits in that the caption refers to the job title and full name of each person. Notably, the subjects were not shot in a photographic studio, but in their personal environments at home or at their places of creative work. Landshoff precisely identifies each individual in a professional setting, thus acknowledging each as an artist.

The infrared photograph and portrait photography of Hermann Landshoff can be seen as a connecting element to his emigration, accompanying the photographer on his life journey from Munich via Paris to New York. It can therefore be assumed that the photographs illustrate his own personal examination of the forced change of location and exile in New York and also depict his attempt to establish himself professionally as well as privately in his new home.³⁹ The portraits can be read as a testimony and contemporary document of a very close network of emigrated artists in New York exile, and can also be read as the first pictures—the first portraits—of their new home.

Photography as a creative medium in the context of exile

This essay analyzes how European emigrant photographers captured their first visual contacts shortly after their arrival in New York. In the works of Josef Breitenbach, Lisette Model, and Hermann Landshoff in the 1940s, American street photography was subjected to a reinterpretation of the arriving émigrés,

which is also seen in the context of their exile experiences. These first pictures are examples of creative and experimental first visual interpretations of the metropolis. Breitenbach, Model, and Landshoff chose their own photographic languages and styles and transferred their visual emotions into artistic images. It is crucial to remember that the experience of displacement and exile as an existential experience of crisis also carries with it the potential of failure and the stagnation of creativity and artistic expression. However, the media philosopher and photo theorist Vilém Flusser suggests a positive assessment of exile and seeks to refute the hypothesis that exile can only be evaluated negatively. In his 1984 essay “Exil und Kreativität,” he argues for a more positive reevaluation and defines exile as a breeding ground for creative acts, for the new.⁴⁰ In his subsequent book *The Freedom of a Migrant* (German version published in 1994), Flusser dedicates a whole chapter to this topic of exile and creativity, in which he views “exile as a challenge of creativity”⁴¹ and clarifies his reasons for this hypothesis. In exile, the émigrés were torn from their accustomed surroundings, customs, and habits, which they had known in their lives before emigration. Exile is, to them, “an ocean of chaotic information,” in which “the lack of redundancy does not allow the exile to receive this information.”⁴² To be able to live in their new homes, the émigrés must first transform the new information into meaningful messages and “must produce data.”⁴³ According to Flusser, processing data is synonymous with creation and therefore the émigrés must be creative.

One can therefore speak of creation of a dialogue process, in which either an internal or external dialogue takes place. The arrival of expellees in exile evokes external dialogues and a beehive of creativity spontaneously surrounds the expellee. He becomes the catalyst for the synthesis of new information. If, however, he becomes aware that his dignity resides in his rootlessness an inner dialogue develops that consists of an exchange between the information that he brought with him and the ocean of waves of information that wash about him in his exile. At this point he attempts to make creative sense of what he brought with him as well as of the chaos that surrounds him in the present. When such internal and external dialogues resonate with each other, not only the world but the settled inhabitants and expellees as well are transformed creatively.⁴⁴

Flusser argues that the new work in exile is created through creative dialogues, which can be characterized by a “cracking of the self and an opening to the other.”⁴⁵ These statements can certainly be applied to the examples of Josef Breitenbach, Lisette Model, and Hermann Landshoff presented in this paper. Combining familiar and appropriated photographic techniques, working methods, and genres, these three photographers created new creative and experimental views and articulations

of the city in their examination of urban life in exile. In his images *We New Yorkers* (Fig. 2) and *Victory Day Parade* (Fig. 3), Josef Breitenbach refers to surrealism, which he already knew from his years in Paris, although the urban architecture of New York and life in the big city also gave him new photographic impulses. As already demonstrated in her photographs of the beach promenade in Nice, Lisette Model chooses unusual perspectives and cutouts. Like Breitenbach, she visualizes the dynamics and anonymity of big-city life in the excerpts of the passing passersby in *Running Legs* (Fig. 4). Hermann Landshoff, on the other hand, attempts to visualize the parables of modern metropolitan photography and the architectural contrasts in Manhattan between modern and Gothic architecture through the use of infrared technology in his image *New York* (Fig. 5).

