

For Immediate Release

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SFMOMA PRESENTS *LOOKING IN: ROBERT FRANK'S "THE AMERICANS"*

Exhibition Celebrates 50th Anniversary of Iconic Photography Book

The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) is pleased to present *Looking In: Robert Frank's "The Americans,"* the most comprehensive and in-depth exploration of Frank's groundbreaking book to date. On view from May 16 to August 23, 2009, the exhibition coincides with the 50th anniversary of *The Americans*, arguably one of the single-most important photography books published since World War II. The exhibition was organized by the National Gallery of Art, Washington. Its San Francisco presentation is overseen by SFMOMA Associate Curator of Photography Corey Keller and is made possible by generous support from the Bernard and Barbro Osher Exhibition Fund and Bob and Randi Fisher.



Robert Frank, *Parade—Hoboken, New Jersey, 1955*; gelatin silver print; 8 3/8 x 12 3/4 in.; Private collection, San Francisco; © Robert Frank

The Book

In 1955 and 1956, Swiss-born American photographer Robert Frank (b. 1924) traveled across the United States to photograph, as he wrote, "the kind of civilization born here and spreading elsewhere." During his nine-month journey, he took 767 rolls of film (more than 27,000 images) and made more than 1,000 work prints. He then spent a year editing, selecting, and sequencing the photographs, linking them thematically, conceptually, formally, emotionally, and linguistically. The result was *The Americans*, a series of photographs that looked beneath the surface of life in the United States to reveal a culture on the brink of massive social upheaval.

When it was first published (in France in 1958; in the United States in 1959), *The Americans* revealed a country that many knew existed but which few had acknowledged. The book showed Americans as a people plagued by racism, ill-served by politicians, and numbed by a rapidly rising culture of consumption. But in addition to exposing a darker side of the United States, Frank shed light on the beauty of overlooked corners of the country. In his photographs of diners, cars, and even "the road" itself, Frank helped to redefine the icons of America.

The Exhibition

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Looking In: Robert Frank's "The Americans" is grouped into four sections. The first section examines the roots of *The Americans*, not only in Frank's earlier handmade books—including *40 Fotos* (1946), *Peru* (1949), and *Black White and Things* (1952)—but also in other sequences of photographs he made at this time, such as *People You Don't See* (1952). The first section also present books by his contemporaries and influences, such as Bill Brandt, Alexey Brodovitch, and Jakob Tuggener.

The second section displays Frank's original application to the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation (which funded his primary work on *The Americans* project), along with vintage contact sheets, letters to photographer Walker Evans and author Jack Kerouac, and two early manuscript versions of Kerouac's introduction to the book. Also exhibited are three collages (made from more than 115 original rough work prints) that were assembled under the Frank's supervision in 2007 and 2008, revealing his intended themes as well as his first rounds of images selection.

The third section is composed of all 83 images from *The Americans* in their original sequence, often in the form of rarely exhibited vintage prints.

The fourth section addresses the impact that *The Americans* had on Frank's subsequent career and includes a film Frank made in 2008 especially for this exhibition.

Catalogue

The exhibition is accompanied by a major publication, *Looking In: Robert Frank's "The Americans,"* produced in two different editions (a softcover and an expanded hardcover) and published with assistance from The Getty Foundation. Published by the National Gallery of Art—in association with Steidl and distributed by D.A.P.—the catalogue will be available at the SFMOMA MuseumStore.

The softcover edition includes reproductions all of the works in the exhibition, along with essays by Sarah Greenough, Anne Wilkes Tucker, Stuart Alexander, Martin Gasser, Jeff L. Rosenheim, Michel Frizot, Luc Sante, and Philip Brookman. Priced at \$45, it comprises 396 pages with 6 four-color, 168 tritone, and 210 duotone images.

The hardcover is an expanded edition that includes all of the material in the softcover, plus reproductions of all of the contact sheets for images in *The Americans*, a chronology, a map, and two appendices. Priced at \$75, it comprises 528 pages with 108 four-color, 168 tritone, and 210 duotone images.

Related Programs

From May 2 to June 27, SFMOMA will feature the film series Robert Frank Retrospective. Presented in the Phyllis Wattis Theater, the showcase includes feature-length and short films made by the Frank, who turned to filmmaking in 1959. Included is his first film, *Pull My Daisy* (1959, codirected with Alfred Leslie), cited not only as one of the most influential works of avant-garde independent film, but also as the beginning of New American Cinema. The highlight of Robert Frank Retrospective is the controversial, unreleased, and rarely screened *Cocksucker Blues* (1972), a feature-length documentary of a Rolling Stones tour.

In addition to the film series, SFMOMA's ongoing photography exhibition *Picturing Modernity* will, for the span of the Frank exhibition, consist of works by photographers who influenced him, as well as pictures by

artists who inspired by his incisive, personal documentary style. The exhibition includes work by Diane Arbus, Bill Brandt, Bruce Davidson, Walker Evans, Lee Friedlander, Jim Goldberg, Danny Lyons, and Garry Winogrand.

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Museum hours: Open daily (except Wednesdays): 11 a.m. to 5:45 p.m.; open late Thursdays, until 8:45 p.m. Summer hours (Memorial Day to Labor Day): Open at 10 a.m. Closed Wednesdays and the following public holidays: New Year's Day, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, Christmas. The Museum is open the Wednesday between Christmas and New Year's Day.

Koret Visitor Education Center: Open daily (except Wednesdays): 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.; open late Thursdays, until 8:30 p.m. Summer hours: Open at 10 a.m.

Admission prices: Adults \$12.50; seniors \$8; students \$7. SFMOMA members and children 12 and under are admitted free. Thursday evenings after 6 p.m. admission is half-price. The first Tuesday of each month admission is free.

SFMOMA is easily accessible by Muni, BART, Golden Gate Transit, SamTrans, and Caltrain. Hourly, daily, and monthly parking is available at the SFMOMA Garage at 147 Minna Street. For parking information, call 415.348.0971.

Visit our Web site at www.sfmoma.org or call 415.357.4000 for more information.

SFMOMA is supported by a broad array of contributors committed to helping advance its mission. Major annual support is provided by Grants for the Arts/San Francisco Hotel Tax Fund, Koret Foundation, and the Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund. First Tuesdays are always free, thanks to AT&T. Thursday Nights at SFMOMA are sponsored by Banana Republic. KidstART free admission for children 12 and under is made possible by Charles Schwab & Co., Inc.

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