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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GETTY PRESENTS TWO DECADES OF HEADLINE-MAKING NEWS IMAGES FROM THE GROUNDBREAKING PHOTOJOURNALIST WEEGEE
Part of the Getty's American Visions Series

Scene of the Crime: Photo by Weegee
At the Getty Center, September 20, 2005–January 22, 2006

“Sure. I’d like to live regular. Go home to a good-looking wife, a hot dinner, and a husky kid. But I guess I got film in my blood. I love this racket. It’s exciting. It’s dangerous. It’s funny. It’s tough. It’s heartbreaking.”

-- Weegee, from a profile in Popular Photography, December 1937

LOS ANGELES—A new Getty exhibition will present two decades of headline-making news images from photographer Arthur Fellig (1899-1968), also known as Weegee the Famous. Scene of the Crime: Photo by Weegee, at the Getty Center, September 20, 2005–January 22, 2006, brings back Weegee’s dramatic, sometimes sensational photographs, which dominated the growing news media of the 1930s and ‘40s with scenes of murders, fires, riots, and accidents as well as human-interest pictorials of life in the big city.

The exhibition features over 60 Weegee photographs from the Getty Museum’s permanent collection. It will be introduced with earlier pictures by pioneering Los Angeles news photographer George Watson and his nephew Coy Watson, Jr., with whom Weegee worked briefly in 1932 in California. Running concurrently is the related exhibition Pictures for the Press, which presents a broader view of news-making images from World War II to Vietnam, with works by Robert Capa, Larry Burrows, Charles Moore, and other photojournalists.

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Scene of the Crime covers the period of Weegee's freelance career, which began in 1935 in New York. It was a time of dizzying activity for the photographer. He would sleep by day in a one-room apartment and spend his nights dashing around the city responding to the police radio, tips from reporters, cues from informers, or his own intuition. Once his bulky Speed Graphic camera had obtained a sufficient record of the night's events, he sped around from editor to editor, picture agency to picture agency, selling his images to newspapers in New York and beyond. Among the publications Weegee worked for was the adventurous PM Daily, a politically progressive paper that ran Weegee's picture stories, sometimes with his words, throughout the 1940s.

“Weegee's images fired the imagination of a nation fed by Hollywood, the tabloids, and large doses of pulp fiction. The crime photographer was seen as part of an alluring group of Depression-era celebrities, including mobsters and detectives who seemed to live exciting lives," said Judith Keller, curator of the exhibition. Crime was considered by some to be not only viable but also glamorous. As an unshaven, tough-talking, fedora wearing, cigar-smoking loner, Weegee fit the profile of the antihero. In the 1930s, he became known as Weegee the Famous. Reversing the Great Houdini's performances of escape, Weegee (after the Ouija board game) seemed to materialize wherever news was happening.

His talent for “psychic photography," as he called it, was helped by his privileged access to emergency calls and the line-up room at the Manhattan Police Headquarters, where he was a fixture. In 1941, Weegee arrived just in time to catch a burglar being arrested by detectives in front of a candy store, after covering a nearby fire. The next day, the tabloid PM ran Weegee's pictures with headline, “Police Report: Weegee Covers an Arrest and a Fire.” The photographer, it seems, was considered as important as the news he helped to create.

But Weegee's expert police-beat eye took in more than the crime scene and the criminals. The emotional reaction of witnesses and other onlookers was as important to him as the tragic action that had taken place. Later, when he had become more
cynical about New York life, he gave his 1941 newspaper image “Brooklyn School Children See Gambler Murdered in Street” a new title: “Their First Murder.”

In addition to violent and tragic episodes, Weegee also recorded a softer side of the city. Armed with infrared film that permitted photographing in low light without flash, Weegee captured a symphony of couples kissing under the cover of darkness in movie theatres, parks, and beaches. He took pictures of artist communities in Greenwich Village, and also loved to prowl Harlem, the Bowery, and Times Square for colorful subjects. He took his camera to the circus, jazz concerts, and even the opera, which he covered each season for *PM*. Weegee was able to get under the skin of New York high society with his infrared film, revealing the roughness beneath the surface of the dressed-up ladies and their companions. In his sardonic comments about the opera crowd for one *PM* article, he complained of feeling out of place, and claimed that since he had no top hat, he was nearly ejected by the police.

Born in Austria, Weegee moved with his family to New York’s Lower East Side in 1910. He held various jobs in photography, including stints as an itinerant portrait photographer, a passport photographer, and an assistant in the darkroom of *The New York Times*, before settling into a steady position in the darkroom labs of Acme Newspictures (later United Press International Photos). Among his assignments was the 1932 Olympics in Los Angeles, working under the direction of veteran *Los Angeles Times* photographer George Watson (1892–1977), who managed the West Coast Acme office. In 1935, Weegee quit Acme and embarked on his prolific freelance career. At Weegee’s death in 1968, he left behind more than 20,000 prints spanning his career.