In a second step, these first pictures of Breitenbach, Model, and Landshoff can also be analyzed through Mary Louise Pratt's concept of contact zones. Pratt's concept of contact zones is defined as a term "to refer to social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in context of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today."⁴⁶ From a methodological-theoretical point of view, her concept, which originates from the field of postcolonial studies, could be transferred to migration and exile studies. Therefore, the social and urban spaces of emigrants could also be read as contact zones where different cultures, traditions, languages, as well as different artistic and photographic aesthetics, coincide. The photograph of Landshoff showing the gathering of exiled Surrealists at the home of Peggy Guggenheim clearly shows a social contact zone—the contact zone and network of emigrated artists in New York and, at the same time, referring to Flusser, the creative dialogue between the European and American art and art market characterized in the circle around Peggy Guggenheim (Fig. 6). Therefore, Hermann Landshoff, by taking this photograph, was also included in this social, cultural, and intellectual contact zone in exile. Beside networks and social groups as contact zones, which can be experienced through images by émigré photographers, the metropolis itself and urban life can be seen as a contact zone where modern aesthetics, architecture, and the social life were explored and visualized in different modalities. The photographs of Breitenbach, Model, and Landshoff are therefore examples of these varieties of urban contact zones (Figs. 2–5). In contrast to Peggy Guggenheim's home, which can be seen as a more private contact zone, the streets and architecture of New York City can be interpreted as a public contact zone, in which the exile life in the metropolis is expressed in photographs. For Breitenbach, Model, and Landshoff, New York as a city was itself a contact zone where they could express their first impressions by using different photographic techniques, cameras, and aesthetic modes of view. Consequently, they were also able to transform and manifest parables of metropolitan life such as anonymity,

mass accumulation of city crowds, and the specific architecture of New York. In a broader understanding of the concept of contact zones, the examples of Landshoff, Model, and Breitenbach reveal the close interdependence of European emigrants and their American colleagues; in the 1940s, these European emigrant artists were instrumental in establishing new artistic principles and interacted in new contact zones visualizing these encounters in their first pictures. Additionally, in the years following their arrivals, all three protagonists actively participated in the photography scene in New York both privately and professionally, establishing new photographic contact zones, such as working at the New School for Social Research, for the Photo League, or for magazines such as *Harper's Bazaar*.⁴⁷

In the context of the conference “Photography, Migration and Cultural Encounters in America,” this essay will contribute to a broader and new understanding of photography in the field of migration studies: even though forced emigration particularly leads to a turning point in artwork, the exilic career of these three photographers could also instigate new forms and techniques.⁴⁸ Above all, the modern urban space and the metropolitan life of New York opened up new creative photographic approaches, which they visualized in their first pictures. To conclude, photography can be read as a visual medium that émigrés could access without language barriers and problems of understanding as they were far away from their homeland; photography is also both linked to exile and articulates the artists' own artistic ideas. Photographer Andreas Feininger, who emigrated to New York in 1939, describes this as follows in his essay *A Philosophy of Photography*: “Photography – the language of vision – is my medium. Bridging the barriers of speech and alphabet, it is understood by everybody anywhere, making it the ideal means of universal communication, each picture a self-contained statement, short, precise and true.”⁴⁹ Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that not all emigrated photographers could quickly reestablish themselves in the professional field in their exile in New York. They could not always manage to prevail against the competition and start a productive career in their new home. In other cases, due to financial problems, they had to earn money in other areas or often their partners were the main earners. Finally, it should be emphasized that the work and life of many emigrants, apart from the photographic canon, is still inadequately researched.⁵⁰

Notes

1. In addition to the reportage on Ellis Island, from 1929 to 1932, Salomon spent several months in New York and the United States. For example, he was the first photographer who was allowed to take pictures in the White House and the Supreme Court in Washington, DC (see digitized photos in the estate of Erich Salomon, Berlinische

