

The Aesthetics of Concealment: Weegee in the Movie Theater (1943-1950)

By Diana Ramírez Jasso

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Signature of Author

Diana Ramírez Jasso, Department of Architecture, August 8, 2002

Certified by

Professor Mark Jarzombek, Associate Professor of History and Architecture, Thesis Supervisor

Professor Erika Naginski, Assistant Professor of the History of Art, Thesis Supervisor

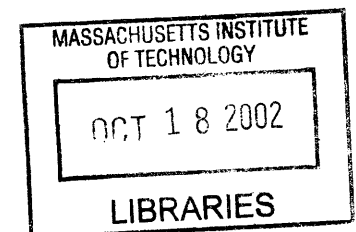
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Reader

Professor Giuliana Bruno

Professor of Visual and Environmental Studies
Harvard University

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Abstract

Between 1941 and 1945, movie theaters in the United States enjoyed a period of intense activity marked by record levels of attendance. Film scholars have explained this phenomenon by referring to the fascination exerted by “escapist” Hollywood films, which either idealized or completely negated the harsh economic and social conditions brought about by the outbreak of World War II. However, American photographer Arthur Fellig “Weegee” produced between 1943 and 1950 a series of photographs that reveal a more complex reality of movie going. Using infrared film and an invisible flash to cut through the almost complete darkness of the theater, his pictures reveal a peculiar function of the movie house at a specific moment in the history of the United States. By analyzing these photographs in the context of other sources of information such as posters, newspapers and magazine articles of the time, the dark and permissive interior of the movie theater emerges as an effective refuge from the violent forms of visual interaction that were established in public space as a consequence of wartime threats over American territory. Thus, at the time they serve as a starting point to recover a forgotten moment in the urban history of the United States, the images prompt a reevaluation of the spatial conditions of the movie theater itself—a site for public interaction that, interestingly, fosters unique forms of privacy and intimate exchange.

Thesis Supervisors:

Mark Jarzombek

Title: Associate Professor of History and Architecture

Erika Naginski

Title: Assistant Professor of the History of Art

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Weegee in the Movie Theater (1943-1950)**

I would like to dedicate this work to Luis and to our baby, about to be born,
for being my most loyal, generous and loving companions throughout the writing of this thesis;
and to my brother, Miguel, who sprinkled with laughter the final days of this process.

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Introduction: Reinventing Spectatorship

Despite the particularities of its forms and functions, the physical space of the movie theater has rarely been addressed as an architectural site in its own right. Only until fairly recently have a small number of scholars begun to delve into the architectural forms and spatial qualities of the movie house, and to explore its role in the phenomenon of film reception¹. The generalized omission of the movie house as container and producer of the spatial background for film viewing seems to have been inherited. The seminal theories of film established in the late nineteen fifties to seventies traditionally neglected the material and spatial qualities of the theater when attempting to explain the “cinema situation”. In this context, the movie house was often construed as a “blank” space for interpretation; as a black box unrelated to the “real” world of the urban fabric whose main function lay in its capacity to negate its own physical reality in favor of the fantasized spaces and situations projected on the screen. Most of these analyses of the cinematic experience, that is, privileged the film as the main, and even the *only*, sphere of perception for those audiences assembled in the space of the theater. Not surprisingly, for these film theorists, one of the essential pleasures of going to the movies lay precisely in the fact that

the subject's voyeuristic experience opened up the possibility of *transcending* the actual, physical space and time of the movie theater in order to *inhabit* the imaginary realm of the film. For example, in the late nineteen fifties, Andre Bazin noted that one of the most important elements in the experience of film was the suspension of the spectator's existence in the world through experiencing the virtual spaces provided by the screen, where "there is nothing to prevent us from identifying ourselves in imagination with the moving world before us, which becomes *the* world."² Later, in the mid-seventies, Christian Metz prioritized the spatial experience of film over the "here" and "now" of the theater to the point of arguing that cinema requires "a silent, motionless spectator, a *vacant* spectator, constantly in a sub-motor and hyper-perceptive state, a spectator at once alienated and happy, acrobatically hooked up to himself by the invisible thread of sight."³ Thus, for Metz, the physical space of the movie house served merely as a container for the *vacant*, that is to say, *uninhabited* bodies left behind by the spectators during their intellectual and emotional wanderings into filmic space. The dramatic split between body and mind experienced by film viewers was expressed, according to Metz, as a violent disjunction between their visual perception and their physical reality. After asserting the spectators' unavoidable disengagement from their own space and time, Metz went on to compare them with fish who "[take] in everything with their eyes, nothing with their bodies."⁴ Thus, the experience of film described by both Bazin and Metz became essentially that of an

isolated individual whose immediate bodily perception was abrogated in favor of a visual experience that managed to stand in for the world. This approach, followed and reinforced later by other film scholars, established a broader discursive context within film studies that relied on the figure of a passive subject who entered the movie theater prepared to put life on hold as he or she was taken into an altered phenomenological state. The mainstream interpretation of the spectator became, in short, that of a transfixed and vacuous individual who was incapable of escaping the authoritative power of the image.

Nevertheless, such a model of spectatorship was not exclusive to filmic discourse. The spectator assumed by such film theories elaborated, more to the point, an understanding of the metropolitan subject that emerged in the late nineteenth century within the context of early critiques of modernity. In a time when cinema was yet to make its appearance in the public sphere of the modern world, early sociologists, confronted by radically new forms of production, transportation, and entertainment, diagnosed an overwhelming increase in the perceptual demands that the city imposed on its dwellers. Take Georg Simmel who, in a quote that closely described the perceptual mechanisms of film viewing, denounced, in 1903, the aggressive features of metropolitan life. For him, life in the city, with its “rapid crowding of changing images, the sharp discontinuity in the grasp of a single glance and the unexpectedness of onrushing impressions,” had its most significant effect in a critical erosion of subjectivity⁵. “A [metropolitan]

life in boundless pursuit of pleasure,” Simmel claimed, “makes one blasé because it agitates the nerves to their strongest reactivity for such a long time that they finally cease to react at all.”⁶ It is not coincidentally that Simmel referred to “images”, “glances”, and “onrushing impressions”—it was, in his view, specifically an excess of *visual* stimuli in the modern city that produced such a radical transformation in the urban politics of human interaction. Walter Benjamin, who later elaborated on Simmel’s diagnosis of the emerging modes of visual stimulation in the modern city—although with a more positive assessment of their effect on modern life—cited an interesting passage by Simmel where the latter explained the source of this perceptual increase:

The interpersonal relationships of people in big cities are characterized by a markedly greater emphasis on the use of the eyes than that of the ears. This can be attributed chiefly to the institution of public conveyances. Before buses, railroads, and streetcars became fully established during the nineteenth century, people were never put in a position of having to stare at one another for minutes or even hours on end without exchanging a word.⁷

Thus, construed as *spectator* even before the advent of cinema, the metropolitan subject entered the discourse of modernity as an unconcerned member of the crowd, unable to react even to the most dramatic events and incapable of critical reception or meaningful social intercourse. This interpretation—which has by now become mainstream—continued to influence theories not only of film but of modernism and mass culture throughout the twentieth century. By

1967, for example, Guy Debord, the famous leader of the Situationist movement, was still denouncing the “trancelike behavior” produced by a capitalist world that presented itself essentially in the form of *spectacle*—spectacle that lured the urban subject into passive acceptance of the ruling economic order by over-stimulating the visual field of the city⁸. Sight, he argued, is the “most easily deceived” of the senses.

Not surprisingly, the disenchanting assessment of the transformation of the field of vision at the hands of modernity also left its imprint in the sphere of art. Here, the depiction of audiences often followed the model established by these theoretical interpretations. When Simmel was busy diagnosing an erosion of subjectivity in the metropolitan crowd, Georges Seurat was working to depict circus audiences as a monolithic mass of hyper-passive spectators. *Cirque* (1890-91), his last major painting, presents the viewer with a strong spatial polarity between audience and performance⁹. On the one hand, the circus ring is presented as an energetic sphere of movement where the flexible bodies of animals and performers are allowed to move about and push their corporal expression to the limit. On the other hand, the audience is depicted in the background as a series of undetailed and extremely passive spectators who, devoid of facial expressions and divided in sections by class, observe the spectacle from behind the rails that confine their bodies (fig. 1). The contrast posited between those who perform and those who watch is all the more striking if we consider that the only

movement that can be perceived beyond the limits of the ring is that of another set of performers: a group of musicians in the upper right corner of the canvas whose tunes accompany the show. Seurat seems to suggest, as did the theoretical constructions that paralleled his work, that the essence of modern forms of spectacle lay in the encounter between a group of hyperactive agents of creation and a hyper-passive mass of uncritical image consumers. After Seurat, the representational discourse remained widely unquestioned and eventually came to permeate other media. Sixty years after *Cirque*, J. R. Eyerman produced in photography one of the most widely-distributed and exploited icons of this rhetoric: the image of an extremely uniform and static movie audience wearing 3-D glasses, published in *Life* magazine in 1952 (fig 2).

Hence, following the model of the early *blasé* metropolitan dweller assailed by visual stimuli on the street, the film spectator similarly came to be construed as an unimpressionable “automaton” who passively sat in the movie theater, yielding to the hypnotic power of moving images. Thus, the traditional understanding of film reception that has remained a point of reference to the work of many film theorists to our day is anchored in a view of modern forms of urban visibility that rendered the subject incapable of escaping a manipulative power that lay at the center of the image. Of course, a number of contemporary critics have contested earlier theories of the gaze such as Metz's, by reinterpreting the spectator's visual absorption not as a

merely hypnotic state but as a complete emotional, intellectual and even physical engagement with the film. However, one might argue that even in these critiques of the mainstream model, the spatial conditions of the movie house itself have continued to be neglected by their failure to acknowledge the way in which the theater as a physical entity configures a space whose function transcends the fleeting reality of film viewing. It seems, more to the point, that many contemporary theories of film reception assume the theater's architectural layout as an extremely efficient disciplinary arrangement: rows of stationary individual seats usually separated by armrests and facing nothing but a screen placed at the center of the field of vision, marking the existence of two interacting spheres: a central focus where the filmic illusion is presented, and an ordered, restrictive space that ensures the attentiveness of immobile, uniform bodies. In other words, the traditional discourse of film reception almost strictly adheres to an idea of the movie theater understood exclusively as a "theatron," that is to say, as a place "to watch." It very rarely allows space for the consideration of forms of physical activity that escape the unifying power of the screen. Aside from a few valuable examples, scholars have still to delve into the complex environment of the occupied and operating movie theater with its noises, movement, smells, and darkness. They have still to acknowledge that the theater fosters not only forms of attentive reception, but also different forms of idleness and leisure, play,

consumption and erotic exchange in the almost complete absence of light that its architecture provides.

An interesting exception to this generalized neglect, the work of Giuliana Bruno, in an insightful analysis of cinema going in Naples in the early decades of the twentieth century, points out the important role of this neutralization of visibility and identity through the theater's darkness and posits it as complementing the *visual* pleasures of film reception. Citing a quote by Charles Baudelaire, she notes the similarities between the film spectator and the *flâneur*, whom Baudelaire described as follows:

For the perfect flâneur, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude... To be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the center of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world—such are a few of the slightest pleasures of those independent, passionate, impartial natures... The spectator is a *prince* who everywhere rejoices in his incognito... He is an “I” with an insatiable appetite for the “non-I,” at every instant rendering and explaining it in pictures more living than life itself, which is always unstable and fugitive.¹⁰

To the pleasure of the spectator's own invisibility, which Bruno emphasizes over the mere experience of what is “visible” on the screen, she further underscores two particular roles of the theater's darkness in the early modernity of Naples: on the one hand, it concealed the creatures of the underworld—“beggars, pimps, street urchins, idlers”—from the eyes of the

social elite of Naples who wandered its elegant arcades; and on the other hand, it created of an erotically charged and protected environment in which women felt free to experiment different forms of transgressive spatial practices.¹¹

However, beyond Bruno's acknowledgement of darkness as a crucial element in the general experience of movie going, we will explore its transcendence in a specific period in the history of the United States, particularly in relation to the way in which exterior public space was experienced at the time, and through a series of photographic documents produced between 1943 and 1950. Five decades before scholars recognized the alternative practices that take place in the movie theater, and while surrounded still by the dominant discourse of the transfixed, hypnotized film viewer, American photographer Arthur Fellig "Weegee"¹² produced a series of photographs that present a complex interpretation of the space in which audiences find themselves and which they themselves create. Emerging from the fissures of a pessimistic view of mass culture, and problematizing this interpretation, Weegee offers a radically different portrayal of the film spectator. Exploring the intrinsic contradictions of filmic pleasure, he captured his subjects using infrared film and invisible flash amid the darkened movie palaces of New York. His pictures reclaimed the experience of the audience's secret life in the dark, thereby bringing to "light" a vivid take on the filmic phenomenon, one that captures a previously unacknowledged complement to the voyeuristic joy of cinema: the pleasure inherent in *not*

watching the film. Overturning dramatically the one-dimensional logic of the modern automaton, Weegee's photographs present us with a multi-layered understanding of the spatial and affective experiences involved not only in watching but in "going to" the movies.