*Scene of the Crime* and *Pictures for the Press* are part of *American Visions*, a sequence of four exhibitions featuring works by some of the country’s preeminent practitioners drawn from the Getty Museum’s renowned photographs collection. The series began in May with two exhibitions featuring the visionary work of Paul Strand and Frederick Sommer. Together, the exhibitions offer insight into 75 years of photographic innovation, exploring the medium’s versatility as a new creative language used to document reality and as a means for artistic expression.
RELATED EVENTS
All events are free and are held in the Harold M. Williams Auditorium, unless otherwise noted. Seating reservations are required. For reservations and information, please call (310) 440-7300 or visit www.getty.edu.

CURATOR'S GALLERY TALK
Judith Keller, Associate Curator of Photographs, the J. Paul Getty Museum, leads a gallery talk on the exhibition. Meet under the stairs in the Museum Entrance Hall.
Tuesday, December 13, 2:30 p.m.
Museum galleries

FAMILY FESTIVAL
Explore the 1930s and 1940s through the lens of Weegee. Swing to the sounds of jazz, blues, and big band and hear storytellers re-create the radio craze. Hands-on workshops let you edit your own newspaper or think like a photojournalist.
Sunday, October 2, 10:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m.
Museum Courtyard

FILM SERIES
Weegee's passion for reporting crime and punishment on the streets of New York was shared by four filmmakers—Raoul Walsh, William Wyler, Michael Curtiz, and Jules Dassin—who examined the high and low life of urban gangsterism.
Reservations available beginning Thursday, September 22, at 9:00 a.m.
Friday, October 14, 7:30 p.m.
Regeneration (1915), directed by Raoul Walsh
Dead End (1937), directed by William Wyler
Saturday, October 15, 4:00 p.m.
Angels with Dirty Faces (1938), directed by Michael Curtiz
Saturday, October 15, 7:30 p.m.
The Naked City (1948), directed by Jules Dassin

LECTURE
On Being a Press Photographer
Freelance photojournalist James Nachtwey reflects on his career. For three decades he has devoted himself to documenting wars, conflicts, and critical social issues around the world.
Sunday, November 20, 4:00–5:00 p.m.

PANEL DISCUSSION
Making News: A Discussion of Photojournalism
Moderator: Michael Parks, Director, School of Journalism, USC Annenberg School of Communications; Philip Gefter, New York Times picture editor; David Lubin, Professor, Wake Forest University; and Molly Bingham, freelance journalist and photographer.
Thursday, December 8, 7:00 p.m.

POINT-OF-VIEW TALKS
Head of the Delmar Watson Photography Archives in Hollywood, Delmar Watson began his career as a press photographer in the mid-1940s working for Acme Newspictures in Los Angeles and later the Mirror News. A member of a successful family of Los Angeles–based photojournalists whose work is held by the Getty, Mr. Watson will lead a gallery discussion of the exhibition.
Sign up at the Museum Information Desk beginning at 3:00 p.m.
Friday, December 2, 4:30 and 6:00 p.m.
Museum galleries

RELATED EXHIBITION
Pictures for the Press
Focusing on pictures made to document newsworthy events from the 1940s to the 1970s, this exhibition presents images by well-known press photographers like Larry
Burrows, Robert Capa, and W. Eugene Smith as well as lesser-known and, in some cases, unidentified makers.

**RELATED PUBLICATION**
Publications are available in the Getty Museum Store, by calling (800) 223-3431 or (310) 440-7059, or online at www.getty.edu.

*In Focus: Weegee, Photographs from the J. Paul Getty Museum*
By Judith Keller
This volume presents approximately fifty of the ninety-five Weegee prints in the Getty Museum's collection, surveying the photographer's probing vision of life in New York—from Harlem to Times Square, Greenwich Village, and the Bowery.
(Paper: $17.50)

**SEMINAR**
*Like a New Comet: The New York Evening Graphic and the Tabloid Avant-Garde*
Luc Sante, general editor of the Library of Larceny, author of *Evidence, Low Life: Lures and Snares of Old New York*, and other works on crime photographs, and a teacher of the history of photography at Bard College, discusses the *New York Evening Graphic*, an influential tabloid published from 1924 to 1932.
**Wednesday, September 28, 3:00–5:00 p.m.**
*Museum Lecture Hall*

**UPCOMING PHOTOGRAPHS EXHIBITION**
*Robert Adams: Two Landscapes*
February 7–May 28, 2006
Robert Adams (American, born 1937) has photographed the landscape of the American West for more than forty years, particularly in California and Colorado. His vision is inspired by both his joy in its inherent natural beauty and his dismay at its exploitation and degradation. This exhibition features about seventy photographs drawn from the Getty Museum’s holdings of more than one hundred prints by Adams.

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**Note to editors:** Images available on request.

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The J. Paul Getty Trust is an international cultural and philanthropic institution devoted to the visual arts that features the J. Paul Getty Museum, the Getty Research Institute, the Getty Conservation Institute, and the Getty Foundation. The J. Paul Getty Trust and Getty programs are based at the Getty Center in Los Angeles.

**Visiting the Getty Center:**
The Getty Center is open Tuesday through Thursday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Friday and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. It is closed Mondays and major holidays. Admission to the Getty Center is always free. Parking is $7; no reservation required. Reservations are required for event seating and groups of 15 or more. Please call 310-440-7300 (English or Spanish) for reservations and information. The TTY line for callers who are deaf or hearing impaired is 310-440-7305.

Additional information is available on the Getty Web site at www.getty.edu.