

## ANN TREER

Ann Treer was born in Vienna in 1922. Her father was Hungarian and when the child was four years old her mother began a career as an opera singer whose engagements took them from country to country. Her education began in boarding schools and in a small vilage in Yugoslavia where she was taught by her ex-school-director grandfather. At the age of ten she was brought back to Vienna to begin four years of Real-Gymnasium and three years in convent schools. She was fourteen when she began the study of English at a girls' college in Prague and received a diploma to teach privately. In 1938, when all foreigners were expelled from Prague, her father took her to Budapest where she learned Hungarian and indulged hopes of becoming a comedienne. It was in Hungary that she spent the years of the Second World War, though there was a year or so in tourist hotels in Slovakia spent in working at poster, fashion and theatre costume design. She also began to write stories in Hungarian some of which were published and others were rejected because of their anti-war propaganda. Abandoning writing, she worked briefly as a movie extra. She survived until after the Russian occupation, then went to Italy where she met the man who became her first husband. Attracted by the possibilities of Australia, they went there. A number of jobs followed and it was while employed as a draftsman in Sydney that she became involved with photography. Her trials as a commercial photographer - if sometimes amusing - formed an arduous early training, but she endured them, despite many prejudices, among them suspicions about the legitimacy of enlarging and spotting.

In 1954 she came to New York. After asking her husband for a divorce she decided to stay. Then began her establishment in the United States via commercial photography and designing. For one semester she studied with Sid Grossman and again for a few weeks before his death. She has written: "I didn't understand a thing he said about pictures, but found out years later that it had worked on my subconscious, or something, just as he had predicted. Am still puzzled about rumors about his cruel and destructive ways with students; must have had semantic blocks against his verbal death rays, if there were such. . . . In the meanwhile learned printing the hard way - at night, with bathroom setups, driven by the principle of 'high craftsmanship or bust'. Am still hostile to young gifted photographers who bat out a 30 or 40 print show in a couple of days (having commercial darkroom experience) because even if I can't find fault with their prints, I find this extremely unfair. It takes me three to four hours to come to my final print of a negative, and in a whole night I can tackle two or three negatives maximum - with five or six acceptable prints each. I still think of 'fast looking' as 'shallow looking' and see no reason to change my ways. Of course I'll never get a job in a commercial lab again".

When David Vestal, the photographer-writer-teacher started teaching she studied with him. They have been married for several years and at present live in Brooklyn. Ann Treer's work is represented in the permanent collection of The Museum of Modern Art and it has been shown in a one-man exhibition at the Architectural League. Portfolios have been published in Infinity and Popular Photography. Her last assignment was for a Federal project on roads and highways in the city and she chose the George Washington bridge and its approaches.

This is the first one-man show of her work in the Middle West. From hundreds of prints of such high quality and rare subject matter it was difficult indeed to make a selection that would give a fair view of the scope and character of their maker and her admirable practice of unadorned, direct photography. Behind each of the prints shown may be sensed the rewards of conscientious work and the Odyssey of a modern human being who despite the inconsequential, illogical shiftings of her time has never allowed her singularity and identity to become weakened. Her work is a complex total which reflects in each of its details an awareness of the extraordinary in all things and the mysterious meaning it may have for others.