Weegee's images, in contrast to those representations that illustrate the hypnotic powers of modern spectacle such as J. R. Eyerman's famous photograph, focus less on the attentive "masses" than on particular forms of behavior among individuals in the audience. His pictures display close-range shots of solitary subjects, couples, groups of children and general audiences in whom a range of different responses to the spectacle can be discerned. Weegee's camera encounters dynamic and heterogeneous groups of spectators that are thematized into four main groups: active children, young people enjoying the film, sleeping adults, and young lovers kissing in the dark. Weegee's children, the most active of his subjects, eat, jump, play, sleep and make of their movie experience a festive display of corporal enjoyment (figs. 3-5). The young people he captures are often laughing, their postures make manifest comfort in the dark and a great degree of spontaneity; in most cases, their bodies overflow the restrictive structures of the seats and challenge the organizing principles of the movie theater itself (figs. 6-7). Similarly, while the sleepers close their eyes and break away from the repressive functions of consciousness as well as from the restrictive layout of the theater seats (figs. 8-10), the lovers cuddle, kiss, and embrace passionately and uninhibitedly, many of them facing each

other instead of the screen (figs. 11-12). It is precisely in these photographic subjects, the sleepers and lovers, that we can begin to unravel more effectively the secret enjoyment that the dark space of the theater provides. For those who sleep and kiss in the theater, the spatial experience has become refuge for a subversive activity that radically deviates from what at first appears to be the main goal of the architectural layout, namely, the attentive and isolated perception of a film.

It is important to note, however, that Weegee does not always reject the “automaton” model. His sympathetic approach to movie audiences stands in stark contrast to his incisive interpretation of other forms of social grouping. Reversing the paradigm of the “numbed” film viewer, Weegee captured his own version of an insipid subject overcome by modern forms of life in different contexts. Consider, for example, his 1940 photograph of a group of male “socialites” entering the opera (fig. 13). The arms of these subjects hang at the sides of their inexpressive bodies with backs turn to the photographer, as the four of them exhibit incredibly similar coats and hats. The motif of social uniformity is repeated when he photographs policemen (fig. 14) or children at a bar mitzvah (fig. 15). Weegee, just as sociologists did before him, also seems to suggest an eroding of individuality and critical perception in the modern urban dweller but, in his view, it is institutions and commodities, instead of the spectacle, that produce this effect. Thus, as this strong juxtaposition suggests, the consistency with which

Weegee's photographs reclaim and reevaluate the phenomenon of movie going allows us to rethink not only the characteristics of any film audience at any point in time, but also the particular social and spatial conditions from which Weegee's project originated. We will be able to discern important connections between the experience attained by audiences inside the movie theater and the specific conditions in the urban public sphere brought about by the outbreak of World War II.

Despite their originality and their potential to illuminate a spatial experience rarely explored through visual means, Weegee's pictures inside movie theaters have not been addressed or studied in their own right. Weegee scholarship has remained centered on Weegee's crime-scene photography, considered by many his most significant body of work. Hence, scholars have failed so far to acknowledge these pictures as evidence of Weegee's preoccupation with the effects of war on public space and to discover in them a token of his acute spatial sensibility. Furthermore, the unique experience that the images document has escaped, to this day, the scrutiny of film scholars and historians.

The remainder of this paper will examine Weegee's pictures in the movie theater as an attempt to unravel their important contribution to the understanding of Weegee's work as well as to the history of the movie theater and its uses. Firstly, the study of these images will not only recover them from a general neglect but will also help to provide a better understanding of

Weegee's thematic interests and creative temperament. Secondly, the fact that Weegee's active subjects disrupt the long-respected model of the film spectator as a subject transfixed by the allure of the spectacle opens up a new array of possible interpretations of both the space of the movie theater and of the experience of film in its premises. Thirdly, by examining other sources of information and different kinds of images from the critical period 1941-1945, the pictures evidence an area of scholarship that has remained virtually unexamined until now: the fear and anxiety that permeated life in the city during the war, and which affected the experience of public space in a fundamental way. Thus, the photographs will allow us to uncover a peculiar function of the darkness and enclosure of the movie theater at a specific moment in the history of the United States. In the following sections, the images captured by Weegee will serve as a point of departure for a reevaluation of the psychological implications of the space of the movie theater as a site for public interaction that, interestingly, allows unique forms of private behavior and intimate exchange.

1

From the Street to the Movie Theater

Spectators of Death

Between 1941 and 1945, movie theaters in the United States enjoyed a period of intense activity marked by record levels of attendance. With eighty-five million spectators per week, the average attendance for these five years exceeded that of the preceding decade by more than twenty percent. After 1946, the weekly average for the next decade dropped dramatically to only forty-nine million viewers; in other words, by more than 40 percent.¹³ Film scholars have explained this phenomenon by referring to the fascination exerted by “escapist” Hollywood films, which either idealized or negated the harsh economic and social conditions brought about by the outbreak of World War II. Film exhibitors of the time have also characterized the wartime film experience as a cheap source of amusement and distraction for a nation in distress: “people wanted to escape the radios and the newspapers, (...) with stories about what was happening in Europe. They went to the movies for escape.”¹⁴ While the thematic contents and character of wartime films has remained the main element by which the appeal of going to the movies during

the war years has been explained, there are reasons to believe that the theaters as urban sites worked in this context as hubs of a new kind of social interaction. Barbara Stones, for example, has noted that “[c]apitalizing on their positions as important community centers, movie theaters became the focal points for scrap metal drives and inventive rubber matinees designed to gather much needed raw material for the war effort”.¹⁵ Similarly, Maggie Valentine notes that the “movies were a welcome escape from private deprivation, but in addition the theaters became community centers for war bond drives and newsreel presentations.”¹⁶

Arthur Fellig “Weegee”, mostly known at this time for his crime-scene pictures of the late nineteen thirties and early forties, secretly entered the movie theaters of New York during the period in question, with the intention of producing candid portraits of moviegoers in the dark. Evidencing his documentary aspirations, Weegee’s incognito approach involved the use of infrared film, and thus invisible infrared flash, to cut through the almost complete darkness of the movie theater while remaining unnoticed by the subjects he photographed. As we will see, the photographs he captured bring to light a spatial element that the strictly *filmic* “escapism” advanced by film scholars has failed to address: the architecture of the movie theater itself as a site for escape.

