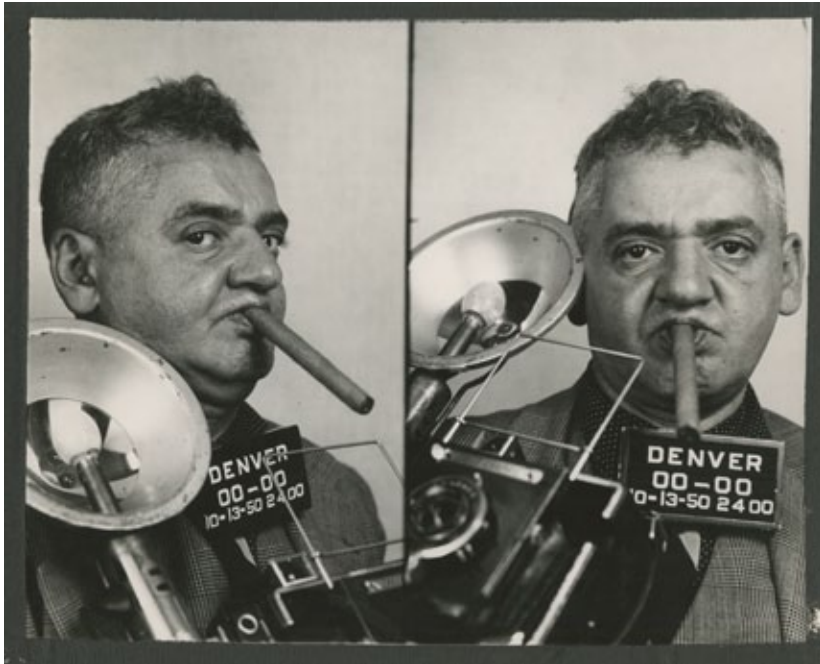


WEEGEE



Autopsy of the Spectacle

Fundación
MAPFRE



Cover: Charles Sodokoff and Arthur Webber Use Their Top Hats to Hide Their Faces, New York, January 26th 1942.
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Self-Portrait with Speed Graphic Camera, October 13th 1950.
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Arthur H. Fellig, known by his pseudonym Weegee (Zolochiv, 1899–New York, 1968) was an immensely popular artist thanks to the news photographs he took in New York in the 1930s and 1940s that were published in the city’s tabloids for which he worked: corpses, fires, detainees in police wagons, etc. But Weegee had another group of works which, at first glance, might seem diametrically opposed to his reportage: the photos and photo-caricatures of celebrities created in Hollywood between 1948 and 1951. Critics highlighted the opposition between these two periods, praising the former and rejecting the latter. *Weegee: Autopsy of the Spectacle* attempts to reconcile both bodies of work by showing that, stylistic differences aside, they are fundamentally consistent

in their portrayal of the “society of the spectacle” which was taking shape in the United States at that time.

In his early years, the artist photographed lurid, violent subjects, but those shots were often deeply ironic and exposed the “spectacular” nature of the depicted events. His images were printed in newspapers, and Weegee often included spectators or fellow photographers—individuals gawking at a traffic accident or murder scene—in the fore or background of his compositions. In a consistent manner, during the second part of his career the artist mocked the Hollywood spectacle: the short-lived fame, the adoring crowds who flocked to see “celebrities”, and the banal society scene. Weegee personally edited and altered these ironic, satirical images in the lab, anticipating the theories of the Situationist International and the critique of the society of the spectacle and its commodification, and always acted in consonance with his own political convictions.

Holiday Accident in the Bronx, July 30th 1941.
© International Center of Photography.





Man Arrested for Cross-Dressing, New York, ca. 1939.
© International Center of Photography. Louis Stettner Archives, Paris.



Anthony Esposito, Booked on Suspicion of Killing a Policeman, New York, January 16th 1941.
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The exhibition curated by Clément Chéroux, director of Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson, features over one hundred photographs and a variety of documentary material. With a new perspective on Weegee's oeuvre, the itinerary is divided into three sections and offers a sweeping overview of his work.

The exhibition has been organised by Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson in partnership with Fundación MAPFRE.



Afternoon Crowd at Coney Island, July 21st 1940.

© International Center of Photography.

Courtesy Galerie Berinson, Berlin

KEY THEMES

High-impact photographs: Some of Weegee's photographs were veritable "visual punches". This is true of the pictures he took of murders, corpses, fires and prisoners during the years spent covering crimes and accidents in New York, as well as of his later work, like the series showing circus artist Egle Zacchini being fired from a cannon at a speed of 100 metres per second, or his photo-caricatures of Marilyn Monroe, President Kennedy and other prominent personalities.

His images almost always had a powerful impact on viewers, making them think not only about the scene they were contemplating but also about how they were looking at it.

The society of the spectacle: First published in 1967, *Society of the Spectacle* is one of the most important books by the philosopher Guy Debord, founding member of the



The Critic, New York, November 22nd 1943.

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Situationist International. It paints an incisive portrait of contemporary society, presumably replaced by its represented image. Throughout the work, Debord critically exposes the theory and practice of the spectacle, explaining how it governs our experience of time, history, goods, territory and happiness. In the twenty-first century, when immediacy reigns supreme, Debord's ideas resound as the severest, most lucid assessment of the meanness and bondage of a society—the society of the spectacle—in which we all live.

Critique of the society of the spectacle: Class consciousness and empathy for the disadvantaged permeate Weegee's work, as he never forgot his humble beginnings. Yet his most famous images are snapshots of accidents, fires and murders, in which he underscores the idea that bystanders are also spectators of the tragedies they contemplate,



Self-Portrait, ca. 1963.
© International Center of Photography.



Charlie Chaplin, Distortion, ca. 1950.
© International Center of Photography



"Il Fotografo cattivo", *Epoca*, vol. XIII, n° 636, december 1962
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Collection privée Paris

watching a scene in much the same way as cinema-goers watch Hollywood films (which are not all that different to the events captured by Weegee's camera). He also used trick photography to critique the image of actors, singers, broadcasters, politicians and other public figures.

Weegee's "satires", as he called them, were visionary, appearing several years before the Situationist International first posited its theories. As Clément Chéroux, curator of the exhibition, has pointed out, during his first period in New York, Weegee proved that the tabloids were selling news as a spectacle, and after 1945 he exposed how the media system radically spectacularised celebrities.

Curator

Clément Chéroux
Director de la Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson

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Fechas

From September 19, 2024
to January 5, 2025

Opening times

Mondays (except public holidays):
2 pm to 8 pm
Tuesdays to Saturdays:
11 am to 8 pm
Sundays
and public holidays: 11 am to 7 pm
(Last access: 30 minutes
before closing time.
Visitors must leave the galleries
10 minutes before closing time)

Ticket prices

Standard: 5 €
Reduced: 3 €
Free entry: Mondays (except public holidays)

Commented tour

Brief explanation of the main artistic aspects
of the exhibition and its most outstanding works.

Hours:

Wednesdays and Thursdays: 5 pm to 8 pm
Fridays and Saturdays: 12 am to 2 pm
and 5 pm to 8 pm
Sundays and holidays: 12 am to 2 pm
No additional cost upon entry. Information
at reception desk

Audio guide

4 €. Spanish and English

Bookshop

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Fundación MAPFRE  **Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson**

Exhibition is organized by the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson with the collaboration of Fundación MAPFRE.
Curated by Clément Chéroux, Director of the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson.