THROUGH A DIFFERENT LENS

STANLEY KUBRICK
PHOTOGRAPHS
Explore a formative phase in the career of one of the 20th century’s most renowned motion picture directors.

For those who know Stanley Kubrick as a filmmaking legend, his early career as a photojournalist for Look magazine is a revelation. In 1945, the future director of 2001: A Space Odyssey, The Shining, and A Clockwork Orange was just 17 years old, but he already possessed an uncanny ability to capture the essence of a Post War New York in the midst of transformation. Kubrick examined both the grit and the glamor of his native city, turning his lens on the vibrant nightclubs, street scenes, and sporting events that made up his first assignments, and capturing poignancy of ordinary life with a sophistication that belied his young age. Producing work that was far ahead of his time, he explored themes that would recur throughout his creative life as he lay the technical and aesthetic foundations for an unparalleled cinematic career.

Accompanied by the original Look magazines in which many appeared, this visually stunning exhibition is comprised of 132 dynamic black and white photographs drawn from the Museum of the City of New York’s extensive Look magazine archive. Through a Different Lens captivates us with insight into Kubrick’s early years at Look exploring how his time there proved a pivotal step in 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.

I. Walter Cartier, Prizefighter of Greenwich Village [Cartier and Dolores Germaine on a beach], 1948. X2011.4.11122.102C.
II. Rosemary Williams, Show Girl [Kubrick photographing Rosemary Williams], 1949. X2011.4.11169.9A.
Born in 1928 in the Bronx, the young Kubrick was less interested in formal education than in lessons of the real world. The Manhattan offices of *LOOK* proved to be his college, its editors and fellow photographers his professors, and New York City his field of study. For five years he worked at the magazine, participating in the process of making art in a collaborative setting not unlike that of the film studios he would soon enter.

Kubrick’s name appeared on the *LOOK* masthead for the first time on January 7, 1947. 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 Kubrick had fully hit his stride on the pages of *LOOK* magazine. His contributions ranged from quirky “only in New York” stories about an innovative paddy wagon and pampered city dogs, to extended profiles of celebrities.

FROM PHOTOGRAPHER TO FILMMAKER

III.  Betsy Von Furstenberg [Reading a script in a windowsill], 1950. X2011.4.12268.92.

IV.  A Dog’s Life in the Big City [Dogs in a convertible], 1949. X2011.4.2565.264.

V.  Walter Cartier - Prizefighter of Greenwich Village [Cartier during a fight], 1949. X2011.4.763.236.

Kubrick’s work for Look advanced his ways of seeing and his fascination with human relationships. He sometimes photographed unsuspecting subjects engaged in intimate interactions or caught others in the act of looking. His ability to see and translate an individual’s complex psychological life into visual form was apparent in his many personality profiles. Kubrick’s most openly “voyeuristic” photographs rarely made the pages of the family-oriented Look, but are presented here as evidence of how powerfully human idiosyncrasies captured his gaze.

LOOKING

VII. Advertising Sandwich Board [Woman wearing a sandwich board advertising the 1-2-3 cafe], 1946. X2011.4.10375.22.
VIII. Rocky Graziano, He’s a Good Boy Now [Rocky Graziano showering], 1949-1950. X2011.4.12284.176.
IX. People Mugging [Woman leaning against a car], 1946. X2011.4.10303.50.
X. Park Benches - Love is Everywhere [Couple flirting on a fire escape], 1946. X2011.4.10347.
XII. Advertising Outdoors [Model posing as men paint the billboard], 1947. X2011.4.12150.27.

XIII. Advertising Outdoors [Men watching model being painted for the billboard], 1947. X2011.4.12150.73.

At LOOK, Kubrick mastered the skills of framing, composing, and lighting compelling images. His experiences at the magazine also offered him opportunities to explore a range of artistic styles. While the editors at LOOK often promoted straightforward composition and natural lighting typical of contemporary photojournalism, Kubrick frequently imitated the dark, brooding style of the Hollywood film noirs he so admired. Many of these early photographs foreshadow the dispassionate view of life he would adopt in his films. Two of Kubrick’s early feature films, *Killer’s Kiss* and *The Killing*, owed debts to the film noir aesthetic and themes—boxing, crime, and horse racing, as well as ambition and alienation—that he explored at LOOK.

VISUAL STYLE

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5. Peter Arno [Arno reading sheet music], 1948. X2011.4.1487/670
XII. Circus [Man with tattoos and body modifications], 1948. X2011.4.11327.39.

XIII. Columbia University [Professor working with bright light], 1948. X2011.4.10365.235.

In the last year in which he published his photographs 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. Of the many topics Kubrick covered for *LOOK*, none aligned more closely with his burgeoning interest in film than his explorations of media: stage, radio, and movies. His numerous personality profiles gave him firsthand experience of the ways that celebrities crafted their public personas, and he was often on the set, seeing the production process up close.
XVII. Leonard Bernstein [Leonard Bernstein with Betty Comden and Adolph Green on a balcony], 1949. X2011.4.12304.107F.

XVIII. Montgomery Clift - Glamour Boy in Baggy Pants [Montgomery Clift with a young boy on his shoulders], 1949. X2011.4.12164.46C.

XIX. Faye Emerson [Walking down the street], 1950. X2011.4.12264.61.
A veteran photographer at 19, Stanley Kubrick makes up for youth with zeal and surest wits in camera work. He's a man of two minds, great attention to detail, and an eye for the unusual. His pictures are often striking, but do not neglect the technical aspects of photography. His pictures are often amusing, but he does not neglect the technical aspects of photography.

Like any experienced photographer, Stanley Kubrick knows exactly what he wants. The impatient moments of inspiration that had long since faded to the background have returned, and his pictures are now as important as his stories. The pictures are more than just pictures, they are stories, and the pictures are more than just stories, they are pictures.

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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 or the laboratories at Columbia University. This comprehensive volume features around 300 images, many previously unseen, as well as rare Look magazine tear sheets. Published by Tachen, 2018, Through a Different Lens includes essays by co-curators of the exhibition, Sean Corcoran, and Donald Albrecht, as well as an introductory essay by photography critic Luc Sante. Hardcover, 10.5 x 13 in., 328 pages.

The Museum of the City of New York fosters understanding of the distinctive nature of urban life in the world’s most influential metropolis. It engages visitors by celebrating, documenting, and interpreting the city’s past, present, and future. Founded in 1923 by Henry Collins Brown, a Scottish-born writer with a vision for a populist approach to the city, the Museum was originally housed in Gracie Mansion, the future residence of the Mayor of New York. Completed in 1932, the Museum’s current home is a Georgian Colonial-Revival building constructed by Joseph H. Freedlander on land owned by the City of New York. Over the years, the Museum has amassed a considerable collection of exceptional items, approximately 750,000 objects including prints, photographs, decorative arts, costumes, paintings, sculpture, toys, and theatrical memorabilia.
Front: Circus [Circus barker with acrobats in the background], 1948. X2011.4.11379.6
Back: Gimbels Fashion Show [Audience watching a model walk down the runway], 1949. X2011.4.12312.72F.

Curators
Sean Corcoran and Donald Albrecht

Number of Works
132 modern gelatin silver prints, and 41 Look magazines

Availability
Spring 2021 – Winter 2024

Booking Period
12 weeks, can be prorated for a shorter or longer presentation

Exhibition Requirements
Moderate Security, 2,500 – 3,000 square feet; 350 linear feet; facility report subject to approval by Museum of the City of New York

Loan Fee
Please enquire

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