Archival research shows that the experience of the movie theater occupied Weegee’s mind for most of the duration of the war, during which he produced more than one hundred

photographs of movie spectators, only a handful of which have been published.¹⁷ The magnitude and intensity of Weegee's movie theater project puts into question the widespread notion that his work of these years focused mainly on capturing the aftermath of crime or the harshness of life in New York with its fires, disasters and stark social contrasts. Nevertheless, these pictures are still connected in interesting ways with the rest of his work. While they stand on their own as products of a focused thematic exploration, his photographs of movie audiences also reveal themselves as a crucial phase in the evolution of some of his more pervasive interests.

In 1943, when he started photographing movie audiences, Weegee was already a well-known crime scene photographer who sold his pictures to a large number of tabloids and newspapers in New York. In 1935, he had begun his freelance career centering his activity around the Manhattan Police headquarters, making it his specialty the capture of nocturnal murders, accidents, and fires. By 1938 he had become one of the first civilians—and according to some accounts, the only photographer—to have been granted special permission to install a police radio in his car. This allowed him to intercept all emergency dispatches and to rush to the scene sometimes before the police or fire department had arrived. This gave his pictures a rare sense of immediacy, a first-hand documentary character highly valued both by news editors and by readers at large.¹⁸ Although Weegee's interest in the movie theater only emerged in the mid-

forties, the relationship between space and spectatorship was already evident throughout his work in crime photography. His murder pictures, taken as a whole, suggest an evolution that goes from a close framing of the murder victim to more distant shots that explore the spontaneous crowds gathering around the scene. Take, as a starting point, one of his earliest photographs of a murdered gangster, which was published in the *New York Post* in 1936 (fig. 16). In this picture, the inert body of a man in a suit appears at the center of a close-range shot. The violence of his uncomposed posture stands in contrast to the artificially “posed” appearance of his hat and handgun, which are carefully positioned next to him. In spatial terms, the photograph isolates the victim from any external reference, preventing any information from the surroundings of the scene from entering the image. It limits its scope to the corpse as a static and objectified representation of violence, construed thus not as an element connected with an action and a particular context, as in a narrative, but as an object extracted from its natural setting and therefore perceived or grasped only through the photographic means. It is no accident that the photograph resorts to the kinds of representational strategies used by Edouard Manet in his *Dead Toreador* of 1864 (fig. 17); Weegee seems to have had at least some background in the history of art, from which he borrowed a series of compositional models. The photographer and the viewer of the picture become thus the only subjects in relation to the image, the only voyeurs of the body, as evidenced by the fact that it is illuminated exclusively

from the angle from which the image is captured.¹⁹ Thus, in this photograph, the only visual axis present in the image is the one directed from the camera towards the victim, establishing between the victim's body and its viewer a typical subject-object relationship.

By 1938, a powerful new element had emerged in Weegee's photojournalism: the spectator. In one photograph, for example, a group of men and women appears behind the covered remains of a car accident victim, at an awkwardly excessive distance from it (fig. 18). Here, the heterogeneous group of spectators, including a police officer, line up to pose for Weegee's camera, only to produce a neatly composed image. Within the perfectly isolated foreground, the victim's body is still depicted as an object, but now it stands in relation not to the photographer or the viewer of the image but to the disengaged group of passers-by who have gathered at the scene and who, interestingly, establish themselves as spectators simply by respecting an imaginary line that divides their bodies from that of the victim. Weegee, in other words, seems now to have become aware as much of the *space* in which death has taken place as of the violent reaction that death provokes in its immediate aftermath. The corpse, by definition unable to compose itself, to respond or to look back at its observers has been covered over with a blanket. This protection from the prying eyes of the crowd and of the intrusive lens of the camera acts to negate the very source of fascination that brought the spectators together as a group in the first place. In short, the onlookers here have gathered around the body of the

victim transforming the sidewalk into the *scene* of a crime, i.e., into a stage where a group of subjects is presented with a spectacle to be watched.

At this point, the viewer of the photograph is confronted with a reciprocal visual axis from which a fundamentally spatial depiction of the murder-scene emerges. On the one hand, there is an implied (if invisible) axis that leads from the people gathering at the scene to the body of the victim, which, ironically, no one bothers to look at. On the other hand, there is an actual (because enacted) axis between the crowd and Weegee's camera, to which all expectantly gaze back. Like the spectators who avoid looking towards the center of the scene, Weegee himself shows a different visual interest; while his photograph maintains the priority of the dead body's position in the foreground—as the object closest to us as viewers, completely isolated by two thirds of the pictorial space—the photographer's critical gaze is now directed to the spontaneous body of spectators. Death becomes at this point in Weegee's pictures the source of a complex visual and spatial problem rather than just the subject matter. From this moment on, his photographs will invariably present the dead body as the source and *cause* of a spatial transformation evolving in time as opposed to an isolated object of contemplation extracted from the narrative of a violent action.

The arms casually crossed over chests, the smiling faces of those onlookers who react to the presence of the camera rather than to the gory details of the event, the uniformed police

officer who, detached from the crime, poses for the picture while lining up at the same distance as the rest of the crowd, begin to reveal the violence inherent in the social act of gathering at the crime scene. Such details emphasize the power relation posited in Weegee's portrayal of victim and onlookers. While the corpse remains spread out horizontally on the ground—that is to say, at the (literally) lowest level of visual interaction—the spectators stand close to, and loom above, the body, their potential gazes positioned at a higher level, following a vertical scheme of visual domination. In other words, Weegee captures not only the spectators' disconnectedness from the victim. Their predatory nature and privileged position over the spectacle of death also becomes evident in the image. Later pictures such as *Murder on the Roof* (1941) (fig. 19) show Weegee's continued exploration of this scenic aspect. Unlike the previous example, where spectators are divided from spectacle by an imaginary line, in this image two detectives interact with the body of a man murdered on a roof, while the audience watches from a neighboring building, contained by a wall as well as by the gap between both structures, positioned again at a higher level than the body. Like Seurat's *Cirque*, Weegee's picture depicts a physical distinction between a space where the performance is watched and a place reserved exclusively for observation, which reminds the viewer of the prototype of the theater or circus in connection to the casual observation of death.

From his first crime-scene photograph of the 1936 murder until the early forties, then, Weegee's obsession with the urban witnesses to violence became increasingly evident. The theme becomes so pervasive that some of his most famous pictures focus strictly on the onlookers, leaving out the victims altogether. For instance, in 1940, Weegee shot *Murder in Hell's Kitchen*, which, despite the suggestion made by its title, did not depict a murder but rather a group of neighbors who look out from two windows of a building we can assume was adjacent to the crime-scene (fig. 20). While at one window some look back directly at Weegee's camera, others from a second window look at the murder scene with excitement. One year later, Weegee captures the perverse eagerness of a group of children who, thrilled by the possibility of glimpsing their "first" murder victim, violently push each other in order to make their way to the spot outside their school where a gambler was shot in his car (fig. 21).

