Shooting War

LIFE
Magazine

In the period from the Great Depression to the Vietnam War, the majority of photographs printed and consumed in the United States appeared on the pages of illustrated magazines. Among them, *Life*, published weekly from 1936 to 1972, was both extraordinarily popular, with studies suggesting that at its height the magazine reached approximately 25 percent of the US population, and visually revolutionary. It used images in ways that fundamentally shaped how its readers understood photography and experienced key historical events.

Drawing on unprecedented access to *Life* magazine's picture and paper archives, this exhibition brings together original press prints, contact sheets, shooting scripts, internal memos, and layout experiments that shed new light on the collaborative process behind many now-iconic images and photographic stories. *Life*'s editorial and layout teams worked together, sequencing photographs and crafting brief captions to create stories that often ran across multiple pages of the magazine.

Life's impact relied on its approach to visual storytelling, and its photographs played an important role in twentieth-century dialogues surrounding war, race, technology, art, and national identity. Through the vision of its founder, Henry R. Luce, its editorial teams' points of view, and the demographics of its readers, *Life*'s stories promoted a predominately white, middle-class perspective on politics and culture. Even as technologies and the distribution of images have changed dramatically in the intervening decades, photographs remain potent tools of communication that can shape and influence our understanding of world events and cultures.

and the Power of Photography

LIFE Magazine and the Power of Photography

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SECTION 1

GETTING THE PICTURE

Multiple factors determined the making of photographs for *Life* magazine, including the details of the assignment, the idea for the story developed by the editorial staff, the selection of a particular photographer for the job, and the photographer's own decisions about how to best capture the images needed to illustrate a story. As *Life* picture editor Wilson Hicks noted, "A picture story starts with an event or an idea." *Life*'s editorial team turned events and ideas into assignments for photographers, though sometimes photographers pitched their own stories.

Many photographers developed specific skills over time that made them obvious choices for certain stories. On being given an assignment, a photographer would frequently work with a researcher, creating "story-building team," and then head out with a reporter, guidebook in hand. Once the assignment began, the focus of a story might shift, and a photographer's individual authorship, vision, and on-the-spot decisions became an essential part of the picture-making process. Photographers were expected to determine the best composition, lighting, and moment of exposure for any given scene while creating compelling images on an enormous variety of topics for *Life*'s readers.

Hiring Expert Photographers

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Founding *Life* Magazine

Inspired by earlier European picture magazines, Time Inc. publisher Henry R. Luce created an "experimental picture department" with the goal of bringing more photography into his publications and creating a new magazine. The German émigré Kurt Safranski and other editors with experience working on European magazines created mock-ups for *Life*, including recently discovered "dummy" magazines that are exhibited here for the first time. The dummies served as precursors to a test issue of *Life* titled "Rehearsal," which Luce mailed to potential subscribers and others. This experimentation inspired Luce's prospectus for his picture magazine, circulated to advertisers associated with his flagship publication, *Time*, promising to "reveal, every week, aspects of life and work which have never before been seen by the camera's miraculous second sight."

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Frame after Frame

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

***Vu*,** December 7, 1932

***Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung*,** April 29, 1934

***Le Soir Illustré*,** September 7, 1935

***Münchner Illustriete Presse*,** January 8, 1933

Princeton University Art Museum

LEFT

HENRY R. LUCE
American, born China, 1898–1967

"A Prospectus for a New Magazine," August 1936
Facsimile

The New-York Historical Society, New York

BELOW, LEFT TO RIGHT

KURT SAFRANSKI
American, born Germany, 1890–1964

Dummy A, ca. 1934

Dummy B, ca. 1934
Photographs by Martin Munkácsi (American, born Hungary, 1896–1963)

Gelatin silver prints, ink, and graphite on paper

Ryerson Image Centre, Toronto. Gift of Robert Lebeck Archive, 2019

KURT SAFRANSKI
American, born Germany, 1890–1964

Dummy I, late 1934
Photostats and ink on paper

The New-York Historical Society, New York

"Rehearsal," dummy for *Life* magazine,
September 24, 1936

Princeton University Art Museum

Hiring Expert Photographers

Publisher Henry R. Luce hired Margaret Bourke-White as one of *Life*'s first four salaried staff photographers and its only female photographer in its early years. Having already risen to prominence as a photojournalist on the staff of Luce's magazine *Fortune*, Bourke-White brought to *Life* expertise in photographing modern industry and human-interest stories. For the magazine's first issue, she was assigned to shoot the construction of the massive Fort Peck Dam, one of a series of public projects and programs initiated by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in response to the Great Depression.

Bourke-White reported to editor Daniel Longwell via telegram—a message communicated over phone lines and delivered in printed form—that she was "doing all possible on dam with changeable light." Her monumental image graced the magazine's first cover.

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Telegram from photographer Maragaret Bourke-White to *Life* editor Daniel Longwell, November 4, 1936

The New-York Historical Society, New York

***Life*,** November 23, 1936

Cover photograph by Margaret Bourke-White

Princeton University Art Museum

Hiring Expert Photographers

MARGARET BOURKE-WHITE
American, 1904–1971

Fort Peck Dam, Montana, 1936
Gelatin silver print

LIFE Picture Collection

Verso of Margaret Bourke-White's **Fort Peck Dam, Montana,** 1936, with notes added over subsequent decades

LIFE Picture Collection

Life labeled the backs of the photographs it published as a way to track them for possible reuse. This vintage press print of *Fort Peck Dam, Montana*, a detail of which graced *Life's* first cover, features the penciled phrase "This is cover picture printed full neg[ative]." It bears a host of stamps recording its inclusion in *Time* magazine and in later Time-Life books, as well as one reading "Famous Picture: Do Not Circulate."

Gaining Access

Despite the international reach of salaried staff photographers stationed across the world, *Life* would also contract freelance photographers and buy independent photographers' images for specific stories. For example, a letter from the renowned Canadian photographer Yousuf Karsh to *Life* editor Edward K. Thompson offering a portrait of the British prime minister Winston Churchill for publication shows the frequent collaboration between independent photographers and *Life*'s editors. Karsh's stately portrait of Churchill was published multiple times in *Life*.

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YOUSUF KARSH
Canadian, born Turkish Armenia, 1908–2002

Winston Churchill, 1941
Gelatin silver print

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Gift of Estrellita Karsh
in memory of Yousuf Karsh

BELOW

Letter from photographer Yousuf Karsh to *Life* associate editor Edward K. Thompson, January 5, 1941

The New-York Historical Society, New York

Following a Script

When editors at *Life* learned about the French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson's trip to China in late 1948 and his agreement to sell his photographs to one of *Life*'s European competitors, picture editor Wilson Hicks contacted the newly founded collective Magnum Photos to contract the photographer. Magnum Photos then sent Cartier-Bresson a telex—an electronically transmitted message—conveying *Life*'s directives about what to photograph. Instructions such as "go to tea houses get faces of quiet old men whose hands are clasped around covered cups of jasmine" effectively provided Cartier-Bresson with a script for what to look for in Peiping (Beijing), and his pictures show how closely he followed it.