- Gallerie, Berlin). During the years of the Weimar Republic, he was considered one of the most famous photographers, who repeatedly succeeded in capturing well-known personalities from politics and society in unobserved moments. See *Erich Salomon. "Mit Frack und Linse durch die Politik und Gesellschaft." Photographien 1928–1938*, eds. Janos Frecot et al. (Berlin: Berlinische Galerie, 2004), catalogue of an exhibition at Berlinische Galerie. Berlin.
2. Anonymous, "Die Gefangenen der Weltkrise. Bei den unerwünschten Einwanderern und Deportierten auf Ellis Island im Hafen von New York," in *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, vol. 41, no. 20 (May 22, 1932), 630; Barry Moreno, *Images of America. Ellis Island* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing).
 3. Roland H. Bayor, *Encountering Ellis Island. How European Immigrants Entered America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 2014), 22ff.
 4. Salomon, who was Jewish, fled Germany for the Netherlands in 1932 and continued to work as a freelance photojournalist, traveling in England, France, and Switzerland until the Nazis occupied Holland in 1940. In 1943, he was imprisoned and deported; he died at Auschwitz in 1944.
 5. For further publications on New York as an arrival city and emigration destination, see Claus Dieter-Krohn, "Vereinigete Staaten von Amerika," in Claus Dieter-Krohn (ed.), *Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration 1933–1945* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1998), 446–466; Michael Winkler, "Metropole New York," in Claus Dieter-Krohn et al. (eds.), *Exilforschung. Ein internationales Jahrbuch. Metropolen des Exils*, Vol. 20 (Munich: Edition text + kritik, 2002), 178–198. For publications in the context of exile and photography, see Claus-Dieter Krohn et al., *Exilforschung. Ein internationales Jahrbuch, Film und Fotografie*, Vol. 21 (Munich: Edition text + kritik, 2003); Hanno Loewy, "Fotografie," in Dan Diner et al. (eds.), *Enzyklopädie jüdischer Geschichte und Kultur, Band Co–Ha 2* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2011), 362; Sybil Milton, "The Refugee Photographers, 1933–1945," in Helmut F. Pfanner (ed.), *Kulturelle Wechselbeziehungen im Exil – Exile across Cultures* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1986), symposium on German and Austrian Exile Literature at the University of New Hampshire March 7–March 10, 1985, Bonn 1986, 279–293; Irme Schaber, "Fotografie," in Claus Dieter-Krohn et al. (eds.), *Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration 1933–1945* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1998), 970–983, here 978.
 6. Erwin Blumenfeld, *Eye to I. The Autobiography of a Photographer. Erwin Blumenfeld* (London: Thames & Hudson 1999), 233. This edition of his autobiography accompanies photographs taken at various stages of Blumenfeld's emigration, such as a still life with self-portrait in Paris, and a view through the slats of blinds on the New York skyline in 1939; see 229, 351. In 1922 Blumenfeld opened his leather goods shop, the Fox Leather Company, in the Kalverstraat in Amsterdam; the company failed in 1935. During this time, he taught himself photography. Deciding to become a professional photographer, he moved to Paris in 1936, where his images were published in mag-

- azines such as *Vogue*. After the outbreak of WWII, he was placed in an internment camp. In 1941, he was able to emigrate to the United States, where he lived in a flat at the Hotel des Artistes (67th street) and shared a studio with the emigrated photographer Martin Munkácsi.
7. Photographers who emigrated to New York included, for example, Alfred Eisens-taedt, Andreas Feininger, Martin Munkácsi, Ilse Bing, Erwin Blumenfeld, and André Kertész. See *Und sie haben Deutschland verlassen ... müssen. Fotografen und ihre Bilder 1928–1997*, ed. Klaus Honnef (Bonn: Rheinisches Landesmuseum Bonn, 1997), catalogue of an exhibition at Rheinisches Landesmuseum Bonn, Bonn 1997. Many of these photographers found work in the field of photojournalism, as well as in fashion and portrait photography.
 8. For photography in the context of the city of New York, see: Quentin Bajac, et al., *Photography at MoMA: 1920–1960* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2016); Max Kozloff (ed.), *New York Capital of Photography* (New York: The Jewish Museum, 2002), catalogue of an exhibition at The Jewish Museum, New York 2002; Ortrud Westheider et al. (ed.), *New York Photography 1890–1950. Von Stieglitz bis Man Ray* (Hamburg: Bucerius Kunst Forum, 2012), catalogue of an exhibition at Bucerius Kunst Forum, Hamburg 2012; Jane Livingstone, *The New York School Photographs 1936–1963* (New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 1992).
 9. This article is based on research by the author and is part of her dissertation project on New York as an exilic photographic city within the ERC Consolidator Grant “Relocating Modernism: Global Metropolises, Modern Art and Exile (METROMOD)” at the LMU Munich (2017–2022), www.metromod.net.
 10. It is not clear if Breitenbach, Landshoff, and Model knew each other in Paris. See: Larisa Dryansky (ed.), *Josef Breitenbach, 1896–1984. Une photographie impure* (Paris: Musée Nicéphore Niépce, 2001), catalogue of an exhibition at Musée Niépce de Chalon-sur-Saône, Paris 2001; Monika Faber et al. (eds.), *Lisette Model. Fotografien 1934–1960* (Vienna: Kunsthalle Vienna, 2000), catalogue of an exhibition at Kunsthalle Vienna, Vienna 2000, 12; Ulrich Pohlmann: “I owe everything to Landshoff”, in Ulrich Pohlmann et al. (eds.), *Hermann Landshoff. Portrait, Mode, Architektur. Retrospektive 1930–1970*, (Munich: Stadtmuseum München, 2013), catalogue of an exhibition at Münchner Stadtmuseum – Sammlung Fotografie, Munich 2013, 15–45.
 11. Lisette married Evsa Model, a Jewish Nicéphore Painter of Russian origin, in 1937 in Paris. See Marianne Le Pommeré, *Evsá Model. Peintre Américain* (Paris: Éditions Norma, 2010).
 12. After their ship passages from France to New York, each of these photographers could restart,—although each in a different way—their careers as photographers. Landshoff continued after a short break to take fashion photographs for well-known magazines such as *Harper’s Bazaar*. Breitenbach succeeded in opening his own photo studio near Central Park and gave lectures at the New School for Social Research, where Lisette

