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media release



Unidentified Photographer, [Governor John Connally, Nellie Connally, President John F. Kennedy, and Jacqueline Kennedy in presidential limousine, Dallas], November 22, 1963. International Center of Photography, Museum Purchase, 2013.

JFK November 22, 1963: A Bystander's View of History

On view from
October 4, 2013
through
January 19, 2014

Media Preview
October 3, 2013
11:30am-1:30pm

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When President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas, on November 22, 1963, the event and its aftermath were transmitted to a stunned nation via photography and television. Many of the key news photographs from those days were taken by amateur photographers, or happenstance bystanders, rather than by professional photojournalists. On the fiftieth anniversary of this event, the International Center of Photography will present *JFK November 22, 1963: A Bystander's View of History*, an exhibition that considers the role of the amateur photographers as witnesses to President Kennedy's tragic assassination.

The Kennedy Presidency coincided with the rise of popular media, which established an intimate rapport between audiences and celebrities. Public events, including parades and rallies, were chances to see prominent figures and perhaps take their pictures. The widespread availability of inexpensive cameras and even instant photographs made photography accessible to middle-class audiences. This exhibition considers how mid-century viewers used the camera to understand and construct their lives—from their interest or goal in taking pictures of the President in the first place to the destination or use of these informal snapshots to what happened when such private notations became the public record of this key historical event.

JFK November 22, 1963 addresses the relationship between personal photography and collective memory. The exhibition departs from the typical recapitulation of the historical events of the Kennedy assassination and is instead a study of popular photography and its uses, taking a single historical event as a kind of case study. It might be called an anti-photojournalistic exploration in that it examines, on the one hand, the failure of professional news photographers to capture the climactic moments of the historical narrative, and, on the other hand, the rise of a type of "citizen journalist" that is so familiar today.

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“The expectations of traditional photojournalism collapsed on November 22, 1963,” said ICP Chief Curator Brian Wallis, who organized the exhibition. “Instead, citizen journalists—really just bystanders with cameras—stepped to the forefront to document this unforgettable moment and its historical significance.”

The objects in this exhibition are drawn from the collection of the International Center of Photography. Included are original stills from eyewitness Abraham Zapruder’s famous film of the shooting; the “backyard photograph” of Lee Harvey Oswald holding weapons, used on the cover of *Life*; and Mary Moorman’s famous Polaroid taken at the moment of the assassination. The exhibition also includes other news photographs, personal snapshots by bystanders, souvenirs, and books.

In addition, filmmaker Alan Govenar has created two new films, commissioned especially for this exhibition. The first, *The Silent Witness Speaks*, is a rare interview with assassination eyewitness Mary Moorman, who describes the taking and the significance of her photograph of the shooting. The second, *Listening Hard*, is a meditation on another kind of bystander response, folk songs about Kennedy that were created in the aftermath of the assassination.

JFK November 22, 1963 provides viewers with an alternate version of history—and of the history of photography—different from the official narrative. In doing so, it considers the historical and aesthetic merits of vernacular photographs, which collectively constitute a kind of folk history of photography. On the fiftieth anniversary of the tragedy, these historical artifacts demonstrate the active role of photography in negotiating trauma and mourning.

Public Program

In conjunction with the exhibition, ICP will present *Who Shot JFK? Oliver Stone in Conversation with Brian Wallis* on Wednesday, November 20, at 7:00 pm. The event will be held at the School at ICP (Shooting Studio, 1114 Avenue of the Americas at 43rd Street).

JFK November 22, 1963: A Bystander’s View of History is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.



ALSO ON VIEW

Lewis Hine

October 4, 2013—January 19, 2014

Lewis Hine (1874–1940) is widely recognized as an American original whose work has been cited as a precursor to modernist and documentary photography. While certain of Hine’s photographic projects—such as on immigration, child labor, New York City, and the building of the Empire State Building—are well known, few exhibitions have considered his entire life’s work. The aim of *Lewis Hine* is to provide a broad overview of his photographic career, using supplementary material to situate the photographs in the context of their original consumption while providing a platform for reconsidering the work today—both historically and artistically. The exhibition includes Hine’s earliest work from Ellis Island (1905) and extensive selections from every major project that followed, including “Hull House,” “American Red Cross in Europe,” and “Men at Work.” The exhibition is curated by Alison Nordström, Curator of Photographs at George Eastman House International Museum of Photography and Film, which holds the largest and most comprehensive archive of Hine’s work.

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The Future of America: Lewis Hine's New Deal Photographs

October 4, 2013—January 19, 2014

Among the least known but most prescient photographs taken by social documentary photographer Lewis Hine were those he made as chief photographer for the National Research Project (NRP), a division of the federal government's Works Progress Administration (WPA) founded in late 1935. The goal of the NRP was to investigate recent changes in industrial technologies and to assess their effects on future employment. In more than 700 photographs, taken in industrial towns throughout the Northeast in 1936 and 1937, Hine revealed not only working conditions in aging industrial factories, but also in new industries and productive workplaces. The NRP published hundreds of reports illustrated with Hine's photographs on a broad variety of agricultural, manufacturing, and mining activities. His works captured the look of labor and industry in transition, while the entire NRP story provides provocative parallels to today's economic challenges. The exhibition, organized by Hine scholar Judith Mara Gutman, draws on ICP's archive of more than 300 of Hine's prints from the NRP series and the master holdings at the National Archives.

Zoe Strauss: 10 Years

October 4, 2013—January 19, 2014

For a decade between 2001 and 2010, Philadelphia photographer Zoe Strauss (b. 1970) showed her photographic works once a year in a public space beneath an I-95 highway overpass in South Philadelphia, mounting her color photographs to the concrete bridge supports and selling photocopies for five dollars. Through portraits and documents of houses and signage, Strauss looked unflinchingly at the economic struggles and hardscrabble lives of residents in her own community and other parts of the United States. This exhibition is a mid-career retrospective and the first critical assessment of her decade-long project.

THE PICTURE WINDOWS SERIES: Gideon Mendel's Drowning World

EXTENDED through the fall

A large-scale installation of Gideon Mendel's *Drowning World* series occupies the museum's 43rd Street windows.

About ICP

The International Center of Photography (ICP) is the world's leading institution dedicated to the practice and understanding of photography and the reproduced image in all its forms. Through our exhibitions, educational programs, and community outreach, we offer an open forum for dialogue about the role images play in our culture. Since our founding, we have presented more than 500 exhibitions and offered thousands of classes, providing instruction at every level. ICP is a center where photographers and artists, students and scholars can create and interpret the world of the image within our comprehensive educational and archival facilities. Visit www.icp.org for more information.

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