Following a Script

FAR LEFT

Telex from Magnum Photos to photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson, November 25, 1948

Facsimile

Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson, Paris

LEFT

HENRI CARTIER-BRESSON

French, 1908–2004

Photographs from Peiping, 1948

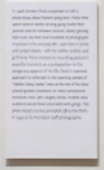
Gelatin silver prints

LIFE Picture Collection

Pitching a Story

In 1948 Gordon Parks proposed to *Life* a photo-essay about Harlem gang wars. Parks then spent several weeks driving gang leader Red Jackson and his followers around, slowly gaining their trust. He then took hundreds of photographs of Jackson in his everyday life—seen here in prints and contact sheets—with his mother, brother, and girlfriend. Parks insisted on recording Jackson's peaceful moments as a juxtaposition to the dangerous aspects of his life. Parks's nuanced approach is reflected in the opening spread of "Harlem Gang Leader," even as the rest of the story placed greater emphasis on more sensational moments that *Life*'s largely white, middle-class audience would have associated with gangs. The photo-essay's success prompted *Life* to hire Parks in 1949 as its first black staff photographer.

Pitching a Story



GORDON PARKS
American, 1912–2006

Red Jackson, Harlem, New York, 1948
Gelatin silver print

Princeton University Art Museum. Gift of the artist

Harlem Rooftops, Harlem, New York, 1948
Gelatin silver print

Princeton University Art Museum. Museum purchase, Hugh Leander Adams, Mary Trumbull Adams, and Hugh Trumbull Adams Princeton Art Fund

IN CASE

Spread from "Harlem Gang Leader," ***Life*****,** November 1, 1948
Photographs by Gordon Parks

Princeton University Art Museum

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

GORDON PARKS
American, 1912–2006

Gang Member with Brick, Harlem, New York, 1948
Gelatin silver print

Princeton University Art Museum. Museum purchase, Hugh Leander Adams, Mary Trumbull Adams, and Hugh Trumbull Adams Princeton Art Fund

Red Jackson with His Mother and Brother, Harlem, New York, 1948
Gelatin silver print

The Gordon Parks Foundation, Pleasantville, New York

Untitled, Harlem, New York, 1948
Gelatin silver print

The Gordon Parks Foundation, Pleasantville, New York

Night Rumble, Harlem, New York, 1948
Gelatin silver print

The Gordon Parks Foundation, Pleasantville, New York

FAR LEFT

Contact sheets of negatives by Gordon Parks, 1948
Gelatin silver prints

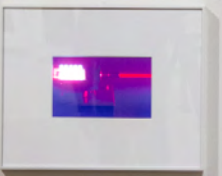
The Gordon Parks Foundation, Pleasantville, New York

Innovative Photographers

Life aimed to provide the public with examples of the most technically advanced photographs in a variety of fields. Gjon Mili's stroboscopic images of a gymnast depict movement invisible to the human eye, a technical feat made possible by a stationary camera capturing a subject in motion through a rapid succession of flashes.

Managing editor George P. Hunt noted that *Life* regularly turned to Fritz Goro "to take pictures which everyone else says are impossible to take." Through extensive experimentation with films and filters over hundreds of exposures, Goro photographed several applications of laser technology in images as impressive as the revolutionary invention they depict.

Innovative Photographers



TOP TO BOTTOM, LEFT TO RIGHT

FRITZ GORO
American, born Germany, 1901–1986

Red laser light focused through a lens blasts a pin-point hole through a razor blade in a thousandth of a second, 1962

Illuminated coils of projector used to create laser light, 1962

Color transparencies from digital files

LIFE Picture Collection

GJON MILI
American, born Albania, 1904–1984

Stroboscopic image of intercollegiate champion gymnast Newt Loken doing back somersault on parallel bars, 1942

Stroboscopic image of Newt Loken on horse executing leg circle, 1942

Stroboscopic image of Newt Loken doing floor leaps, 1942

Gelatin silver prints

LIFE Picture Collection

Frame after Frame

While some *Life* photographers shot as many as three thousand frames per story, Margaret Bourke-White was more methodical and typically created about one hundred negatives per story. The negatives on view here—made in the aftermath of the Ohio River flood in Louisville, Kentucky—reveal the photographer capturing images from different vantage points and show her interest in the graphic impact of signage. Bourke-White's juxtaposition of the billboard featuring a smiling white family touting "the American Way" and the "World's Highest Standard of Living" above a line of black Americans waiting for flood relief assistance highlights disparities between advertising and reality, prosperity and struggle.

Frame after Frame

SECTION I

GETTING THE PICTURE

MARGARET BOURKE-WHITE
American, 1904–1971

At the Time of the Louisville Flood, 1937

Gelatin silver print

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The Howard Greenberg Collection—Museum purchase with funds donated by the Phillip Leonian and Edith Rosenbaum Leonian Charitable Trust

Digital negatives, 1937

LIFE Picture Collection

On Assignment

Life often planned stories focused on social issues. "Nurse Midwife" looked at the challenges faced by licensed nurse-midwives, primarily black women, in the impoverished US South. Even before it was assigned, editors outlined the story using language that reveals the systemic racism underpinning its conceptualization. Once photographer W. Eugene Smith received the assignment, he took a two-week midwifery course and interviewed candidates to be his subject, ultimately choosing Maude Callen. Smith and his assistant spent almost a month shadowing Callen in Pineville, South Carolina, as she performed births, made emergency house calls, held vaccination clinics, and taught classes at the state-run midwifery institute. Smith shot twenty-six hundred frames and wrote home about the intensity of the assignment. His contact sheets and prints of Callen's varied and demanding work reflect more than *Life* originally outlined and would, he hoped, strike "a powerful blow . . . against the stupidity of racial prejudice."

