



Museum of the City of New York receives \$185,423 grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) Museums for America to increase public access to work from *LOOK* Magazine staff photographer John Vachon

(New York, NY | October 2018) - The Museum of the City of New York is honored to announce that it has been awarded a \$185,423 grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services Museums for America in the category of Collections Stewardship to digitize work from *LOOK* Magazine staff photographer John Vachon. This project will digitize approximately 18,500 photographs from 54 of Vachon's assignments over the course of his 25-year career with *LOOK*. This project is part of an ongoing effort to provide online access to the Museum's *LOOK* Collection, which includes approximately 200,000 photographs related to 2,242 stories from 41 different photographers. These photographs were taken between 1938 and 1968 and vividly document the cultural transformation of America from World War II through the Cold War era. With this generous support from the Institute, the Museum will make this important collection freely accessible to the public.

Founded in 1937 by Des Moines, Iowa newspaperman Gardner Cowles, *LOOK* focused a lens on the lives of individuals, using personal stories to narrate the nuanced political, social, and cultural issues of the day, rather than taking the broader documentary approach of a publication like *Life*. John Vachon—who made his name as a photographer working for Roy Stryker at the Farm Security Administration (FSA) during the Great Depression—was known for his technical skill and dramatic composition. He was skilled at engaging his subjects, which often led editors to assign many of the more interesting stories to him. The assignments proposed for digitization in this project—which range from celebrity profiles to investigative pieces on youth culture and a feature on tugboat operators in New York Harbor—capture the societal and cultural issues of the era through diverse narratives. With New York City as both the lens and the prism for viewing the nation during this time period, the city emerges as simultaneously the *most* American and the *least* American metropolis in the nation and is essential to understanding how Americans of the mid-20th century moved within political, social, and physical environments.

The collection primarily exists as film negatives, a format that renders the material nearly inaccessible for researchers and curators alike. As the number of images taken

for a single assignment varied from a few dozen to a few hundred, at least 80% of the images in the *LOOK* collection never reached the publication's pages. Through the digitization of Vachon's *LOOK* assignments, an estimated 11,100 digital images will be brought to light via the Museum's free, public Collections Portal at collections.mcny.org.

About the Institute of Museum and Library Services

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation's libraries and museums. We advance, support, and empower America's museums, libraries, and related organizations through grantmaking, research, and policy development. Our vision is a nation where museums and libraries work together to transform the lives of individuals and communities. To learn more, visit <http://www.imls.gov> and follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

The views, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this project do not necessarily represent those of the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

About the Museum of the City of New York

The Museum celebrates and fosters understanding of the world's most influential metropolis. Through a unique array of content-rich special exhibitions, public and education programs, and publications, the Museum engages visitors by documenting and interpreting the city's past, present, and future. For more information visit: www.mcny.org.

The Museum serves the people of New York and visitors from around the world through exhibitions, school and public programs, publications, and collections spanning fashion, art, music, theater, culture, activism, and history. Three floors of exhibitions and a prodigious collection of 750,000 objects, art, and artifacts chronicle New York City's people, places, and events.

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