



**The International Center of Photography Presents
*Weegee: Society of the Spectacle***

The International Center of Photography | 84 Ludlow Street, New York
On View January 23-May 5, 2025
Opening January 23, 5-8PM



Weegee, *Photographers at Premier*, c.1951. © International Center of Photography/Getty Images

The International Center of Photography (ICP) is pleased to announce *Weegee: Society of the Spectacle*, an exhibition presented in partnership with Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson, Paris and curated by Clément Chéroux, Director of the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson.

This exhibition revisits Weegee's bold, boundary-pushing perspective and celebrates his pioneering role in documenting spectacle, from crime and tragedy on New York City's streets to distorted portraits of iconic Hollywood celebrities. The exhibition will be accompanied by a new publication created by the Fondation and Thames & Hudson that explores the impact of Weegee's art and his critical view of urban spectacle. ICP is excited to present the new English-language edition of this important study of Weegee's work.

Weegee: Society of the Spectacle marks the sixth major presentation of Weegee's work at ICP and the first since it relocated to Manhattan's Lower East Side neighborhood, the very same one that Weegee transformed into an urban stage in his photographs. The exhibition arrives at a time when his commentary on the blurred lines between reality and performance and news and entertainment feel newly relevant and urgent in the age of smartphones and viral media where every individual has become both a voyeur and a consumer of spectacle.

Drawn largely from ICP's Weegee collection, itself comprised of his entire studio archive and also the most comprehensive holdings of the photographer's work in the world, *Weegee: Society of the Spectacle* is a re-examination of the photographer's visual commentary on the society of his time, connecting his early career documenting New York City streets to his later work in Hollywood's glamorized world of celebrity and working with experimental image distortions. Long regarded as two distinct periods in his career, the works in *Weegee: Society of the Spectacle* challenge this division by underscoring how Weegee's exploration of spectacle persisted across different contexts—from crime scenes and fires to red carpet premieres. Weegee's masterful depiction of the 'society of spectators' captures both the unfiltered, everyday urban experience and the glossy allure of fame.

"While he may never have imagined the centrality of images to contemporary life, Weegee's provocative and prescient perspective on urban life forces us to reflect on how we now exist simultaneously as both consumers and the consumed," **Elisabeth Sherman, Senior Curator and Director of Exhibitions and Collections at ICP, said.** "In an age where technology and constant image sharing shape our reality, Weegee's work challenges us to reconsider the camera's role not only as a witness but as an active participant in the creation of spectacle."

Clément Chéroux, Director at Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson, stated, "Weegee's works highlight his ability to capture life's extremes, from high society to the underworld. Often working at night, Weegee's images of crime, fire and urban unrest reveal the harsh realities of 1930s and 1940s New York. His later shift to Hollywood did not distance him from this focus on spectacle but rather amplified his satirical approach, as he created playful distortions of celebrities that critiqued the American obsession with fame."

The exhibition will highlight three recurring themes in Weegee's work. **The Spectacle of the News** focuses on his nighttime photos of crime scenes, car accidents and fires, where the onlookers are as important as the events themselves. **The Society of Spectators** shows Weegee's lens turned towards the people on the fringes of the main action—from high-society parties to street scenes—emphasizing that spectatorship is part of the spectacle. **Hollywood Distortions** highlights Weegee's later years, which saw him experiment with techniques that

satirized Hollywood stars and the world of celebrity through exaggerated photo-caricatures, offering a pointed critique of the culture of fame.

The publication accompanying the exhibition, *Weegee: Society of the Spectacle*, further explores these themes, presenting essays by leading photography scholars including Clément Chéroux, Isabelle Bonnet, David Company and Cynthia Young alongside rare archival material that deepens the viewer's understanding of Weegee's complex legacy. The book, published by Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson and Thames & Hudson, will be available for purchase at ICP's bookstore and through select retailers.

For more information, visit icp.org.

Exhibition Support

Weegee: Society of the Spectacle is curated by Clément Chéroux, Director of the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson, Paris.

The exhibition is generously supported by the Trellis Charitable Fund, the National Endowment for the Arts and ICP Exhibitions Committee members - Luana Alesio, Deborah Brown, Romy Cohen, Marguerite Gelfman, Vasant Nayak, Elizabeth Rea, Benita Sakin, Magali Smith, Helena Sokoloff and Richard Stern.

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About The International Center of Photography

The International Center of Photography (ICP) is the world's leading institution dedicated to photography and visual culture. Cornell Capa founded ICP in 1974 to champion "concerned photography"—socially and politically minded images that can educate and change the world. Through exhibitions, education programs, community outreach, and public programs, ICP offers an open forum for dialogue about the power of the image. Since its inception, ICP has presented more than 700 exhibitions, provided thousands of classes, and hosted a wide variety of public programs. ICP launched its new integrated center at 84 Ludlow Street on Manhattan's Lower East Side in January 2020. ICP pays respect to the original stewards of this land, the

Lenape people, and other Indigenous communities. Visit icp.org to learn more about the museum and its programs.

About Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson

Established by Henri Cartier-Bresson, his wife Martine Franck and their daughter Mélanie, the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson opened its doors in Paris in May 2003. Recognized as a leading public interest organization, the Fondation is committed to sharing the work of its two founding artists through the organizing of exhibitions in France and around the world, in collaboration with the most prestigious institutions. For twenty years, the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson has established itself as a leading photographic institution, thanks to its unique exhibition programme featuring its own collection and the work of other artists.

The Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson actively supports contemporary photographic practices through its grantmaking and awards including the HCB Prize given every two years, as well as the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson Honorary Award celebrating its recipient's entire career.



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