On Assignment

NANCY GENET
American, 1912–2006

"Outline for Essay on 'Midwives,'" April 13, 1951
Facsimile

Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, Tucson

IN CASE

Contact sheets of negatives by W. Eugene Smith, 1951
Gelatin silver prints

LIFE Picture Collection

Letter from photographer W. Eugene Smith to *Life* associate editor Don Bermingham, July 21, 1951

The New-York Historical Society, New York

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

W. EUGENE SMITH
American, 1918–1978

Maude followed by a woman, hiking through forest, 1951
Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of International Center of Photography, New York.
The LIFE Magazine Collection, 2005

Nurse Midwife, 1951
Gelatin silver print

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The Howard Greenberg Collection—
Museum purchase with funds donated by the Phillip Leonian and Edith
Rosenbaum Leonian Charitable Trust

Schoolyard parking lot with people gathered to see nurse midwife, Maude Callen, South Carolina, 1951
Gelatin silver print

Princeton University Art Museum. Fowler McCormick,
Class of 1921, Fund

Newborn baby in makeshift crib near cold stove, 1951
Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of International Center of Photography, New York.
The LIFE Magazine Collection, 2005

Nurse midwife Maude Callen delivers a baby, Pineville, South Carolina, 1951
Gelatin silver print

Princeton University Art Museum. Fowler McCormick,
Class of 1921, Fund

Nurse midwife Maude Callen after 27 hours at work, 1951
Gelatin silver print

Princeton University Art Museum. Fowler McCormick,
Class of 1921, Fund

Shooting War

"Although we did not plan *Life* as a war magazine, it turned out that way," reflected Luce. Covering conflicts required *Life* photographers to embed with the military. During World War II the US government granted four photographers, including Robert Capa, permission to photograph the Allied landing in Normandy, France, known as D-Day. Capa recounted parts of his experience in his "caption file," detailed notes submitted with the photographer's film but censored by the military before arriving at *Life*'s offices.

Known for his harrowing photographs of the Vietnam War, Larry Burrows commented, "You can't photograph bullets flying through the air. . . . So it must be the wounded." Engaging in this high-risk photojournalistic endeavor, both Capa and Burrows were killed on assignments in combat zones.

Shooting War

LEFT

ROBERT CAPA
American, born Hungary, 1913–1954

American soldiers landing on Omaha Beach, D-Day, Normandy, France, June 6, 1944
Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of International Center of Photography, New York.
The Robert Capa and Cornell Capa Archive, Purchase, with funds provided by the ICP Acquisitions Committee and John L. Steffens, 2007

BELOW

Contact sheets of negatives by Robert Capa, 1944
Gelatin silver prints

Page from caption file for photographs taken by Robert Capa, June 1944

LIFE Picture Collection

LARRY BURROWS
British, 1926–1971

Reaching Out, Mutter Ridge, Vietnam, October 5, 1966
Dye transfer print

Princeton University Art Museum. Fowler McCormick,
Class of 1921, Fund

Four marines recover the body of a comrade under fire. On the right: French photographer Catherine Leroy, who had flown in on a supply helicopter, October 1966
Chromogenic print

Courtesy of the International Center of Photography, New York.
The LIFE Magazine Collection, 2005

IN CASE

MAYNARD PARKER
American, 1940–1998

Page from caption file for photographs taken by Larry Burrows, October 1966

LIFE Picture Collection

LARRY BURROWS
British, 1926–1971

Photographs from Vietnam, October 1966
Color transparencies from digital files

LIFE Picture Collection


Shooting War

ROBERT CAPA
American, born Hungary, 1913–1954

Normandy Invasion on D-Day, Soldier Advancing through Surf, June 6, 1944
Gelatin silver print

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The Howard Greenberg Collection—Museum purchase with funds donated by the Phillip Leonian and Edith Rosenbaum Leonian Charitable Trust

This photograph captures a soldier's view of D-Day, the Allied invasion of Normandy, France, during World War II. Only eleven of Robert Capa's photographs of the invasion are known today. Capa claimed to have shot more than one hundred frames, most of which he said *Life* accidentally destroyed while rushing them to press. Scholars question that episode's accuracy, though the scarcity of photographs of D-Day and this image's inclusion in *Life* publications at least eight times—as indicated on the back of the print—ensure its continued historical importance.

Verso of Robert Capa's **Normandy Invasion on D-Day, Soldier Advancing through Surf,** 1944, with notes added over subsequent decades

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The Howard Greenberg Collection—Museum purchase with funds donated by the Phillip Leonian and Edith Rosenbaum Leonian Charitable Trust

Photographer and Reporter

Many *Life* stories involved a photographer-reporter team going on assignment and then submitting detailed caption files with each prenumbered roll of film. In 1961 reporter Will Lang Jr. and photographer Paul Schutzer were assigned to document the construction of the Berlin Wall, a barrier that separated communist East Berlin from democratic West Berlin. Lang's notes highlight his own opinions of what to look for among the captured images, revealing the reporter's integral role in the picture selection process.

In the case of J. R. Eyerman's photograph of captivated moviegoers wearing 3-D glasses, reporter Stan Flink's commentary reveals that the assignment's original focus was on the technology of 3-D film rather than on the audience.

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Contact sheet of negatives by J. R. Eyerman, 1952

Gelatin silver print

LIFE Picture Collection

STAN FLINK

American, born 1924

Page from caption file for photographs taken by J. R. Eyerman, 1952

LIFE Picture Collection

J. R. EYERMAN
American, 1906–1985

Audience watches movie wearing 3-D spectacles, 1952
Gelatin silver print

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The Howard Greenberg Collection—Museum purchase with funds donated by the Phillip Leonian and Edith Rosenbaum Leonian Charitable Trust

Life presented Eyerman's photograph of an audience screening *Bwana Devil*, the first full-length three-dimensional movie in color, as a standalone image rather than as part of an extended photographic story. It was published in a section titled "Miscellany" above text—also printed on the back of this photograph—recounting that it was the moviegoers wearing Polaroid glasses, and not the film and its new technology, that stole the show.

Verso of J. R. Eyerman's **Audience watches movie wearing 3-D spectacles,** 1952, with notes added over subsequent decades

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The Howard Greenberg Collection—Museum purchase with funds donated by the Phillip Leonian and Edith Rosenbaum Leonian Charitable Trust

WILL LANG JR.
American, 1914–1968

Pages from caption file for photographs taken by Paul Schutzer, August 30, 1961

LIFE Picture Collection

Contact sheet of negatives by Paul Schutzer, 1961
Gelatin silver print

LIFE Picture Collection

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

PAUL SCHUTZER
American, 1930–1967

Commemorating death of East Berlin woman who tried to escape from sealed city, 1961

Barbed-wire tops Berlin Wall; West Berliners gather nearby, 1961

East German policeman flashes mirror into camera lenses of Western photographers, 1961

US tank with gun aimed at East German military vehicle on other side of Berlin Wall, 1961

Gelatin silver prints

LIFE Picture Collection

SECTION 2

CRAFTING PHOTO STORIES

Once undeveloped rolls of film and caption files arrived at *Life*'s offices, editorial teams selected images and determined how to adapt them for the printed page. The most elaborate of these would become photo essays, a visual format *Life* claimed to have invented. Photographers often shot thousands of images for a single story, and *Life*'s negative editors, such as Peggy Sargent (shown at right), and picture editors winnowed down the images to arrive at the final selection of photographs for a photo-essay, which generally ranged from five to eleven pages in length.

With photographic content finalized for photo-essays and other stories, the art director and layout artists then collaborated with writers, researchers, and fact-checkers to construct each page. A story's subject could determine the approach to its appearance, as one art director explained: "One story may call for panels of continuity or action with one objective in mind. Another may call for a larger symbolic picture to set the mood and excite further interest in smaller pictures making other points."

This complex editorial process concluded when final layouts were sent by train on Saturday evening from New York to Chicago, where the magazine would be printed by R. R. Donnelley & Sons starting Monday. Every Friday *Life* appeared on newsstands and in subscribers' mailboxes.

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***Life* photo editor Natalie Kosek reviews photographs,** 1946
Gelatin silver print

LIFE Picture Collection

***Life* magazine editorial staff at work, left to right: Wilson Hicks, Daniel Longwell, John Billings, Hubert Kay, Margaret Bassett, and Howard Richmond,** 1937
Gelatin silver print

LIFE Picture Collection

Making a Layout

Photographic stories came alive in *Life*'s layout department. Editors reviewed draft layouts and caption text, often pinning layout mock-ups on boards to make final selections. *FYI*, Time Inc.'s internal newsletter, detailed this process in a story (at right) featuring award-winning art director Charles Tudor and managing editor Edward K. Thompson.

Few layout mock-ups exist today because they were ephemeral steps along the way to the printed page. Those that do—three are on view in these cases—show experimentation with the scale, placement, and impact of the photographs. Placeholder text indicates that the pictorial message came first.


HORSEMATER LAY
MAYER THER

BELOW

Page from *FYI*, Time Inc. internal newsletter, July 27, 1951

New-York Historical Society, New York

AT RIGHT

Layout mock-ups for "The Compassion of Americans Brings a New Life for Flavio," July 1961

Photographs by Gordon Parks, *Flávio After Asthma Attack, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil*; Carl Iwasaki, Flávio being treated in Denver and Flávio on swingset, Denver

Gelatin silver developed-out paper photographs and printed text panels on paperboard

The Gordon Parks Foundation

Spread from "The Compassion of Americans Brings a New Life for Flavio," *Life*, July 21, 1961

Photographs by Gordon Parks, left; Carl Iwasaki, right

Princeton University Art Museum

Altering Images

Life often altered photographs for the printed page. Layouts sometimes necessitated the cropping of an image; for example, small slivers of the top and bottom of David Douglas Duncan's Korean War image were cropped out when it appeared in *Life*.

Other photographs, such as W. Eugene Smith's view from a World War II bunker, were retouched for clarity, with a dangling piece of metal visible on both the press print and the inverted contact sheet airbrushed out of the published version.

At the most extreme, *Life* might fabricate an image. A photocollage in which Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev's head is no longer centered directly below the Lincoln Memorial—in contrast to the published image—reveals experimentation with how best to visualize historical American values over Soviet communism.


Altering Images
LIFE
KHRUSHCHEV CONFRONTS THE REPUBLIC
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RIGHT

Spread from "There was a Christmas in Korea" ***Life*****,** December 25, 1950

Photographs by David Douglas Duncan

Princeton University Art Museum

FAR RIGHT

DAVID DOUGLAS DUNCAN
American, 1916–2018

Near the end of the road soldiers look but do not stop as they pass the bodies of men killed in the last Chinese ambush. These dead were picked up later, 1950

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of International Center of Photography, New York.
The LIFE Magazine Collection, 2005

W. EUGENE SMITH
American, 1918–1978

Battle of Iwo Jima—Aftermath, from this blockhouse in face of the ridge overlooking the Marines beachhead, 4-T gun and dead Japanese soldier on left shelled everything that moved, 1945
Gelatin silver print

Collection of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System.
Gift of Leo and Nina Pircher

Spread from "The Battlefield of Iwo," ***Life*****,** April 9, 1945
Photograph by W. Eugene Smith

Princeton University Art Museum

Contact sheet of negatives by W. Eugene Smith, 1945
Gelatin silver print

LIFE Picture Collection

Spread from "Khrushchev Confronts the Republic," *Life*, September 28, 1959

Photograph by Burton Glinn (American, 1925–2008)

Princeton University Art Museum

Mock-up of Nikita Khrushchev in front of the Lincoln Memorial, 1959

Photographs by Burton Glinn

Photocollage on board

LIFE Picture Collection

Positioning an Icon

Negative editors made indispensable decisions, and many photographers felt these editors shaped their careers. Markings on this contact sheet attest to the discerning eye of one such negative editor, who not only chose the best of Alfred Eisenstaedt's four shots of a sailor kissing a nurse but also suggested how to crop it to increase its impact in layout. *Life* printed this photograph full-page, giving it pride of place among the sixty-eight images comprising its coverage of victory celebrations at the end of World War II. This path to becoming an iconic photograph—a widely recognized and remembered image—began with a negative editor.

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RIGHT

Spread from "Victory Celebrations," *Life*, August 27, 1945
Photographs by ACME Newspictures, top left; Earl Hense, top right; *Miami Herald*, bottom; Alfred Eisenstaedt, right page

LIFE Picture Collection

Contact sheet of negatives by Alfred Eisenstaedt, 1945
Gelatin silver print, printed ca. 1955

LIFE Picture Collection

FAR RIGHT

ALFRED EISENSTAEDT
American, born Germany, 1898–1995

VJ Day in Times Square, New York City, 1945
Gelatin silver print

Collection of Alan and Susan Solomont

Building a Photo-Essay

Margaret Bourke-White knew how to build a compelling narrative through photographs. For her assignment on female industrial labor during World War II, she shot tight portraits of a diverse group of workers, including the African American Lugrash Larry, the Croatian-born Katherine Mrzljak, the Mexican American Dolores Macias, and the North Dakotan Lorraine Gallinger. *Life*'s layout department chose one female worker for the issue's cover and arranged ten of Bourke-White's portraits to form the centerpiece of her photo-essay "Women in Steel." The grid offered a vision of women equal in size and stature, attempting to normalize wartime female labor across racial and ethnic lines at a time of segregation and xenophobia. The crafting of this photo-essay aligned with the Office of War Information's strategies to encourage female magazine readers to join the war effort.


Building a
Photo-Essay

RIGHT

MARGARET BOURKE-WHITE
American, 1904–1971

Flame Burner Ann Zarik, 1943
Gelatin silver print, printed ca. 2000

Princeton University Art Museum. Museum purchase, Hugh Leander Adams, Mary Trumbull Adams, and Hugh Trumbull Adams Princeton Art Fund

FROM TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT

MARGARET BOURKE-WHITE
American, 1904–1971

Blast furnace cleaner Katherine Mrzljak, Carnegie-Illinois Steel Corporation, 1943

Steel worker Theresa Arana, Carnegie-Illinois Steel Corporation, 1943

Flame cutter Audrey Mae Hulse, American Bridge Company, 1943

Metallurgical observer Lorraine Gallinger, Carnegie-Illinois Steel Corporation, 1943

Blast Furnace Laborer Lugrash Larry, Carnegie-Illinois Steel Corporation, 1943

Welder Blanche Jenkins, Carnegie-Illinois Steel Corporation, 1943

Blacksmith's helper Victoria Brotko, 1943

Blast furnace cleaner Dolores Macias, Carnegie-Illinois Steel Corporation, 1943

Flame burner Ann Zarik at Armor Plate Division, Carnegie-Illinois Steel Corporation, 1943

Gelatin silver prints

LIFE Picture Collection

IN CASE

***Life*, August 9, 1943**

Cover photograph by Margaret Bourke-White

Princeton University Art Museum

Spread from "Women in Steel," *Life*, August 9, 1943

Photographs by Margaret Bourke-White

Princeton University Art Museum

LEFT

Digital spreads from "Women in Steel," *Life*, August 9, 1943

MARGARET BOURKE-WHITE
American, 1904–1971

Blast furnace cleaner Bernice Daunora, Carnegie-Illinois Steel Corporation, 1943
Gelatin silver print

LIFE Picture Collection

Margaret Bourke-White's photographs often portrayed individuals as representatives of larger communities. For a story originally titled "Women in Defense Industry,"—as printed on the back of this photograph—Bourke-White shot valorizing portraits of female steel workers during World War II. Bourke-White depicts Bernice Daunora wearing what *Life* describes as a breathing apparatus to protect her from the blast furnace fumes.

Verso of Margaret Bourke-White's **Blast furnace cleaner Bernice Daunora, Carnegie-Illinois Steel Corporation,** 1943, with notes added over subsequent decades

LIFE Picture Collection

Aligning Image with Text

Life invited readers of its September 27, 1963, issue to imagine the "dark and hopeless" world of twelve-year-old Sarah Jean Collins, a survivor of the white supremacist bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, which killed four girls. The article quotes at length a white Birmingham lawyer who laid blame for the racial violence on everyone who had "contributed to the popularity of hatred." This condemnation was echoed by *Life*'s use of Frank Dandridge's intensely intimate photograph of Collins, a choice underscored by a variant in which a woman and a man flank the girl's hospital bed. In the published image Dandridge takes up the woman's position, framing an image in which he—and therefore each viewer—hovers over Collins in a bedside vigil of concern.

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Disparities between Image and T

A photo essay on racial unrest in Birmingham, Alabama, exemplifies the incongruities that sometimes arise between *Life*'s images and text. The opening photograph by Charles Moore visually aligns *Life*'s predominantly white readers with the attacking firefighters, while the article's title—"They Fight a Foe That Won't Go Out"—underscores the futility of their actions in a period of intense civil protests by black Americans. A sequence of police attacking protesters with dogs is accompanied by text suggesting that the protesters provoked the attacks. In contrast, caption files submitted with Moore's film index the police for "moving in with clubs and dogs" and note that protesters threw "rocks and bricks" only after battling against the firefighters' hoses. Although Moore's images succeeded in showing that the white authorities were the aggressors and the black protesters victims, the text quotes no black participants, and the final page is given over to reactions from "shaken" whites.

FRANK DANDRIDGE
American, born 1938

Birmingham Bombing Victim Sarah Jean Collins, 1963
Gelatin silver print

LIFE Picture Collection

Spread from "Birmingham: An Alabaman's Great Speech Lays the Blame," ***Life*****,** September 27, 1963
Photograph by Frank Dandridge

LIFE Picture Collection

FRANK DANDRIDGE
American, born 1938

Birmingham Bombing Victim Sarah Jean Collins, 1963
Gelatin silver print

LIFE Picture Collection

Life editors selected this print from nearly four hundred images taken by Frank Dandridge following the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, by members of the Ku Klux Klan. It places *Life's* mostly white viewers in an intimate confrontation with Sarah Jean Collins's cut and bandaged face. As a black man, Dandridge would have had access to Collins's bedside in the University of Alabama's segregated hospital, enabling him to construct this vision of concern.

Verso of Frank Dandridge's **Birmingham Bombing Victim Sarah Jean Collins,** 1963, with notes added over subsequent decades

LIFE Picture Collection

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FROM LEFT

CHARLES MOORE
American, 1931–2010

Attacked by police dogs, Birmingham, May 3, 1963, 1963
Gelatin silver print

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The Howard Greenberg Collection—Museum purchase with funds donated by the Phillip Leonian and Edith Rosenbaum Leonian Charitable Trust

Police dogs are turned onto protesters during a civil rights demonstration, Birmingham, Alabama, May 3,1963
Gelatin silver print

Ryerson Image Centre, Toronto. The Black Star Collection

Police using dogs to attack civil rights demonstrators, Birmingham, Alabama, May 3, 1963
Gelatin silver print

International Center of Photography, New York. The LIFE Magazine Collection, 2005

IN CASE, FROM LEFT

MIKE DURHAM
American, born 1935

Page from caption file for photographs taken by Charles Moore, May 1963

LIFE Picture Collection

Spreads from "They Fight a Fire That Won't Go Out," *Life*, May 17, 1963
Photographs by Charles Moore

Princeton University Art Museum

FROM LEFT

ALBERT FENN
American, 1913–1995

***Life* magazine on an automated printing press at R. R. Donnelley & Sons, Chicago,** ca. 1956
Gelatin silver print

LIFE Picture Collection

***Life* magazine in production at R. R. Donnelley & Sons, Chicago,** ca. 1957
Gelatin silver print

LIFE Picture Collection

***Life* magazine copies, affixed with address labels, flow down a conveyor track to the shipping area, R. R. Donnelley & Sons, Chicago,** April 1962
Gelatin silver print

LIFE Picture Collection

SECTION 3

LIFE'S PHOTOGRAPHIC IMPACT

SECTION 3

LIFE'S PHOTOGRAPHIC IMPACT

From its earliest issues sold on newsstands and delivered to homes in late 1936, *Life* realized its potential power and reach. The magazine's circulation went from 1 to 2 million between its first and second year, and it peaked at more than 8.5 million in 1969. Estimates for pass-along readership—the number of people who shared each copy of *Life* in spaces like waiting rooms and offices—suggest that the magazine may have regularly reached about one in four people in the United States. Readers did not passively consume *Life*'s photographs. They responded to them by writing letters to *Life*'s editors, purchasing extra copies of special editions, and even offering assistance to individuals profiled in the magazine.

