

# THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

NY CULTURE

## Capturing the City as an Empty Canvas

Photography Exhibitions of Duane Michals, Yojiro Imasaka, and Lee Friedlander and Milt Hinton

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**DC Moore Gallery**  
535 W. 22nd St.  
(212) 247-2111  
Through May 31

Duane Michals (b. 1932) is well known for his story sequences, series of little surreal images that relate fictional anecdotes with his handwritten captions underneath. The exhibition at Moore is a prequel to those stories: In 1962, Mr. Michals came across a book of Eugène Atget's photographs of turn-of-the-century Paris and set about taking similar pictures in New York. Mr. Michals went out early on Sunday mornings and shot the empty streets, empty stores and empty subway cars; he shot shop windows and the backs of billboards. "I had become Atget's apprentice," he says. The 30 black-and-white prints on display show a hushed city, familiar but preternaturally still.



A photograph of a laundromat (c. 1964) that is part of Duane Michals's 'Empty New York' series. *Duane Michals/DC Moore Gallery, New York*

There is a Coney Island roller coaster without screams. An empty laundromat with the opposing rows of washing machines awaiting the week's dirty clothes. A window crammed with women's shoes (very Atget). A bar, a kosher butcher shop and a grocery store, all with no one about. A barber's towel is draped over the arm of a classic barber's chair in a classic barbershop, but no one is reflected in the row of mirrors. A vinyl banquettes in a diner awaits trade.

The outdoor pictures were taken with overcast skies so the light is diffused; there are no shadows, which suggests that even time is standing still. Nothing is happening, but, said Mr. Michals, "Everywhere seemed a stage set." So his next project was to people these empty spaces with his existential dramas.