



015

# WEEGEE COLLECTION

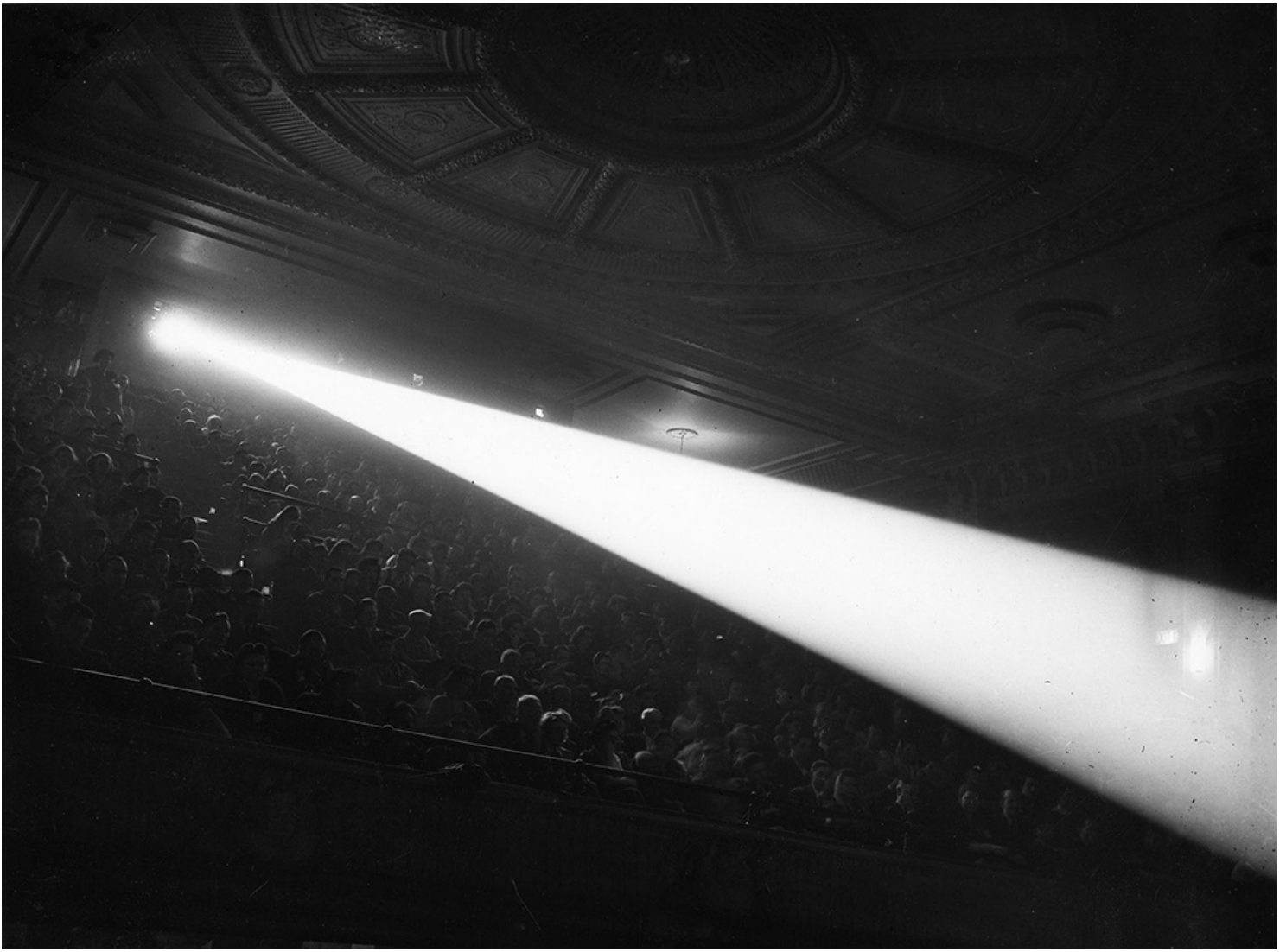
*"I HAVE NO INHIBITIONS AND NEITHER DOES MY CAMERA..."*

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**SIDE**  
TOURING

SIDE  
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064

## WEEGEE COLLECTION

Between the 1930s and 1960s, Arthur Fellig (better known as Weegee) documented the raw intensity of New York City's streets. Working primarily at night, he captured crime scenes, tenement fires, desperate crowds, and moments of unexpected humor with an unflinching eye for the surreal drama of urban life.