Life also perpetuated its own influence by repackaging its photographs and using its technical sophistication and business savvy to outpace its competitors. The rise of television, however, caused audiences and advertisers to move away from illustrated magazines, and *Life* was compelled to end its weekly run after 1,864 issues on December 29, 1972.

LEFT TO RIGHT

A newsstand customer reaches for *Life*'s first issue, New York City, December 1936
Gelatin silver print

LIFE Picture Collection

American soldiers on the front lines read *Life* and *Newsweek* during World War II, 1944
Gelatin silver print

LIFE Picture Collection

RALPH MORSE
American, 1917–2014

A sailor relaxes aboard a US Navy cruiser while reading a copy of *Life* during World War II, 1942
Gelatin silver print

LIFE Picture Collection

MYRON H. DAVIS
American, 1919–2010

Mail carrier delivering *Life* magazine to subscriber, 1958
Gelatin silver print

LIFE Picture Collection

Life as a Brand

Life's immediate popular success quickly transformed the magazine into a recognizable brand. The magazine's tenth-anniversary cover self-consciously reinforced its iconic status with a black-and-white photograph of a ten-year-old girl holding the first issue with only *Life*'s bold red logo printed in color. *Life* inspired a host of copycat picture magazines in Europe and the United States as early as 1938, many of which mirrored its cover design. Responding to a desire for consistent coverage of black American experiences, *Ebony* magazine built on *Life*'s successful picture magazine format. It adopted *Life*'s red logo box while also innovatively publishing color photographic covers nearly a decade before *Life* would consistently publish its own color covers.

Life as a Brand

FAR LEFT

***Life*, November 25, 1946**
Cover photograph by Hebert Gehr

LIFE Picture Collection

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

***Nuit et Jour*, August 23, 1945**

***Ebony*, August 1947**

***Match*, November 3, 1938**

***Picture Post*, August 5, 1939**

***Heute*, March 15, 1947**

***Point de Vue Images du Monde*, June 29, 1950**

Princeton University Art Museum

Repurposing Photographs

Life's editors archived photographic negatives and prints by staff and freelance photographers in an image library called the picture morgue. Once published in *Life*, these photographs retained their cultural relevance even beyond the pages of the magazine: *Life* repackaged photographs thematically into Educational Reprints to extend its news coverage into schools and libraries; Henri Cartier-Bresson chose for the cover of his book *People of Moscow* the same photograph featured on an earlier *Life* cover; and the art historian Irving Sandler appropriated Nina Leen's group portrait for the frontispiece of his book codifying the Abstract Expressionist movement in American art.

Repurposing Photographs

TOP

"Negro History: The Mobilization of Black Strength," ***Life Educational Reprint*** **63,** 1969
Cover photograph by Charles Moore (American, 1931–2010)

"Gandhi: The Nonviolent Activist," ***Life Educational Reprint*** **17,** ca. 1968
Cover photograph by Margaret Bourke-White (American, 1904–1971)

"Threatened America: Fight over the Wilderness," ***Life Educational Reprint*** **93,** 1970
Cover photograph by John Loengard (American, born 1934)

LIFE Picture Collection

MIDDLE

Life**,** January 17, 1955
Cover photograph by Henri Cartier-Bresson (French, 1908–2004)

Princeton University Art Museum

The People of Moscow (1955)
By Henri Cartier-Bresson

Princeton University Art Museum

BOTTOM

Spread from "The Metropolitan and Modern Art," ***Life*****,** January 15, 1951
Photograph by Nina Leen (American, born Russia, 1909/1914–1995)

LIFE Picture Collection

The Triumph of American Painting: A History of Abstract Expressionism (1970)
By Irving Sandler (American, 1925–2018)
Frontispiece photograph by Nina Leen

Princeton University Art Museum

Reader Responses

Life took reader feedback seriously, tracking reactions from its largely white, middle-class audience, especially when covering a controversial topic. For instance, reviewing reader responses to Carl Mydans's "Tule Lake," a photo-essay on a California incarceration camp for Japanese and Japanese Americans during World War II, reveals which letters to the editor *Life* decided to print in subsequent issues and the racist and xenophobic responses that the editors elected not to print. Two published letters criticize the treatment of the incarcerated pictured by Mydans, while *Life*'s internal reader report—a summary of all letters to the editor—notes unpublished responses from seventeen readers who proclaim that they "hate all Japs."

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Repurposing Photographs

LEFT TO RIGHT

CARL MYDANS
American, 1907–2004

Drum majorettes at Japanese incarceration camp, Tule Lake, California, 1944
Gelatin silver print

LIFE Picture Collection

Roll call is taken by the US Army at Japanese incarceration camp, Tule Lake, California, 1944
Gelatin silver print

LIFE Picture Collection

A game of basketball at Japanese incarceration camp, Tule Lake, California, 1944
Gelatin silver print

LIFE Picture Collection

Young man playing guitar in the stockade, Tule Lake incarceration camp, California, 1944
Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of International Center of Photography, New York.
The LIFE Magazine Collection, 2005

IN CASE, FROM LEFT

Page from "Tule Lake," *Life*, March 20, 1944
Photographs by Carl Mydans

Princeton University Art Museum

Page from "Letters to the Editors," *Life*, April 10, 1994

LIFE Picture Collection

BEULAH HOLLAND
American, 1909–2007

"Report on the March 20th Issue," April 24, 1944
Microfilm facsimile

The New-York Historical Society, New York

AT LEFT

Digital spreads from "Tule Lake," *Life*, March 20, 1944

Positioning an Icon

Verso of Carl Mydans's photograph **Nine arrivals at Japanese incarceration camp, Tule Lake, California**, 1944, with notes added over subsequent decades

LIFE Picture Collection

Handwritten text on the back of this photograph describes "pitiful Japanese" arriving at the Tule Lake incarceration camp in Northern California from the Manzanar War Relocation Center in Southern California. The red "Used in *Life* March 20 1944" and "Overseas Edition" stamps signal the international reach of *Life*'s controversial photo-essay about Tule Lake. During World War II, *Life* collaborated with the US Army to create lighter-weight, abbreviated five issues of the magazine to distribute to forces deployed overseas.

CARL MYDANS
American, 1907–2004

New arrivals at Japanese incarceration camp, Tule Lake, California, 1944
Gelatin silver print

LIFE Picture Collection

Verso of Carl Mydans's photograph **New arrivals at Japanese incarceration camp, Tule Lake, California,** 1944, with notes added over subsequent decades

LIFE Picture Collection

Handwritten text on the back of this photograph describes "disloyal Japanese" arriving at the Tule Lake incarceration camp in Northern California from the Manzanar War Relocation Center in Southern California. The red "Used in *Life* March 20 1944" and "Overseas Edition" stamps signal the international reach of *Life*'s controversial photo-essay about Tule Lake. During World War II, *Life* collaborated with the US Army to create lighter-weight, advertisement-free issues of the magazine to distribute to forces deployed overseas.

