International Center of Photography

Contact: Communications Department
212.857.0045 info@icp.org

media release

W. Eugene Smith
Burial at sea from the U.S.S. Bunker Hill, 1944
© [1944], 2008 The Heirs of W. Eugene Smith

Living with the Dead: W. Eugene Smith and World War II

On view from
September 19, 2008
through
January 4, 2009

Media Preview
September 18, 2008
9:30—11:00 am

RSVP:
info@icp.org
212.857.0045

Among the most extraordinary photographs produced during World War II are those made by W. Eugene Smith (1918-1978), who served with active combat troops in the Pacific Theater from 1943 to 1945. The International Center of Photography is pleased to present *Living with the Dead: W. Eugene Smith and World War II*, an exhibition of work by one of the foremost photojournalists of the twentieth century, based on a recent generous donation to the Center's permanent collection. The exhibition will be on view at the International Center of Photography (1133 Avenue of the Americas at 43rd Street) from September 19, 2008 through January 4, 2009.

Smith's World War II photography records an incredible narrative of personal heroism and intrepid photojournalism. Frustrated in his attempts to join Edward Steichen's U.S. Navy photographers unit (he failed two physicals due to poor eyesight), Smith took a position as a photographer for the Ziff-Davis publishing company. In November 1943, he was assigned to the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Bunker Hill. While serving in the Pacific, Smith experienced numerous attacks and naval engagements, and recorded several of his best-known photographs, including *Burial at Sea from the U.S.S. Bunker Hill* (1944)) and [Japanese Planes Attacking U.S.S. Bunker Hill] (1944). In 1944, Smith was hired by *Life* as a war correspondent and he subsequently photographed battles in Saipan, Leyte, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa. On May 22, 1945, while covering the invasion of Okinawa, Smith was severely wounded; he spent the next two years recovering from his injuries.

W. Eugene Smith was born in 1918, and began his career at the age of fourteen as a stringer for newspapers in his hometown of Wichita, Kansas. While his photographic work earned him a scholarship to Notre Dame University, he left after a year to pursue a career in New York City. In 1937, at age eighteen, he was hired at *News-Week* and later began working as a freelance photographer for Black Star Agency. His photographs ran in many well-known magazines including *Life*, *Collier's*, and *Harper's Bazaar*. In 1939 he became a staff photographer at *Life* but resigned after two years, frustrated with his assignments.

This exhibition brings together eleven works selected from a group of Smith's original exhibition prints recently donated to the International Center of Photography by Leslie Teicholz, Smith's studio assistant.