It would be easy to assume that Weegee's interest in movie audiences sprang exclusively from his earlier focus on urban spectators of death. As we will see, even though he showed interest in spectatorship before 1943 in the context of urban murders, the emergence of the film viewer was impacted by external factors. Nevertheless, a photograph taken in 1942 (fig. 22) links his murder scene pictures with his movie theater photographs in interesting ways, illuminating the relationship between his interest in the cinema and his earlier work on the urban politics of visual interaction. The photograph in question frames a scene where a group of

spectators has gathered around a dead man's body lying on the sidewalk beneath the marquee of a movie theater. The body is covered with several layers of newspaper under which only the feet are visible to the lower right corner of the picture. Two police officers are caught in the act of placing still another layer of brown paper over the body, to which one of the spectators (probably an usher from the cinema, judging by his uniform) reacts with an inquisitive downward look, his arms crossed tightly over his chest. The picture creates a complex spatial composition. If we analyze the gazes involved in the scene, we discern that while the officers and the usher direct their gazes at the body (that is, at a source strictly within the limits of the pictorial space), the cropped head of a man with a hat enters the picture from the left. The man looks back directly at the camera and to this reflected gaze Weegee's own visual focus acts as counterpart. In an exhibition of his characteristic black humor, which emerges in the photograph by virtue of an association of the murder scenes with the signs of mass culture in close proximity, Weegee gives this print the title *Joy of Living*. The title serves as evidence for the positioning of his own gaze onto something that lies well beyond the events of the foreground, of the "here" and "now." The focus of the image, then, becomes not the crime-scene itself but its relationship with the marquee in the background, which announces a double-bill of musical comedies, one of which is "Joy of Living," a film released in 1938 starring Irene Dunne and Douglas Fairbanks Jr. Weegee's framing and title establish a link between the street as a violent landscape of death

that is depicted in the foreground and an idealized space that exists beyond what is visible in the photograph: the interior of the movie theater, where the “joy of living” is announced to reside.²⁰ Because the interior space of the movie theater remains visually inaccessible both to the people on the scene as well as to the viewer of the photograph, the image sets up an incisive confrontation between the visual protection offered by the movie house and the brutality of the urban setting where vulnerable bodies are exposed to prying eyes.

In this sense, Weegee does not overlook the notion of “cover” as protection. In fact, one might argue that this very notion offers the link between exterior and interior, between urban space and the movie theater. In a gesture that complicates the relationship between scene and signs, Weegee is careful to highlight in the upper right angle an advertising signboard that reads “Lewis Clothing Exchange. We buy and sell new and slightly used clothing.” “Lewis” and “clothing” are the most clearly visible words to the viewer of the photograph. The result is a photographic insistence on a poignant relationship between the advertising slogan and the action carried out beneath it by the officers on the scene; in order to protect the body from the invasive vertical gaze of the public around it, they “clothe” or “cover” it with the “slightly used” shield of newspaper they carefully place between its surface and the “outside” world. We should note here that, interestingly, the word “dark” derives from the old English work *deorc*, which

ultimately sprang from an Indo-European world that also produced the German *farnen*, “to mask or screen.” Thus, we also see etymological connections between “dark” and “to clothe.”

It is not surprising, then, that Weegee would begin at this juncture to take photographs *inside* of movie theaters, to represent the “joy” with which children, young couples, and middle-aged adults alike responded to film projection. His pictures would present the movie theater as an enclosed and safe haven from the violence of urban life. Echoing the protective shield placed over the dead body on the street in *Joy of Living*, the movie theater series would posit darkness and enclosure as a defense from the potential threat of visual exchange in the public realm.

Sleepers and Lovers at the Movies

Even though Weegee devoted a fair number of his movie theater photographs to adults and children attending to the film, the main thrust of the themes he explored were those of sleep and sex: either he focused on young and middle-aged adults sleeping in their theater seats in states of complete withdrawal, or he focused on lovers kissing, embracing and cuddling in the dark. As suggested earlier, these examples, which move away from the spectacle and its hypnotized observers, reflect more strongly Weegee’s awareness of the movie theater as a

spatial problem on its own. For just as the evolution of his murder photographs emphasize Weegee's attention to the subtle mechanics of visibility in public space, his movie theater pictures similarly denote an interesting distinction between the safety of this particular space and the violence of the exterior environment that exists beyond its perimeter. It is important to note that what distinguishes Weegee's pictures of death on the street from his photographs of sleepers and lovers in the movie theater is how the latter exhibit a degree of comfort and relaxation rarely present in those subjects he captures on the outside. Remember that Weegee's pictures of crime and everyday life in the city bear witness to the chaos and anxiety that prevailed in the streets of New York, as well as to the overwhelming threat that vision exerted over its dwellers. Regarding the unsettling environment brought about by the war, take *Woman Looking at Electric Sign on the New York Times Building* (June 7, 1944); or *Time is Short* (March 23, 1942) (figs. 23-24). On the inquisitorial power of sight, consider *Barber confesses to Murder of Einer Sporrer* (1937), *The Lineup* (1939), *Charles Sodokoff and Arthur Webber Use Their Top Hats to Hide Their Faces* (1942), or *Henry Rosen and Harvey Stemmer Were Arrested for Bribing Basketball Players* (1945) (figs. 25-28).

Weegee's work establishes thus a sharp distinction between the violent everyday sphere of the city and the idealized form of life that existed within the movie theater's walls. In a 1943 photograph, for example, a woman sleeps at the end of row seat in a complete state of disarray

(fig. 29). Her torso is tucked up against the corner of her seat, while her arms languidly fall on its armrests, and her head inclines backwards. Her mouth is open just enough to resemble the image of a tranquil death. Her unconstrained body language seems even more jarring given that she is fully dressed; her restrictive coat is still in place (although somewhat disarranged), her purse still hangs from her right wrist and a paper bag sits in her lap. The image becomes evidence of a strange clash between two spatially derived states: on the one hand, the public character of the place where she finds herself which is suggested by the seat where she sits, the spectator behind her and the bag, purse and clothing she wears; on the other hand, the private act of sleeping to which she has so unselfconsciously yielded.

