



# WEEGEE

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**“My name is Weegee. I’m the world’s greatest photographer...”**

Arthur Fellig, better known as Weegee, was a legendary American photojournalist and a master of documentary photography, celebrated for his stark and gripping images of New York City’s nightlife during the Great Depression.

Born in 1899 in Zloczow, then part of Austria-Hungary (now Lviv Oblast), Weegee emigrated to the United States with his family in 1910. He learned photography on the job, starting at the age of 14 as an assistant to a commercial photographer in Lower Manhattan. After over a decade working for ACME Newspictures—

one of New York’s largest press agencies—Weegee launched his independent career in 1935. He began closely collaborating with the Manhattan Police Department, selling his photographs to leading newspapers and magazines.

Thanks to his quick instincts and uncanny ability to reach crime scenes before anyone else—sometimes even before the police—he earned the nickname “Weegee,” a nod to the Ouija board, as many thought his sense for breaking news bordered on the supernatural. In reality, in 1938 he became the first civilian granted

permission to operate a short-wave police radio. This access allowed him to monitor emergency calls and arrive promptly, securing dramatic and timely images for the headlines.

**“To me, pictures are like blintzes – ya gotta get ‘em while they’re hot.” – Weegee**

His first solo exhibition, *Weegee: Murder is My Business*, took place in 1941. Widespread fame followed in 1945 with the publication of his book *Naked City*, after which he became known simply as “Weegee the Famous”—a title he proudly stamped on the back of every photograph he sold. The book’s success brought him a role as a permanent correspondent for *Vogue* and sparked the interest of Hollywood. Director Jules Dassin adapted *Naked City* into a celebrated film, further cementing Weegee’s legacy.

In 1947, Weegee moved to Los Angeles, where he began producing a series of experimental, “distorted” portraits of celebrities and public figures, manipulating lenses and optical effects. This period culminated in the acclaimed book *Naked Hollywood: Weegee in Los Angeles* (1953). During his five years in Hollywood, he collaborated with renowned directors—including Stanley Kubrick—created short films of his own, and published several more books.

**“When you find yourself beginning to feel a bond between yourself and the people you photograph, when you laugh and cry with their laughter and tears, you will know you are on the right track.” – Weegee the Famous**

A unique collection of more than 200 photographs from Weegee’s collaboration with the Manhattan Police Department (1935–1947) is now on view. This body of work has previously been exhibited in leading museums around the world, including: Rupertinum (Salzburg, Austria), The Museum of Modern Art (Oxford, UK), SK Stiftung Kultur (Cologne, Germany), The Chrysler Museum of Art (Norfolk, VA, USA), The Philadelphia Art Alliance (Philadelphia, PA, USA), The Israel Museum (Jerusalem, Israel), Magasin 3 Konsthall (Stockholm, Sweden), and Ubu Gallery (New York, NY, USA).

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