



Third Avenue El

Date

1936 (printed 1979)

Primary Maker

Berenice Abbott

Medium

gelatin silver print

Description

Elevated railways were first built in 1867 as an experiment, and then extended piecemeal around the city. A popular and essential means of transportation, sooty, steam powered trains circled and crisscrossed Manhattan on tracks, making the upper reaches of Manhattan accessible to the lower, and encouraging real estate development. Originally, the subway (the first

section of underground, electrified tracks opened in 1904) connected to the elevated tracks, which towered above the avenues. It was not until the 1940s, by which time an expanded subway system serviced the rest of New York's boroughs, that EIs were phased out, permanently altering Manhattan's cityscape. Berenice Abbott's use of black and white is especially effective in this composition, which, even as it preserves evidence of a disappearing rail system, also investigates abstract form.

Dimensions

Sight: 19 1/8 x 15 1/4 in. (48.6 x 38.7 cm) Mat: 30 x 24 in. (76.2 x 61 cm)