- Model was his colleague. Besides teaching at the New School and the Photo League, Model also worked for magazines and was very well connected in the American photography scene.
13. Vilém Flusser, "Exil und Kreativität," in *Spuren – Zeitschrift für Kunst und Gesellschaft*, 7, (Dec./Jan. 1984–1985), 5–9; Mary Louise Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone," in *Profession* (1991), 33–40.
 14. Kelly George, "Josef Breitenbach," in *Und sie haben Deutschland verlassen ... müssen*, 23; Imke Wartenberg: "Die Straße neu gesehen," in *New York Photography 1890–1950*, 234f.
 15. The image, and Breitenbach's attribution to American society, can be interpreted as an alternative to Hannah Arendt's reflections as an emigrant. In 1943, she published the article "We Refugees," in which she wrote about the political self-understanding of the terms refugee, emigrant, and exile in the context of their own Jewish exile experiences. Hannah Arendt, "We Refugees," *Menorah Journal*, 31, no. 1 (1943), 69–77.
 16. *Josef Breitenbach, 1896–1984. Une photographie impure*, 101.
 17. See Ludger Derenthal, "Paris 1933–1941. Porträts und Experimente," in T.O. Immisch et al. (eds.), *Josef Breitenbach. Photographien zum 100. Geburtstag* (Munich: Staatliche Galerie Moritzburg, 2001), catalogue of an exhibition at Staatliche Galerie Moritzburg Saale, Munich 1996, 76–83; Keith Holz and Wolfgang Schopf, *Im Auge des Exils: Josef Breitenbach und die Freie Deutsche Kultur in Paris 1933–1944* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 2001), 138.
 18. The Victory in Europe Day (V-E Day) denotes the end of WWII in Europe on May 8, 1945.
 19. Corporation of Trinity Church (ed.), *A Guide Book to Trinity Church and the Parish of Trinity Church in the City of New York* (New York: Corporation of Trinity Church 1944/1950), 53ff., here 54.
 20. Quite similar shots exist from the emigrated photographer Robert Haas, who also took an image of the festivities from of his window and on the streets of New York together with photographer and friend Trude Fleischmann. See Anton Holzer et al. (eds.), *Robert Haas. Der Blick auf zwei Welten* (Berlin: Wien Museum, 2016) catalogue of an exhibition at Wien Museum 2016, 176ff.
 21. Kelly George, "New York 1941–1984," in T.O. Immisch et al. (eds.), *Josef Breitenbach. Photographien zum 100. Geburtstag*, 120. English translation (original German quote: "Auch wenn das Bild in dem Sinne realistisch ist, daß die Szene nicht manipuliert oder konstruiert ist, kann man es als surrealistisch klassifizieren").
 22. Josef Breitenbach was employed at the New School from 1949 to 1975. See George, "New York 1941–1984," 125f. As a liberal institution, the New School was an important professional hub for European exiles in the arts and sciences. See Claus-Dieter Krohn, *Intellectuals in exile: refugee scholars and the New School for Social Research* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993).

23. Christina Zelich (ed.), *Lisette Model* (Madrid: Fundación Mapfre, 2009), catalogue of an exhibition at the Fundación Mapfre, Madrid, 2009, 19. Model started her professional career in the studio of the photographer Florence Henri in Paris, where she also came in contact with the stylistic techniques of the Surrealists and the Bauhaus.
24. Monika Faber et al. (eds.), *Lisette Model. Fotografien 1934–1960*, 24.
25. Since 1929, the medium format twin lens reflex camera, Rolleiflex, which was also equipped with a roll of film, was available in Europe. During the 1930s, it was a popular user-friendly reportage camera for many photographers. See Walther Heering, *The Golden book of the Rolliflex* (Harzburg: Heering-Verlag, 1936); Fritz Henle, *Fritz Henle's Guide to Rollei Photography* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1956).
26. Lisette Model, "Pictures as Art. Instructor Defines Creative Photography As Scientific Eye That Captures Life," *The New York Times*, December 9, 1951, 143.
27. See Stephanie Barron, "European artists in exile," in Stephanie Barron et al. (eds.), *Exile + émigrés. The flight of European artists from Hitler* (New York: Los Angeles County Museum of Art 1997), catalogue of an exhibition at Los Angeles County Museum of Art 1997, Los Angeles 1997, 11–29; Sabine Eckmann, "Exil und Modernismus: Theoretische und methodische Überlegungen zum künstlerischen Exil der 1930er- und 1940er-Jahre," in Burcu Dogramaci (ed.), *Migration und künstlerische Produktion. Aktuelle Perspektiven* (Bielefeld: Transcript Press, 2013), 23–42; Megan R. Luke, "The trace of transfer," in Frauke V. Josenhans (ed.), *Artists in Exile. Expressions of Loss and Hope* (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 2017), catalogue of an exhibition at Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven 2017, 129–141.
28. From 1941, the photographs of Lisette Model were shown in exhibitions at MoMA. See George Steeves (ed.), *Lisette Model. A Performance in Photography* (Halifax: Mount Saint Vincent University Art Gallery, 2011), catalogue of an exhibition at Mount Saint Vincent University Art Gallery, Halifax 2011, 23ff.
29. Alexey Brodovitch also emigrated to New York in 1934 and worked as the art director for the magazine *Harper's Bazaar*, which received a new design under his direction. See Kerry William Purcell, *Alexey Brodovitch* (New York: PRESS, 2002); Livingston, *The New York School Photographs*, 289–295.
30. T.O. Immisch et al. (eds.), *Joseph Breitenbach. Photographien zum 100. Geburtstag*, 210.
31. Hermann Landshoff, *Autograph* (n.p.: unpublished, 1939/1949), 327. Located in the estate of Hermann Landshoff in the Photography Collection at the Munich City Museum. Original German: "Große Sehnsucht, die Freiheitsstatue am Eingang des New Yorker Hafens zu passieren. Sie ist von neuem für viele Bewohner der Alten Welt zum lebendigen Sinnbild erwacht, zu etwas Konkreten, zu einem Lebensstil."
32. According to Ulrich Pohlmann, the director of the Photography Collection at the Munich City Museum, the infrared photography technique could be verified by restorative examinations. For a detailed explanation of infrared photography, see Eastman Kodak Company (ed.), *Applied infrared photography* (Rochester: Eastman Kodak