In another interesting photograph from the same year, the connection between the movie theater and sleeping is explored (fig. 30). In an overhead shot of an empty zone of a theater, a middle-aged man with a strong physique slumbers, again in complete withdrawal. His wrinkled, dirty clothes suggest the end of an intense day of physical work. A closer look reveals that he has unbuckled his belt. In contrast to the woman in her coat, this sleeper has opted to relinquish himself fully to the comfort of dark privacy. In both photographs, then, the image of sleep communicates simultaneously a sense of withdrawal from the filmic experience; but we are forced, as viewers, to wonder whether sleep was an involuntary consequence of the boredom produced by a bad movie, or, more to the point, the sign of a retreat into the movie

theater specifically to avoid the harsh environment of the street. Looking at the large number of photographs in which Weegee captures a total withdrawal on the part of his subjects (figs. 31-33), we are forced to speculate whether they entered the theater precisely in order to rest and abandon the weight of existence while under the protection of its capacity to suspend time and space.

This protection—this suspension of space and time—is even more forcefully foregrounded in the images of couples that Weegee surreptitiously captures in the darkness. The theater seems to provide the lovers the ultimate cover, allowing them to construct microcosms of intimacy in the midst of a wide audience. In a 1945 photograph, Weegee catches a man and a woman whose hands intertwine in an erotically charged form of play. For him, the film is clearly no longer of interest (fig. 34). Over and over, Weegee's camera finds and recovers the stages of "making out." One photograph, featuring a "sailor" and a "girl" (fig. 35), offers a more intense physical exchange, as his hand advances beneath her blouse; yet another shows a man kissing a woman while his eyes remain fixed on the screen (fig. 36). In one series, *Lovers at the Palace Theater* (c. 1945), four photographs trace the progress of love as a young couple, surrounded by spectators with three-dimensional glasses, relinquish their interest in the movie and indulge in a rather *long* and *extended* encounter of kissing (judging by the number of pictures that Weegee was able to take)²¹ (figs. 37-40).

The second of these four photographs, *Lovers at the Palace Theater II*, is worth looking at more closely (fig. 38). The lovers, placed at the lower left half of the photograph, are juxtaposed with the figure of a solitary spectator at the top right, whose left hand covers the side of his face that is closest to the photographer. It is a gesture that suggests his awareness of the camera; he probably heard it click. The man and woman kissing do not, however, seem to be aware of the camera, much less of anything or anyone else. Furthermore, whereas *he* seems to be taking the initiative—holding his companion’s body with one arm while touching one of her ankles with his free hand—*she* has removed her shoes and rests her feet on the back of the seat in front of her. In a gesture that echoes her lover’s touching of her ankle, she caresses her own calf as to complete an imaginary bracket around this part of her body. Three other members of the audience wearing three-dimensional glasses are barely visible in the background, two of whom focus completely on the film while the other looks back in the direction of the camera with an inquisitive look. The reactions of the two men who seem to exhibit at least a partial awareness of Weegee’s presence emphasize the couple’s incapacity to perceive the events around them; theirs is a complete withdrawal into a private sphere of passionate touch. Here Weegee’s picture places a new importance on senses besides that of vision: while suggesting the audience’s capacity to maintain a certain perceptual distance from the visual domain of the film, the image also evidences the role of hearing and touch in the

spatial experience of the movie theater. Even more importantly—beyond, that is, the suggestion that the movie theater functions in ways other than a primary objective of “watching”—the image reveals the radical extent to which the darkness of the space and the three-dimensional glasses of the other spectators neutralize the visual interaction of the theater altogether; what emerges instead is the most private and intimate kind of human encounter.

Like his crime-scenes, Weegee’s framing of the couples in relation to the rest of the audience evolves. He becomes increasingly interested in the interaction between couples and attentive film observers. His early pictures present lovers within a frame just wide enough to contain their bodies. As the project progresses, he begins to move back, at first just enough to make the setting evident and to include a few members of the audience. By 1950, Weegee would situate a kissing couple in a much wider context, surrounded by ten rows of viewers (fig. 41). This was one of Weegee’s last photographs of film audiences. Shot from one of the theater’s balconies, it stresses more than ever with its bird’s eye view the opposition between those who watch movies and those who do not. However, the members of this audience do not comply with the automaton model, either: they manifest an array of different reactions to the film. A young woman three rows behind the lovers, for example, leans over her neighbor in a gesture of boredom. Other spectators laugh or talk. However, they are all more or less focused on the film and—except for the woman who leans to the left so as to avoid the distraction

caused by the lovers seating directly in front of her—they all continue to be indifferent to the private practices that unfold in the center of the photograph. The lovers, in this context, are the only ones who face each other and, furthermore, *she* is one of only two people in the audience (echoed again by the same young woman three rows behind her) to have taken her coat off.

In general, the most compelling aspect of Weegee's photographs of sleepers and lovers is the statement they seem to make about visibility within the movie theater. The space the latter provides not only allows a rupture from the "visual" center—the film—that has traditionally been thought of as the main point of movie going. That space, furthermore, is more essentially one of neutralized vision, where an almost complete darkness allows for the creation of an intimate sphere of interaction (sex) and inaction (sleep). Looking a Weegee's photographs we can problematize the notion of a unified audience that uncritically complies with the rules of behavior imposed by the theater layout, by claiming that these spaces provide the spectator not only with a place to see, but actually and more importantly, with a collective space in which it is still possible to elude the intimidating violence of urban visibility. Let us remember, first of all, that the movie theater institutes a unique form of visual experience and establishes a visual politics that dramatically differs from the visual practices promoted in other sight-focused public spaces. To a far greater degree than the opera house, the stadium or the live drama theatre, the movie house allows a rupture from external reality as well as from the audience assembled at

the auditorium. This can be attributed mainly to the darkness that has traditionally been part of the cinematic experience from the emergence of the diorama to the popularization of the cinemascope screen.