Through stark black-and-white photographs, the exhibition presents an uncompromising portrait of mid-century New York. Weegee's images strip the city to its bare essence - its violence, its tragedies, its eccentricities - offering a visceral and deeply human record of people living on society's margins. His signature use of a Speed Graphic camera and a harsh flash isolated his subjects, emphasizing the drama and immediacy of their circumstances.

What makes Weegee's work distinct is its intimate access to crime and spectacle. A master of timing,

he listened to police radio broadcasts, often arriving at crime scenes before the authorities. His images stand alone as striking documents but are also infused with his own wry commentary, which offers insight into his relationship with the city and its inhabitants.

Weegee's brutal honesty and keen understanding of human nature continue to challenge photographic storytelling. Widely celebrated in his time, his work remains a defining example of documentary photography.

In 1981, Side Gallery in Newcastle upon Tyne organized the first UK tour of Weegee's work, marking a significant milestone in bringing his compelling narratives to a British audience. This initiative fostered a lasting relationship between Side Gallery and Weegee's widow, Wilma Wilcox, which continued until her passing in the early 1990s.

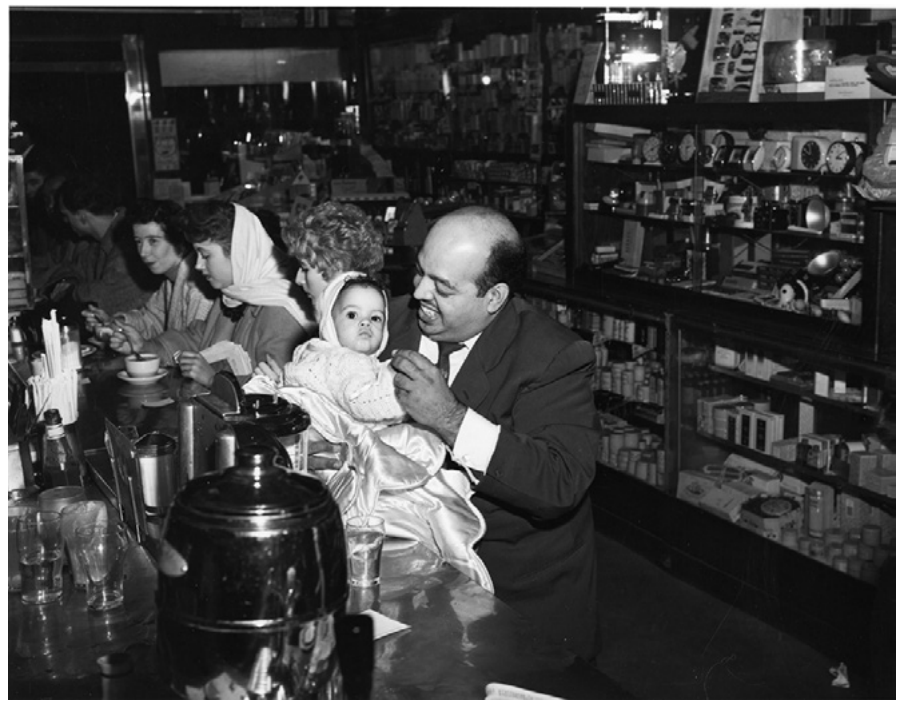


102

**“Being a free-lance photographer was not the easiest way to make a living. There had to be a good meaty story to get the editors to buy the pictures. A truck crash with the driver trapped inside, his face a criss-cross of blood... a tenement-house fire, with the screaming people being carried down an aerial ladder clutching their babies, dogs, cats, canaries, parrots, monkeys, and even snakes... a just-shot gangster, lying in the gutter, well dressed in his dark suit and pearl hat, hot off the griddle, with a priest, who seemed to appear from nowhere, giving him his last rites... just-caught stick-up men, lady burgers, etc. These were the pictures that I took and sold.**

**It was during the Depression, and people could forget their own troubles by reading about others.”**

Weegee



118

## WHY NOW?

Weegee’s work occupies a crucial place within the history of documentary photography, both for its methodological innovations and its raw, unsentimental depiction of urban life. As discussions surrounding the ethics of photography, surveillance, and media sensationalism evolve, Weegee’s work serves as an essential case study in examining how images shape public perception and memory.