- Co, 1987); Joseph Paduano, *The Art of infrared photography: a comprehensive guide to the use of black & white infrared film* (Amherst: Amherst Media, 1995). In the American photography magazine *Popular Photography*, there are also more articles about the technology and practice of infrared photography in the 1940s. Therefore, when Landshoff arrived in New York, this photographic process was not an unknown technique in America; it's possible that the existing practice may have even have inspired him. See *Popular Photography*, 3, no. 1 (July 1939), 30f; *Popular Photography*, 6, no. 5 (May 1940), 24f, 99–103; *Popular Photography*, 12, no. 5 (May 1943), 30f, 82f; *Popular Photography* 21, no. 3 (September 1947), 59f, 145–149.
33. Raoul Hausmann, *Fotografisches Sehen. Schriften zur Photographie 1921–1968* (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2016), 395. The English translation of Hausmann's original German quote is by the author (original quote: "Photograph anders, umfanglicher und spezieller zugleich geschult sein [muss] als bisher. Er muss viele Dinge und Materialien in ihrer Wirkung auf die photochemischen Schichten kennen lernen [...] Hier vor allem hat der Photograph zu lernen: das beste Mittel der Darstellung ist der detailreiche Kontrastbereich"). Raoul Hausmann wrote his own book on infrared photography, which was not published during his lifetime. In 1939, he transferred the rights to László Moholy-Nagy, hoping to establish an institute for infrared photography at the School of Design in Chicago. However, the plans, as well as the emigration, failed, see Bernd Stiegler, "Nachwort. Fotografisches Sehen," in Raoul Hausmann, *Fotografisches Sehen. Schriften zur Photographie 1921–1968* (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2016), 509–540, here 540.
 34. Ulrich Pohlmann et al. (eds.), *Hermann Landshoff. Portrait, Mode, Architektur. Retrospektive 1930–1970*, 73ff.
 35. Gaëlle Morel, "New York-Paris-New York. The photographic Modernism of Berenice Abbott", in *Berenice Abbott (1898–1991)*, ed. Gaëlle Morel et al. (New Haven: Jeu de Paume de Paris, 2012), catalogue of an exhibition at Jeu de Paume de Paris, Ryerson Image Center at the Art Gallery of Ontario, 2012, 10–52.
 36. Peggy Guggenheim, *Confessions of an Art Addict* (London: André Deutsch, 1960), 95–137. The dates of Hermann Landshoff's individual and group portraits coincide with the opening of Peggy Guggenheim's gallery museum Art of this Century in the fall of 1942.
 37. Ulrich Pohlmann et al. (eds.), *Hermann Landshoff. Portrait, Mode, Architektur. Retrospektive 1930–1970*, 76ff.
 38. Ulrich Pohlmann et al. (eds.), *Hermann Landshoff. Portrait, Mode, Architektur. Retrospektive 1930–1970*, 137–169.
 39. Franziska Dunkel, "Hermann Landshoff – Karrierebrüche eines Photographen," in *Zu Unrecht Vergessen. Künstler in Munich des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, Präsidenten und Direktorium der Bayerischen Akademie der Schönen Künste (ed.), (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2009), 105–123.

40. Flusser, "Exil und Kreativität," 9.
41. Vilém Flusser, *The Freedom of the Migrant: Objections to Nationalism*, trans. Kenneth Kronenber (Urbana/Chicago/Springfield: University of Illinois Press, [1994] 2003), 81–87, here 81.
42. Flusser, *The Freedom of the Migrant*, 81.
43. Flusser, *The Freedom of the Migrant*, 81.
44. Flusser, *The Freedom of the Migrant*, 86.
45. Flusser, "Exil und Kreativität," 9 (English Translation by the author of the original quote: "ein Aufknacken des ‚Selbst‘ und ein Öffnen hin zum anderen")
46. Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone," 34.
47. Hermann Landshoff worked as a fashion photographer at *Harper's Bazaar*, *Junior Bazaar*, and *Mademoiselle*. Lisette Model and Josef Breitenbach also executed commissioned works for these magazines. All three protagonists also achieved artistic recognition in exhibitions at Helen Gee's Limelight Gallery and the Museum of Modern Art, for example, in 1944 in the exhibition *Art in Progress*. See Ulrich Pohlmann et al. (eds.), *Hermann Landshoff*, 15–47; Livingston, *The New York School Photographs*, 298–302; *New York Photography*, 53–61.
48. Burcu Dogramaci (ed.), *Netzwerke des Exils. Künstlerische Verflechtungen, Austausch und Patronage nach 1933* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 2011), 14.
49. Andreas Feininger, *A Philosophy of Photography* (n.p.: unpublished, 1992), Andreas Feininger Archive, Center for Creative Photography, The University of Arizona Library, AG 53:13.
50. Some indications of the lack of research on émigré photographers can be found, for example, in the publications of Holzer, *Robert Haas*; Dieter-Krohn, *Exilforschung*; Milton, *The Refugee Photographers* as well as in the exhibition catalogues *Artists in Exile. Expressions of Loss and Hope*; *Exiles + émigrés*; and *Und sie haben Deutschland verlassen müssen*.