Publishing Holocaust Photographs

"Dead men will have indeed died in vain if live men refuse to look at them." That editorial declaration accompanied one of the first photo-essays to picture the death and devastation in recently liberated German concentration camps at the end of World War II. These photographs by four *Life* staff photographers—printed in vivid detail at large scale with minimal surrounding text—challenged readers to contend visually with gruesome Nazi atrocities, even if *Life* refused to identify any of the victims as Jews. *Time* and *Newsweek*, in contrast, published fewer photographs and diminished imagery of the camp's horrors by recycling shots from news agencies like ACME Newspictures and presenting them as small illustrations amid long articles.

Spread from "Atrocities," *Life*, May 7, 1945
Photographs by George Rodger (British, 1908–1995), left page, and right page, top; Margaret Bourke-White (American, 1904–1971), right page, bottom

Spread from "Nazi Policy of Organized Murder Blocks Germany for All History," *Newsweek*, April 30, 1945
Photographs by ACME Newspictures and Signal Corps from Associated Press

Princeton University Art Museum

Spread from "Atrocities," *Life*, May 7, 1945
Photographs by William Vandivert (American, 1912–1989)

Spread from "Foreign News: Germany," *Time*, April 30, 1945
Photograph by ACME Newspictures

Princeton University Art Museum

Spread from "Atrocities," *Life*, May 7, 1945
Photographs by John Florea (American, 1916–2000), left page; George Rodger, right page

Princeton University Art Museum

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Princeton University Art Museum

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Photograph by ACME Newspictures

Princeton University Art Museum

Spread from "Atrocities," *Life*, May 7, 1945
Photographs by John Florea (American, 1916–2000), left page; George Rodger, right page

Princeton University Art Museum

International Reach

Gordon Parks's photographs of poverty in Brazil exemplify *Life*'s international coverage during the 1960s, which tended to reinforce government narratives about the danger of communist expansion at the height of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. Originally intended by *Life*'s editors to show how widespread poverty could provide fertile ground for communism, this story focused on young Flávio da Silva, living in one of Rio de Janeiro's working-class neighborhoods known as favelas, with his family of ten. The photo-essay prompted readers to mail in $27,498—more than $235,000 in today's dollars—within a year to support Flávio's medical treatment in Denver and to fund the da Silvas' new home in Rio. The Brazilian publication *O Cruzeiro* rejected this US paternalism and sent Henri Ballot to photograph New York City's urban poor. Ballot's focus on a young Puerto Rican boy and his family mimicked Parks's images, drawing attention to the racial and social inequities in the United States.

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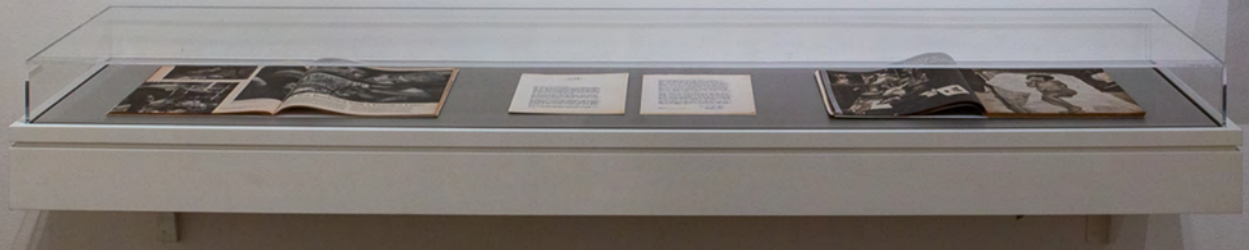

FROM LEFT

GORDON PARKS
American, 1912–2006

Flávio After Asthma Attack, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1961
Gelatin silver print

Princeton University Art Museum. Museum purchase, Hugh Leander Adams, Mary Trumbull Adams, and Hugh Trumbull Adams Princeton Art Fund

***Life*,** July 21, 1961
Cover photograph by Carl Iwasaki (American, 1923–2016)

Princeton University Art Museum

IN CASE, FROM LEFT

Spread from "Freedom's Fearful Foe: Poverty," *Life*,
June 16, 1961
Photographs by Gordon Parks

LIFE Picture Collection

Letter from *Life* managing editor George P. Hunt to Flavio Fund contributors, 1961

The New-York Historical Society, New York

Spread from "Nôvo recorde americano: Miséria,"
***O Cruzeiro*,** October 8, 1961
Photographs by Henri Ballot (Brazilian, 1921–1997), left and right; Gordon Parks, left inset

The Gordon Parks Foundation, Pleasantville, New York

Digital spreads from:

"Freedom's Fearful Foe: Poverty," ***Life*****,** June 16, 1961

"A Great Urge to Help Flavio," ***Life*****,** July 7, 1961

"The Compassion of Americans Brings a New Life for Flavio," ***Life*****,** July 21, 1961

"Aim and Response," ***Life*****,** July 28, 1961

"Letters to the Editors on the July 21 Issue," ***Life*****,** August 11, 1961

Exclusive Images

The morning after President John F. Kennedy's death, *Life* regional editor Richard Stolley acquired exclusive rights to the amateur filmmaker Abraham Zapruder's 8mm home movie of the assassination, guaranteeing *Life*'s sole control over the film. The national importance of the film prompted heated internal debate, including over the ethics of publishing the film stills—single frames from the movie—in color after its first black-and-white printing. *Life* eventually decided to use color in its December 9, 1963, newsstand-only memorial issue. The magazine's handling of the film would later be praised for respectfully conveying the nation's collective "loss of innocence."

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ABRAHAM ZAPRUDER
American, born Ukraine, 1905–1970

Frames 183, 232, 258, and 309 from the film of President John F. Kennedy's assassination, November 22, 1963
Inkjet prints from digital files

LIFE Picture Collection

IN CASE
Spread from "The Assassination of President Kennedy," *Life*, November 29, 1963
Stills from a film by Abraham Zapruder

LIFE Picture Collection

Memo from *Life* art director Bernard Quint to managing editor George P. Hunt, November 26, 1963

The New-York Historical Society, New York

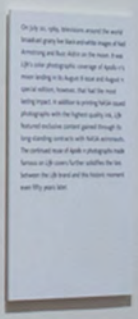
Spread from "Split-Second Horror as the Sniper's Bullets Struck," *Life*, December 9, 1963
Stills from a film by Abraham Zapruder

LIFE Picture Collection

Competing with Television

On July 20, 1969, televisions around the world broadcast grainy live black-and-white images of Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin on the moon. It was *Life*'s color photographic coverage of *Apollo 11*'s moon landing in its August 8 issue and August 11 special edition, however, that had the most lasting impact. In addition to printing NASA-issued photographs with the highest-quality ink, *Life* featured exclusive content gained through its long-standing contracts with NASA astronauts. The continued reuse of *Apollo 11* photographs made famous on *Life* covers further solidifies the ties between the *Life* brand and this historic moment even fifty years later.