By working at the intersection of journalism and artistic expression, Weegee anticipated contemporary debates about the role of visual media in constructing narratives of crime, poverty, and urban struggle. His images highlight the blurred boundaries between truth, voyeurism, and social commentary.

Moreover, his work is particularly resonant in an era where mass media and real-time documentation dominate public discourse. With the proliferation of smartphone photography and citizen journalism, revisiting Weegee’s process (his use of police radio, his dramatic flash lighting, his immediate, immersive approach) offers historical grounding for contemporary visual storytelling.



053

## CURATORIAL DIRECTION

**Crime and Urban Drama** Weegee's stark depictions of crime scenes, murder investigations, and underworld encounters.

**The Underbelly of the City** Tenement life, homeless shelters, and the struggle of the working class.

**Public Spectacle** Coney Island, jazz clubs, late-night revelers, and the surreal contrasts of city life.

**Relationships** Parenthood, friendship, and love in the inner city.

Works can be displayed chronologically or by theme.

## INSTITUTIONAL RELEVANCE

**For Photography and Art Institutions** this exhibition showcases one of the most important documentary photographers of the 20th century, featuring fine art prints produced by master print maker Sid Kaplan.

**For Social History and Cultural Spaces** Weegee's work offers a raw and unfiltered look at mid-century urban life with parallels to contemporary issues of crime, poverty, and voyeurism.

**For Academic and Public Engagement** these photographs provide a compelling visual archive, sparking discussions on ethics in journalism, social justice, and the evolution of documentary photography.



074

## EXHIBITION CONTENT

### Space Required

Approximately 60 - 90 linear metres. However the content of the exhibition can be curated down to accommodate smaller spaces. We can help advise on adapting the show to best suit your space.

### Artworks

137 silver gelatin vintage prints. Currently unframed.

The exhibition prints were made by Sid Kaplan.

### Price

On request dependent on location and size of venue.

## INTERPRETATION & ENGAGEMENT

### Contextual Texts

Original interpretation materials from Side's 1981 Weegee Collection touring show are available in both original and facsimile form.

In 2008 Amber's Pat MacCarthy interviewed master printer Sid Kaplan about Weegee, Wilma Wilcox (Weegee's wife), and the printing of the Weegee Portfolio. This exclusive oral history is able for inclusion within exhibition projects.

### Educational and Public Engagement

Side can offer curatorial responses, panel discussions and educational workshops inspired by the work within this collection.



034



076

## WHAT EXHIBITION HIRE COVERS

**Loan of exhibition** including all artworks and display content for up to 12 weeks at your venue, plus additional time for installation and take-down.

**Suggested hang** created to the size and scope of your venue.

**Exhibition Interpretation** to use and reproduce, including wall panels, information sheets, written guides to work.

**Media Pack** with agreed digital images and press release for your press campaign.

**Support** from our curator and exhibitions team, with advice on curatorial and technical matters.

## WHAT YOUR VENUE WILL NEED TO COVER

**Two-way Transport** of the exhibition to and from Side and insurance in transit and in situ.

**Exhibition Installation**

**Travel and Accommodation** for a member of the Side team to attend installation if appropriate.

**Framing of Prints & Fabrication** of any interpretation materials such as wall vinyl and info sheets.

**Exhibition Launch Event** (if applicable) and costs for artist attendance from within the UK.

**Fees and Costs for Your Education/Learning Programme** to cover any activities involving the curator and/or artists (if applicable).