Plate 10: Josef Breitenbach, *We New Yorkers*, 1942, 38.4 x 30.5 cm (Fig. 2, p. 115). inv.-no. FM 96/3-33
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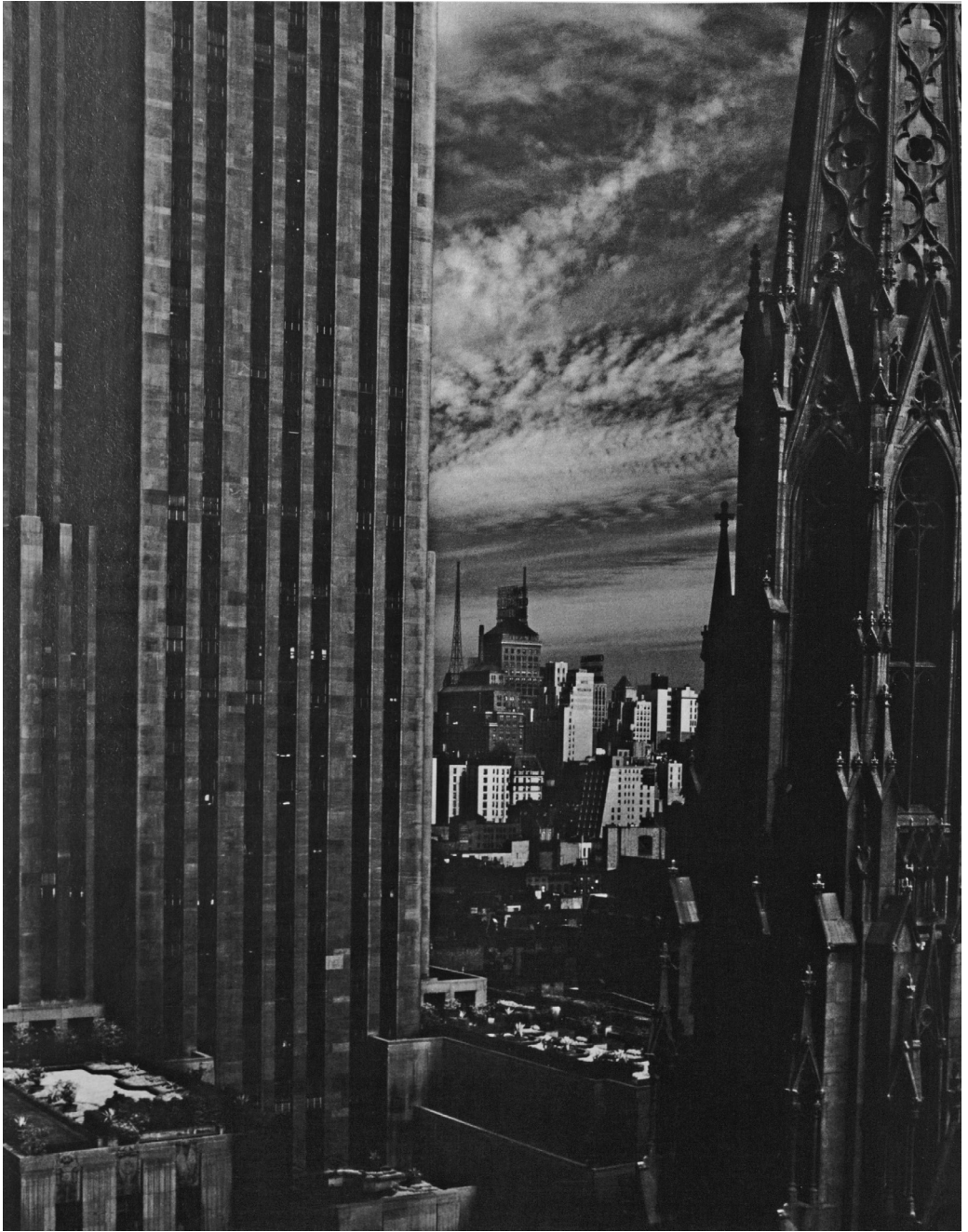


Plate 11: Hermann Landshoff, *New York*, 1941, 29.4 x 24.2 cm (Fig. 5, p. 121). inv.no. FM-2012/200.99
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