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LISA RUYTER MINES CLASSIC AMERICANA PHOTOS IN NEW PAINTINGS AT ELEVEN RIVINGTON

By Brian Boucher



Lisa Ruyter, *Louise Rosskam: Washington, D.C. Canning Class conducted by the Mother's Club at the Barney neighborhood houses, Southwest Washington, 2015*, acrylic on canvas. Courtesy Eleven Rivington, New York.

Painter Lisa Ruyter is back for her first New York solo show in nine years, and she's making a strong return at Eleven Rivington, on New York's Lower East Side.

To create her colorful, smart new paintings, she has mined the nearly 200,000 classic black-and-white Depression-era pictures in the Library of Congress' Farm Security Administration/Office of War Information archive, which includes photographers such as Walker Evans and Dorothea Lange. The new works, though, breathe new life into some of the archive's more obscure images. The show (through July 3) encompasses both the gallery's venues, on Rivington and Christie Streets.



Lisa Ruyter, *Russell Lee: Mother and child of agricultural laborers encamped near Spiro, Sequoyah County, Oklahoma, 2015*, acrylic on canvas. Courtesy Eleven Rivington, New York.

In a large canvas that dominates the Rivington Street gallery, nine zaftig women congregate in a kitchen behind a table covered with Mason jars. The photo shows a canning class taking place in Washington D.C., but with the women all facing the viewer, it's almost like a Depression-era last supper.

The use of existing sources departs from Ruyter's longstanding practice of painting her own photographs. In an artist statement, she expresses some trepidation about the appropriation, though the photos were created for public use; in tribute to their makers, each painting's title includes the name of the photographer.

The photography project was part of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, and was active from 1935-1943, but more than half of the images became available online only in the 1990s. Ruyter has selected images of women in patterned clothing as well as shots of sites where the

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government collected scrap metal for the war effort. As the artist told artnet News, these drives were, as much as anything, events designed to inspire collective patriotic action across the heartland.

The photography project itself, Ruyter pointed out, started its life as part of the government agency known as the Resettlement Administration. During World War II, she said, it became part of the Office of War Information, an even more propagandistic enterprise.

Ruyter has lived in Vienna since leaving New York in 2003. She was previously a director at New York's Team Gallery, and subsequently opened her own gallery in the Austrian capital. She earned a BFA from New York's School of Visual Arts in 1990 and has had nearly three dozen solo exhibitions since then, including at Paris' Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, Arndt & Partner in Berlin, Los Angeles' Ace Gallery, and Leo Koenig, New York.