**Venue Press & Marketing**



083

## ABOUT WEEGEE

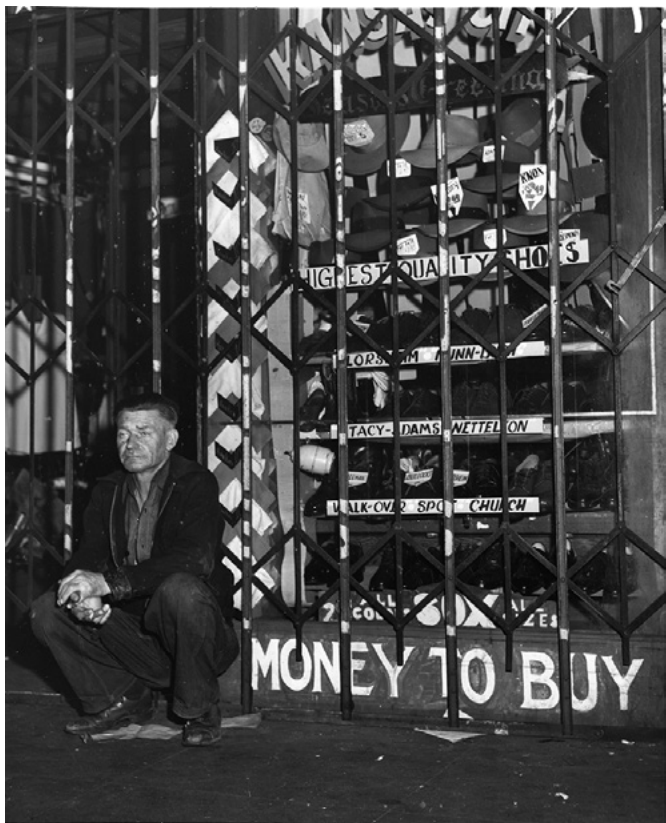
Arthur Fellig was born in Austria in 1899. Coming to the USA in 1909, he ended up in Manhattan's Lower East Side. Leaving school in 1914 to help support the family, he worked for a time as a street photographer. In 1923 he joined Acme News Services as a darkroom operator. In 1935, he left to work as a freelance photographer. He acquired the name Weegee early on, a reference to the Ouija board and his uncanny ability to arrive quickly at crime scenes – sometimes, even before the police (from 1937, he was the only civilian allowed to install a police radio in his car).

From 1940 to 1944, Weegee worked on a retainer to PM newspaper, free to choose his own stories and making many of his best pictures in this

period. 1945 saw an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art and the publication of his best seller *Naked City*. The following year Weegee's *People* was published. Opening up on the stories of New York: its streets, its bars and tenements, its crimes, tragedies and entertainments, he helped to shape urban America's consciousness of itself, his images defining both the myth and reality of the city.

Emerging as a national celebrity, he travelled to Hollywood, lecturing and photographing for *Naked Hollywood* (1953). He travelled widely and continued to work up until his death in 1968.

**Example images from the exhibition follow. For full available image list and details please email: [side.gallery@amber-online.com](mailto:side.gallery@amber-online.com).**



045

Money to buy  
[AmberSide Archive title]

Silver Gelatin Print - 353 x 279mm  
Image - 327 x 265mm



046

Box seats at a Bowery mission  
[Amber Weegee brochure text]

Silver Gelatin Print - 353 x 279mm  
Image - 343 x 265mm



047

Sleep well. 1938  
[Amber Weegee brochure text]

Night's lodging on a fire escape, 1938  
(from 'Weegee's New York' - Schirmer/Mosel 1982)

Silver Gelatin Print - 353 x 279mm  
Image - 32 x 267mm



048

Soldiers farewell  
(from 'Weegee's New York' - Schirmer/Mosel 1982)

Silver Gelatin Print - 353 x 279mm  
Image - 338 x 266mm





053

Little Italy, was rally  
[AmberSide Archive title]

Silver Gelatin Print - 505 x 406mm  
Image - 412 x 317mm (43)



054

Coney Island, 28th of July 1040 4o'clock in the afternoon  
(from 'Weegee's New York' - Schirmer/Mosel 1982)

Coney Island Beach, 1940  
(from 'Weegee' - Aperture, 1978)

Coney Island, the crowd turned to look at Weegee standing on the top  
of the lifeguard station, 1938-39  
(from 'Weegee' - Alfred A Knopf 1977)

Silver Gelatin Print - 505 x 406mm  
Image - 412 x 320mm



055

First aid  
(from 'Weegee's New York' - Schirmer/ Mosel 1982)

Silver Gelatin Print - 252 x 202mm  
Image - 224 x 180



056

Needlework  
(from 'Weegee's New York' - Schirmer/Mosel 1982)

Mending, Coney Island, 1940  
(from 'Weegee' - Alfred A Knopf 1977)

Silver Gelatin Print - 505 x 406mm  
Image - 417 x 318mm



073 Women in evening gowns drinking from coke bottles with straws  
[AmberSide Archive title]

Silver Gelatin Print - 505 x 406mm  
Image - 420 x 320mm



074 The four High Hats are waiting for James and the Limousine, 1940  
(from 'Weegee and Naked City' - University of California Press 2008)

Top hat. Outside the Metropolitan Opera House, 1943  
(from 'Weegee' - Alfred A Knopf 1977)