Competing with Television



NASA
***Apollo 11* moon landing,** July 20, 1969
Television footage

***Life*,** August 8, 1969
Cover photograph by NASA

Princeton University Art Museum

***Life*, special edition,** August 11, 1969
Cover photograph by Neil Armstrong for NASA

LIFE Picture Collection

Life: The Moon Landing (2019)
Cover photograph by Neil Armstrong for NASA

Princeton University Art Museum


LIFE
TO THE MOON AND BACK

Bausch & Lomb

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

NASA
The Earth, from the Moon, 1969
Chromogenic print

LIFE Picture Collection

NASA
Tranquility Base and flag from lunar module window, 1969
Chromogenic print

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Abbott Lawrence Fund

NEIL ARMSTRONG
American, 1930–2012

Buzz Aldrin about to take first steps on the moon, 1969
Chromogenic print

LIFE Picture Collection

Buzz Aldrin walking toward Armstrong, 1969
Chromogenic print

Collection of Rüdiger Pohl

BELOW

NEIL ARMSTRONG
American, 1930–2012

BUZZ ALDRIN
American, born 1930

MICHAEL COLLINS
American, born Italy, 1930

Nine photographs taken during NASA's *Apollo 11* mission,
July 1969

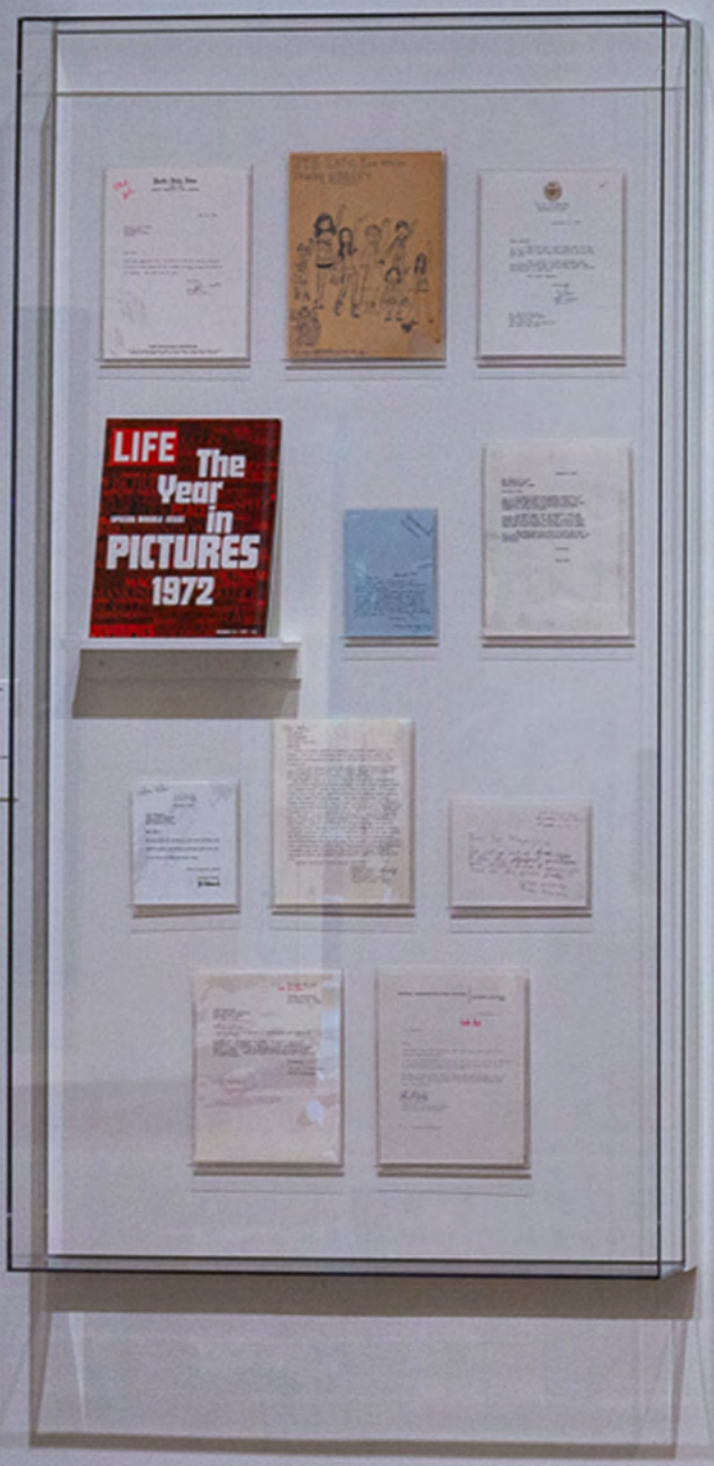
Color transparencies from digital files

LIFE Picture Collection

End of an Era

Life announced its closure as a weekly magazine in December 1972 after years of struggling against television's popularity as well as increased publishing and postage costs. The editors were inundated with letters thanking the magazine and begging them to reconsider. In spite of *Life*'s fundamental commitment to photography, the editors elected not to include a photograph on the magazine's final cover, instead printing only headlines, including "Goodbye."

In the years since 1972 *Life* has released books featuring its photographs and returned as a monthly magazine from 1978 through 2000. It continues to print special issues today.



End of an Era

Life announced its closure as a weekly magazine in December 1972 after years of struggling against television's popularity as well as increased publishing and postage costs. The editors were inundated with letters thanking the magazine and begging them to reconsider. In spite of *Life*'s fundamental commitment to photography, the editors elected not to include a photograph on the magazine's final cover, instead printing only headlines, including "Goodbye."

In the years since 1972 *Life* has released books featuring its photographs and returned as a monthly magazine from 1978 through 2000. It continues to print special issues today.

Letters and a drawing from readers to the editors of *Life*, December 1972

The New-York Historical Society, New York

SECOND ROW, LEFT

***Life*, December 29, 1972**

LIFE Picture Collection

SECOND ROW, RIGHT

Letter from *Life* publisher Garry Valk to Mrs. Charles S. Levy, January 9, 1973

The New-York Historical Society, New York

Life Magazine and the Power of Photography

is organized by the Princeton University Art Museum and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

This exhibition is curated by Katherine A. Bussard, Peter C. Bunnell Curator of Photography at the Princeton University Art Museum, Kristen Gresh, Estrellita and Yousuf Karsh Senior Curator of Photographs at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and Alissa Schapiro, PhD candidate in art history at Northwestern University.

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