History of photography (part 5): the modern era

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Outline

- 1900-1920s - the age of ism’s
- photojournalism in the snapshot age
- 1920s-1940s - modernism
- World War II
- Pulitzer Prize photographs
- LIFE magazine
- post-1940s - post-modernism
1900-1920s - the age of ism’s

- Cubism

Pablo Picasso,
Le Guitariste, 1910
1900-1920s - the age of ism’s

- Cubism

Paul Cézanne,
Table, Napkin, Fruit,
1900
1900-1920s - the age of ism’s

- Cubism

Le Corbusier,
Still Life, 1920
1900-1920s - the age of ism’s

✧ Cubism

✧ Constructivism

Vladimir Tatlin, model for monument to the Third International, 1920

Soviet propaganda poster, 1941
1900-1920s - the age of ism's

- Cubism
- Constructivism
- Dada(ism)
  - chaos, irrationality, anti-art

Hannah Höch, Cut with the Dada Kitchen Knife through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch in Germany, 1919

Marcel Duchamp, Fountain, 1917 (photograph by Alfred Stieglitz)
1900-1920s - the age of ism’s

✧ Cubism
✧ Constructivism
✧ Dada(ism)

✧ revolutionary uprisings
  • Russian Revolution, Communism, Socialism, Fascism

✧ age of experimentation
  • the moribund art of the old needs to be jettisoned
  • down with tradition, up with the avant-garde
  • embrace the chaos of war and revolution

✧ photographer as ideologue
Camera-less images

Man Ray, 
Rayograph, 1922

Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, 
Photogram, 1925

Man Ray, 
Rayograph, 1922

William Henry Fox Talbot, 1839

(Newhall)
Photomontage

Paul Citroen, Metropolis, 1925

John Heartfield, Adolf the Superman; He Eats Gold and Spews Idiocies, 1932
Photographer as ideologue

Lewis Hine, Addie Card, Spinner, Vermont, 1915

Lewis Hine, poster, 1915
Photographer as ideologue

Bill Brandt,
Halifax, 1936

Rainswept Roofs, 1930s

(Rosenblum)
Photojournalism

Arnold Genthe,
The San Francisco Fire,
1906

(Rosenblum)
World War I

23rd infantry fighting in Europe, photographer unknown, 1918
World War I

- mustard gas, machine guns, trench warfare, 37 million casualties
- cameras and film allowed photographers to shoot on the front lines
Other catastrophes

Sam Shere, Explosion of the Hindenburg, 1937

(Newhall)
1920s-1940s - modernism

- modern architecture (a.k.a. International Style)
  - spare design, no decoration
  - strong geometry, primary colors (or white)

Le Corbusier, Villa Savoye, 1929

Mies van der Rohe, Barcelona Pavillion, 1929
modernism

(a.k.a. International Style)

- spare design, no decoration
- strong geometry, primary colors (or white)

Le Corbusier,
Chapel at Ronchamps, 1954

Mies van der Rohe,
Seagram Building, 1958
1920s-1940s - modernism

- modern architecture (a.k.a. International Style)
  - spare design, no decoration
  - strong geometry, primary colors (or white)

- modern furniture

Marcel Breuer, chair, 1928

Charles Eames, chair, 1940
1920s-1940s - modernism

- modern architecture (a.k.a. International Style)
  - spare design, no decoration
  - strong geometry, primary colors (or white)

- modern furniture

- the “straight photograph”
  - un hackneyed themes
  - strong geometry
  - unconventional viewpoints
  - sharp definition - the f/64 club
  - the industrial aesthetic - New Objectivity, Precisionists
The straight photograph

Jan Lauschmann,
Castle Staircase, 1927

(Rosenblum)
Precisionists

Paul Outerbridge, Marmon Crankshaft, 1923
Precisionists

portrait of Frida Kahlo

Imogen Cunningham, Two Callas, 1929
Precisionists

Portrait of Frida Kahlo

Self-portrait with monkeys, 1938
The attack on Pearl Harbor

USS Arizona burning

USS West Virginia
and USS Tennessee
USS Shaw exploding, photographer unknown, 1941
Photographer as propagandist

“Stars over Berlin and Tokyo will soon replace these factory lights reflected in the noses of America’s fighting planes at Douglas Aircraft’s Long Beach, California plant.” (photographer unknown)
Photographer as propagandist

(Dimitri Kessel (?), “Giant Gears in a shop in Massachusetts will become parts of U.S. warships”, 1943)
Hollywood during the war

Large miniature model of Tokyo Bay, to make training films for bombing crews, c. 1943
Photojournalism in World War II

Robert Capa, Loyalist Militiaman at the Moment of Death, 1936
Photojournalism in World War II

Robert Capa, D-Day Landings in Normandy, 1944
Photojournalism in World War II

Dorothea Lange, Dust Storm at Mazanar Relocation Center, 1942
Showing casualties

George Strock, 
Three Dead Americans, 1943 
(first photograph of dead soldiers allowed published by U.S. censors)
The decisive battle of World War II

Stalingrad, July 1942 - February 1943
Dmitri Baltermants, Identifying the Dead, Russian Front, 1942
Joe Rosenthal, Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima, 1943
Eddie Adams,
Executing a Vietcong Officer, 1968
The Pulitzer Prize Photographs

John Filo,
Kent State Shootings, 1970
Huynh Cong Ut, Children fleeing a “friendly fire” napalm attack, 1973
LIFE magazine

Andreas Feininger (LIFE photographer), The Photojournalist, 1955
LIFE magazine photographs

Alfred Eisenstadt,
V-J Day, 1945
LIFE magazine photographs

Edward Clark, Among the Mourners, 1945
LIFE magazine photographs

Gjon Mili,
Pablo Picasso sketching with
a penlight, 1949
LIFE magazine photographs

Hank Walker,
Jack and Bobbie
(John and Robert Kennedy),
1960
Miscellany

J.R. Eyerman,
3-D Movie, 1952
Miscellany

Jytte Bjerregaard,
Guess who’s coming to dinner?, 1955
Atomic bomb test at Bikini Atoll, photographer unknown, 1946
Post-1940s - post-modernism

- disillusionment with modernism after WWII
- photography dominated by photojournalism, television, and advertising, or trivialized by Kodak Instamatics

- artists return to experimentation
  - straight, stark, discordant, alienated, grotesque, ambiguous, pathetic, misfit
The Decisive Moment, a book of photographs by Henri Cartier-Bresson

Valencia, 1933

Chosen by TIME as Best Picture of 20th century

Paris, 1932
Echoes of Surrealism

Henri Cartier-Bresson
Muslim women praying, Kashmir, 1948

Salvadore Dali,
The Persistence of Memory, 1931

Rene Magritte,
Not to be Reproduced, 1937
Social caricature

Weegee, The Critic, 1943

(Newhall)
On the edge of pathetic

Diane Arbus,
Identical Twins,
1966
On the edge of pathetic

Diane Arbus,
Mother Holding Her Child,
1967

(Rosenblum)
Character study

Mary Ellen Mark,
“Tiny” in Her
Halloween Costume,
1983

(Rosenblum)
Ambiguity

Pedro Meyer, The Unmasking in the Square, 1981 (Rosenblum)
And further experimentation

David Hockney,
Place Furstenberg, Paris, 1985
Slide credits