Silver Gelatin Print - 252 x 202mm  
Image - 219 x 176mm



075 At Sammy's in the Bowery  
(from 'Weegee's New York' - Schirmer/Mosel 1982)

Silver Gelatin Print - 252 x 202mm  
Image - 226 x 179mm



076 Ladies keep their money in their stockings...  
(from 'Naked City' - Da Capo Press 1975)

At Sammy's in the Bowery, c1944  
(from 'Weegee's New York' - Schirmer/Mosel 1982)

Entertainers at Sammy's-on-the-Bowery (1), 1944-45  
(from 'Weegee' - Alfred A Knopf 1977)

Silver Gelatin Print - 505 x 406mm  
Image - 414 x 320mm



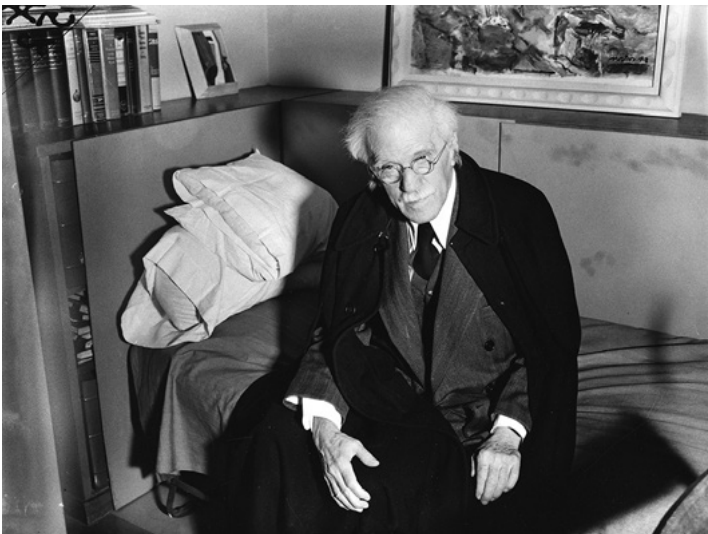
129 "A 35 m.p.h. wind," 1941  
(from 'Unknown Weegee' - ICP/STEIDL 2006)

Silver Gelatin Print - 505 x 406mm  
Image - 418 x 321mm



130 Salvation Army photographer  
[AmberSide Archive title]

Silver Gelatin Print - 353 x 279mm  
Image - 341 x 268mm



131 Alfred Stieglitz c. 1945  
(from 'Weegee's New York' - Schirmer/Mosel 1982)

Silver Gelatin Print - 505 x 406mm  
Image - 414 x 318mm



132 Salvador Dali  
(from 'Weegee's New York' - Schirmer/Mosel 1982)

Silver Gelatin Print - 252 x 202mm  
Image - 230 x 158mm (2740/472)

## ABOUT SIDE

Side is a cultural hub dedicated to documentary photography and film, using visual storytelling to document and preserve working-class life in the North East of England and beyond. Through its exhibitions, film screenings, and extensive archive, Side provides a space where photography serves as a tool for understanding and social change.

Located on Newcastle's historic Quayside, Side is home to the internationally renowned Side Gallery, Side Cinema, and the Amber Collective's UNESCO-registered archive. While deeply connected to the North East, Side has a global perspective, sharing stories that resonate across cultures and borders.

Founded in 1977, Side quickly gained recognition for its commitment to socially engaged photography and it has played a key role in shaping the field. Over the years, Side has fostered leading photographic talent, including Chris Killip and Tish Murtha, and in 1978, hosted Henri Cartier-Bresson's 70th birthday retrospective, further cementing its international reputation.

Side is committed to supporting artists who challenge and document the realities of working-class life. Through exhibitions such as *Survival Programmes* by the Exit Photography Group, which exposed and explored urban poverty in 1970s Britain, and the UK's first touring exhibition of Weegee's renowned street photography, Side has championed work that sparks empathy, debate, and reflection.

As part of its wider mission, Side takes its work beyond the gallery walls through national and international touring exhibitions, ensuring that documentary photography reaches diverse audiences.

Side also provides practical support to institutions looking to showcase socially engaged photography. With expertise in curation, exhibition touring, and film programming, Side offers a range of resources that make it easier for museums, galleries, and festivals to share important photographic work.



**Side is supported by National Lottery Heritage Fund, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Community Foundation Newcastle City Council, National Archives and Pilgrim Trust - Archives Revealed, and Arts Council England, ensuring that the voices and experiences of working-class communities, both in the UK and internationally, remain visible and valued.**

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065

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