The contrast between the movies and the theater as dramatic performance is particularly illuminating in our approach to the movie house. Wolfgang Schivelbusch, for example, in his study of the lighting techniques used from the baroque theater to the late nineteenth century, has pointed out the great importance attributed to the lighting of the auditorium in the case of theatrical performance. In his view, an important aspect in this regard has been the audiences' desire to watch not only the performance on the stage, but also that of the spectators in the audience. As Watelet-Leveque commented, in 1793, the audience of dramatic performances "wanted to see the stage, wanted to see the actors; but above all, they wanted to see each other and, if we may say so, to take in every detail"²². Hence, Schivelbusch asserts: "the social desire to see and be seen has survived in the theatre, despite illusionism, realism and naturalism. Even when gas and electric light brought a total blackout within easy reach, European auditoriums were not plunged into darkness, but only into a dusky light."²³

In stark contrast with this evidently *social* environment of drama theaters, the movie house operates essentially in the opposite way, by reducing and sometimes precluding any visual engagement between spectators. In this sense, German psychologist Hugo Mauerhofer

defined, in his article entitled “Psychology of Film Experience”, the perceptual atmosphere of what he called the “cinema situation” by asserting that “the ideal theatre would be one where there are absolutely no sources of light (such as emergency and exit lighting, etc.), except the screen itself”.²⁴ Mauerhofer’s text, one of the first and few ones to directly address the problem of darkness within the movie theater, was published, not coincidentally, shortly after the war in 1949. In it, he goes on to assert:

Neither in the dimly lit concert hall nor in the darkened theater are the spectators, in relation to one another, subjected to such anonymity as in the cinema. In the first place, neither of the former is darkened to such an extent as the cinema is for technical reasons. Secondly, the intervals serve to make at least visual contact with our neighbors as well as with the orchestra or theater cast. For this reason, too, it is impossible for a ‘community’ in the original sense of the word, to be formed in a cinema. This is prevented by the individualizing effect of the experience of film, as well as by the almost complete anonymity of the spectator. We only sense the presence of our neighbor. He is usually already there when we arrive, and is gone by the time we leave. In the legitimate theatre and at concerts the individual spectators are frequently fused together in an emotional community of objective experience. In the cinema the private and personal participation of the individual is intensified. There is no more than a diffuse mass formation. Apart from this, the individual is thrown back upon his most private associations.²⁵

Even though Mauerhofer ended up defining the *cinema situation* again in terms of isolated spectators who invariably “watch” the film, it is interesting to note that he was nevertheless conscious of a *spatial* dimension embedded in movie going, which defined it and

distinguished it from other forms of spectacle, and which had to do with the darkness of the auditorium. “[A] psychological result of visual seclusion in a darkened room”—he wrote—“is a change in one’s *Sense of Space*.”²⁶

A few years before Mauerhofer, Weegee also seems to have been conscious of this radical form of spatiality in the movie theater, especially when compared to the opera house. During the years when he photographed movie audiences, he also captured opera spectators arriving at the theater in elaborate outfits, hats, and jewels, prepared not only to see the show but offering themselves as spectacle to be visually consumed (figs. 42-43)²⁷. In a different photograph that depicts the activities of the audience during the performance, Weegee perspicaciously catches a group of spectators among whom a woman uses a pair of binoculars to look at other people in the audience (fig. 44). The social context that is so evidently present in Weegee’s opera house, both in the prelude space of the lobby as well as during the performance, is conspicuously absent in the movie theater. The darkness of the cinema shuts out any form of visual interaction allowing the emergence of many intimate spheres. Thus, in stark contrast with the violent negotiation of sight on the streets, where dead bodies are surveyed with curiosity; and at the opera, where visual interaction is a form of social exchange among spectators, the movie theater is posited in Weegee’s pictures as a safe, permissive, and comfortable place where visual intersubjectivity is, so to speak, neutralized. Weegee’s images

reveal thus the extent to which cinema-going represents as much a viewing experience as a pleasure that consists in indulging in activities that can only be made possible while immersed in the particular spatial conditions provided by the theater's environment. His pictures allow us to consider the "here" and "now" of the movie theater, the spatial traits of that site where the audience assembles and the space the audience itself creates with its gathering. By doing so, his photographs not only problematize the model of spectatorship established with the emergence of modernity; they also establish a counterpoint to film theories which have failed to address the experience of those who use the movie theater for activities other than watching the film. While these theories are based on an understanding of the movie theater as a neutral container of "unoccupied" bodies that is there to be negated and transcended in favor of "filmic space", Weegee's photographs recapture the space of the cinema in its own value and allow us to reexamine its intrinsic qualities, especially in relation to the urban and social contexts in which theaters are embedded. Weegee's subjects have indeed *escaped* the public realm of the street, but not only to be absorbed into the fictional space of the film. In reality, the lovers and sleepers that Weegee extirpates from the audience are caught in an interstice between two public spaces: the actual exterior realm of the street and the imaginary space presented on the screen. In other words, they are caught in a private space that lies between the everyday negotiation of visual curiosity and a fantastic sphere of visual absorption. In their absolute "hereness," these

subjects reclaim the movie theater –the physical space left behind by those viewers who actively traveled into the film—for their own, intimate purposes.

2

The Visual Politics of War

War and Cinema

The movie audience as a theme marks a specific period in Weegee's work that extends from 1942 until 1945, with only a brief return around 1950. Little has been written on this obsession of Weegee, even though the pictures reveal such a dramatic turning point in his work that several questions seem difficult to ignore. Why, for instance, would such a proud and relentless "street" photographer turn suddenly from photographing the most open forms of public space, the sidewalks in New York, to an enclosed, inward-looking building? Why would he turn to infrared photography, when one of the main traits of his work was that he invariably shot his subjects with the harshest flashbulbs? Why would he turn from raw scenes of violence to the most secretive scenes of pleasure, and from photographing extraordinary events such as murders and disasters to capturing the everyday practices of ordinary people? In other words, how can we explain the powerful contrast between his photographs of death on the street and

his photographs of life in the dark, or his transition from photographing urban insensitivity to capturing sensuality and live bodies refusing to be absorbed by the film?

It is important to note here that his first photographs of movie audiences were included with other images of everyday life in the city, as well as with shots of fires and murders, in his book *Naked City*, which was published in 1945. Weegee's biographers have speculated on the reasons why he would turn his attention to the ordinary practices of New York dwellers during the early forties. Weegee reveals in his autobiography that, following the exhibition of some of his photographs of murders and disasters at the Museum of Modern Art in 1943, friends and colleagues suggested he published a book²⁸. In his account of the situation, Weegee mentions that he was having great difficulty getting the publishers to accept his selection of disaster pictures. What they wanted to see was, according to Weegee, cliché images of everyday life in New York. Although he does not mention any consequent thematization on his part, when he finally persuaded Duell, Sloan & Pearce to publish *Naked City*, relatively very few of the images were crime and disaster pictures. From this, we may at first wonder if he felt that putting together a collection of interesting photographs of daily life in the city would bring a contract with the publishers. However, there seems to be a far more powerful issue emerging at that very moment in the context of public space that may have influenced his thematic turnabout. Weegee refers to this in his introduction to the book:

I have been told that my pictures should be in a book, that they were a great social document. As I keep to myself, belong to no group, like to be left alone with no axe to grind, I wouldn't know. Then something happened. There was a sudden drop in Murders and Fires (my two best sellers, my bread and butter). I couldn't understand that. With so many millions of people, it just wasn't normal, but it did give me a chance to look over the pictures I had been accumulating. Put together, they seemed to form a pattern. I pasted the photographs into a "dummy" book and left it with the publishers with a note "This is my brain child...handle with care please."²⁹

Clearly, Weegee did not take the sudden decrease in murders only as an excuse to put together other kinds of pictures taken previously. The lack of crime images also brought him to experiment with his camera on hitherto unexplored themes and sites, such as the movie theater. However, Weegee's reference to the occurrence of a dramatic change in the usual qualities of public space during this period is extremely illuminating. What kind of sudden transformation could be operating in the public realm so as to affect the incidence of crime to such a degree as to jeopardize the source of income of a crime-scene photographer?

