

THROUGH A  
DIFFERENT LENS:  
**STANLEY  
KUBRICK**  
PHOTOGRAPHS



**Stanley Kubrick's early career as a photojournalist for *Look* magazine is a revelation for most people who know him as a filmmaker. In 1945, the future director of such films as *2001: A Space Odyssey* and *A Clockwork Orange* was just a teenager – but one with an uncanny photographic sensibility, who was already scouting human-interest stories for *Look* magazine.**

Self-Portrait from unpublished assignment "Rosemary Williams: Showgirl," 1949



**T**urning his camera on his native city, Kubrick found inspiration in New York's characters and settings, sometimes glamorous, sometimes gritty. He produced work that was far ahead of his time and focused on themes that would inspire him through his creative life.

Most importantly, his photography laid the technical and aesthetic foundations for his cinematography: he learned through the camera's lens to be an acute observer of human interactions and to tell stories through images in dynamic narrative sequences. Kubrick's early years at *Look* proved to be the start of his celebrated career as one of the 20th century's great artists – a time when he honed his skills as both a storyteller and an image maker, albeit through a different lens.

*Through a Different Lens: Stanley Kubrick Photographs* tells the story of how a 17-year old amateur photographer from the Bronx took the first steps towards becoming one of the most important film directors of the 20th century. The exhibition will display 130 photographs by Kubrick from the Museum's extensive *Look* magazine archive, all captured during his tenure as a

photographer between 1945 and 1950. In his photographs, many unpublished, Kubrick explored the grit and glamor of the city, turning his lens on the nightclubs, street scenes, and sporting events that made up his first assignments, and capturing the pathos of ordinary life with a sophistication that belied his young age. The exhibited photographs will be accompanied by the *Look*

magazines in which they appeared, providing the journalistic context in which Kubrick's photographs were received by the general public.

*Through a Different Lens* first introduces visitors to four key themes that shaped Kubrick's early work as a photographer and would pop up time and again throughout his career. The show then proceeds chronologically through his time at *Look* magazine with assignments published and unpublished, framing Kubrick as an artist investigating the powerful narrative capabilities of photography and showcasing his aptitude for translating an individual's complex life into visual form.

Stanley Kubrick sold his first photograph to *Look* magazine in 1945: an image of a dejected newsstand vendor the day after the death of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. For a burgeoning photographer like Kubrick, there was no better place to be at that time than New York City, home to the nation's two leading pictorial magazines, *Life* and *Look*. After Kubrick graduated from William Howard Taft high school in 1946, *Look* hired him as an apprentice. Kubrick's name first appeared on the magazine's masthead as a staff photographer in its January 7, 1947 issue. His first extended assignment, "Life and Love on the New York Subway," was published two months later.

In the fall of that year, Kubrick began working on more extended, narrative-based assignments. By 1949 he had fully hit his stride on the pages of *Look* magazine. His contributions ranged from quirky "only in New York" stories about an innovative

**Top:** From "People Mugging," 1946



paddy wagon and pampered city dogs to extended profiles of celebrities. Especially valuable experience for an aspiring filmmaker were stories covering a range of post-war American entertainment: publishing (cartoonist Peter Arno), movies (Montgomery Clift), and popular music (bandleader Guy Lombardo), as well as the new medium of television. In 1950, the last year in which he published his photographs extensively in *Look*, Kubrick created a series of celebrity profiles, covering composer and conductor Leonard Bernstein, television personality Faye Emerson, and boxer Rocky Graziano, among others. While finishing his tenure at the magazine, Kubrick began work on his first independently produced documentary, *Day of the Fight*. The film, which will be on view in the final section of the exhibition, was based on his 1949 article on boxer Walter Cartier, "Prizefighter," which premiered in 1951.

The exhibition culminates with an epilogue that reveals connections between Kubrick the photographer and Kubrick the director. In 1950, he produced essays that explored themes of teenage love, teenage dating, and marital jealousy. He effectively directed these proto-cinematic articles, for which he posed high-school students "starring" in the teenage stories, and actors in the marital story. In addition to featuring these magazines, this section of the exhibition will screen his first film, the Cartier documentary *Day of the Fight*. His photographic work for *Look* became the storyboard for the film, enabling Kubrick to work out the scenes, camera angles, framing, and lighting. Kubrick maintained this practice of storyboarding from photographs throughout his life. This section will also include an excerpt from his second feature film, *Killer's Kiss* (1955). The latter owed debts to the film noir aesthetic and themes—boxing, crime, nightclubs, and showgirls as well as ambition and alienation—that he explored at *Look*.

**From top:**

From "Life and Love on the New York City Subway," 1947; From "Life and Love on the New York City Subway," 1947; From "Midsummer Nights in New York," 1949





**Clockwise from top left:**

Sandwich Girl, Nanette Fredrics on Manhattan's East Side from "It Happened Here: Life in the U.S. Has a Little of Everything," 1948; From "How the Circus Gets Set," 1948; Director Jules Dassin from "Naked City," 1947



## CONTACT

Lindsay Turley  
Vice President | Museum Collections  
Museum of the City of New York  
1220 Fifth Avenue  
New York, NY 10029  
917-492-3472 | [lturley@mcny.org](mailto:lturley@mcny.org)

This exhibition is organized by the Museum of the City of New York in collaboration with SK Film Archives LLC. All images by Stanley Kubrick, courtesy of the Museum of the City of New York / SK Film Archives LLC.

## COMPANION PUBLICATION

*Through a Different Lens* reveals the keen and evocative vision of a burgeoning creative genius in a range of feature stories and images, from everyday folk at the laundromat to a day in the life of a debutant, from a trip to the circus to Columbia University. Featuring around 300 images, many previously unseen, as well as rare Look magazine tear sheets, this release coincides with a major show at the Museum of the City of New York and includes an introduction by noted photography critic Luc Sante. Published by Taschen, 2018, this book includes essays by co-curators of the exhibition, Sean Corcoran, and Donald Albrecht.

Hardcover, 10.5 x 13 in., 328 pages

