



International Center of Photography

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media release



Grey Villet, [Richard and Mildred Loving with their children Peggy, Donald, and Sidney in their living room, King and Queen County, Virginia], 1965.
© Estate of Grey Villet

The Loving Story: Photographs by Grey Villet

On view from
January 20, 2012
through
May 6, 2012

Media Preview
January 19, 2011
11:30 am–1:30 pm

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The Loving Story: Photographs by Grey Villet, on view at the International Center of Photography (1133 Avenue of the Americas at 43rd Street) January 20 – May 6, 2012, presents a series of intimate photographs showing the love and unguarded emotions shared by Richard and Mildred Loving, a shy, nonpolitical married couple whose landmark United States Supreme Court case *Loving v. Virginia* overturned the country's anti-miscegenation laws.

The exhibition, organized by Assistant Curator of Collections Erin Barnett, includes some twenty vintage prints by Grey Villet drawn from Villet's estate and the Loving family. An HBO documentary *The Loving Story*, directed by veteran photo editor and filmmaker Nancy Buirski, inspired a stronger look at Villet's legacy and his intimate images of the Lovings. In the film, his images become a narrative tool that underscores Villet's personal approach to the couple's story. The film debuts February 14, 2012.

The photographs focus not on the epic legal battle surrounding this groundbreaking Civil Rights case, but instead show the Lovings's dedication to each other and their family, and their daily life in the Virginia countryside they cherished. On assignment for *LIFE* magazine in 1965, Villet traveled to Virginia to photograph Richard Loving, a white man, and his wife Mildred, a woman of African American and Native American descent. Both families had lived in Virginia for generations; even during the Jim Crow era, their town was known for friendly relations between the races and there were many mixed-race residents.

The Lovings married in 1958 in Washington, DC, but their interracial marriage was illegal in their home state. Found guilty of violating Virginia's anti-miscegenation law and banished from their home, the Lovings

(more)

enlisted the American Civil Liberties Union, which brought their case to the U.S. Supreme Court in 1966. The following year, the court unanimously declared Virginia's Racial Integrity Act of 1924 unconstitutional and ended all race-based marriage bans in the U.S.

"Villet's intimate access to the Lovings and his tender images show us a side of the couple and their three children the monumental case could not. In fighting for their right to life as husband and wife in their home state, the Lovings, who were not active in the Civil Rights movement, changed American culture and politics. As marriage equality gains support and the first mixed-race U.S. president finishes his first term, the case continues to have relevance," said Barnett.

South African-born Villet (1927–2000) created some of *LIFE* magazine's most poignant photo essays during his seventeen-year tenure. He and his wife, the writer Barbara Cumiskey Villet, collaborated on some of the finest in-depth stories ever to appear in the magazine, including *The Lash of Success* (1961), a look at one man's journey to wealth and success, and a year-long investigation of the Levi Smith family of Vermont, which ran in fifty pages' worth of installments (1966). The Villets also published two books: *Those Whom God Chooses* (New York: Viking Press, 1966) and *Blood River* (New York: Everest House, 1982).

This exhibition was made possible with public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.



About ICP

The International Center of Photography (ICP) was founded in 1974 by Cornell Capa (1918-2008) as an institution dedicated to photography that occupies a vital and central place in contemporary culture as it reflects and influences social change. Through our museum, school and community programs, we embrace photography's ability to open new opportunities for personal and aesthetic expression, transform popular culture, and continually evolve to incorporate new technologies. ICP has presented more than 500 exhibitions, bringing the work of more than 3,000 photographers and other artists to the public in one-person and group exhibitions and provided thousands of classes and workshops that have enriched tens of thousands of students. Visit www.icp.org for more information.

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