It is telling that his first two movie theater photographs published in *Naked City* are presented under the heading "escapists." Naturally, the relentless pressures of World War II made themselves evident in the environment of the city and, consequently, in Weegee's portrayal of everyday life. As we have argued, if one looks at histories of cinema, it does not seem strange that a pictorial account of New York in the forties would include the movie theater

as an important site of wartime life. As mentioned earlier, statistics reveal a meteoric increase in theater attendance and, according to cinema historians, the sudden popularity of movie theaters can be explained by looking at the economic and social conditions produced by the war³⁰. While most historians argue that the movies were a cheap source of laughs in a period of financial deprivation, Barbara Stones argues that the emerging needs associated with the war created jobs for almost every American, producing in turn a wave of prosperity that allowed them to spend more on entertainment³¹. The point is that, while some resorted to the movies as an inexpensive form of withdrawal, others saw them as a luxury they could finally afford. In addition, gas rationing and travel restrictions turned the accessible cinemas into popular centers for social gathering, where all kinds of drives and activities in support of the war were organized. As we have seen, the “escapist” aspect of the movies remains, however, always at the core of every historian’s explanation of the filmic boom of the forties. According to these accounts, not only did the movies allow a rupture from the reality of war, but they also allowed the viewers to confront alternative and more benign readings of the conflict. The convenience of using films to advance certain views of the situation in Europe and the home front became evident as early as 1942, when Franklin D. Roosevelt acknowledged in a public statement the importance of keeping motion pictures operative “to maintain the morale of the public” and to present propagandist films. Hence, the Roosevelt administration granted the film industry a priority

classification of “AA,” which meant governmental support for repairs and replacement of equipment for theater sound systems.³² Walter Winchell, whom Weegee respected to as “the world’s greatest newspaperman,” announced the news:

Attention Mr. and Mrs. United States: The Government has certified the motion picture industry as a necessary war industry. This is not the creation of a special privilege. It is an honest recognition of the importance of the movies—the American Way of Life...Almost as a unit, the men and women of the screen have volunteered to stand behind a gun. The finding that their work is an essential service means that a movie camera is as much an instrument of war as a machine-gun and that an actor’s work can be as helpful as a riveter’s...³³

The American public quickly accepted the idea that films were effective agents of distraction and amusement that made people forget the harshness of the outside crisis with its limited resources, intense ideological campaigns and worries about the safety of the loved ones at the front. Only a few days after the entrance of the United States into the war, certain films were already openly advertised as escapist (fig. 45). However, we will see that the issue of escapism fails to acknowledge a spatial dimension that affected movie attendance during the war. It is important to acknowledge that, with the financial support of the government, Hollywood’s films presented patriotic stories with happy endings that connected audiences emotionally with those at the front and helped rally support for the war by idealizing the cause of

the United States and its Allies. One might argue, then, that the “escape” that films were able to provide according to historians was really only a journey into a charged discursive sphere that reproduced the same propagandistic mechanisms that prevailed on the street. Films became key instruments in consensus building and distributors of propaganda that continued and perfected the campaigns on the radio, through posters, and in the press.

Strangely enough at first, Weegee seems to share the view of the movies as an antidote to the harshness of reality. Alongside his movie theater photographs in the chapter entitled “escapists” in *Naked New York*, he writes: “Laugh-it’s good for you...forget all about shoe coupons...red stamps... and gas rationing...and that lonely ache in your heart every night waiting for First Class Private G. I. Joe to come home safely....”³⁴

Although Weegee seems to advocate for the films as salutary entertainment, it is important to remember that his images insistently focus on people who do not watch the movies but instead linger in the space of the theater without being captured by the ideological sphere of the film. There seems to be in his photographs a form of escape that is suspended between the outside and the screen. This is the fundamental aspect we will be able to unravel by historicizing Weegee’s photographs.

We can begin by saying that the harshness of the situation in the United States cannot be exclusively summed up in terms of material shortages and worries about the war front in

Europe. If we take a closer look at the spatial dimension in Weegee's photographs and at what life in New York meant at the time when these pictures were produced, we will find that the war set in place a particular set of conditions which dramatically altered the way in which public space was perceived. Thus, we will be able to see these images as part of a larger discourse on surveillance, concealment, and darkness that emerged during the politically tense years of the early forties. Furthermore, they will allow us to challenge the idea of an exclusively "filmic" escape advanced by film historians, and to reveal the extent to which the spatial conditions of the movie theater itself played a role in the very escape and shelter that the audience required.

Darkness and Vertical Visuality

On December 7, 1941, Japanese planes carried out a surprise attack on the United States naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. On the American side, twenty-one battleships and naval vessels were sunk or badly damaged, close to 200 aircraft were destroyed, and approximately 3,000 people were killed or wounded. The attack, considered to this day one of the most painful passages in American history³⁵, marked the entrance of the United States into World War II on the side of the allies, and against Japan, Germany, and Italy.

Even though the official photographs of the attack would not be released by the government until late December, the news were immediately reported and illustrated using a very peculiar set of images: the obscure silhouette of American cities deprived of light during emergency blackouts produced in prevention of imminent air raids on civilian population. On its issue dated December 22, for example, *Life* magazine presented, under the heading “America Goes to War”, a clear depiction of the radical effects of the Japanese attack on the experience of urban space in the mainland: the article compared two photographs of the Capitol in Washington D.C. before and after a blackout that was imposed on the city. Significantly, the article stated: “In the nation’s capital and in cities on both continental coasts the lights of peace flicked off” (fig. 46)³⁶. Whereas in this case the confused and inexperienced authorities had left the streetlights on after completely obscuring the buildings, it was soon realized that these trails of light could guide enemy bombers toward important military targets. As a result, total blackouts were prescribed for the following weeks, leaving the city in complete gloom. A few weeks after the first article, it was the completely black silhouette of Washington Monument at dusk that appeared under the title “Washington Goes to War” (fig. 47).

In a general sense, it was not far-fetched to fear airborne attacks over American cities. World War II was the first modern conflict in which large cities and civilian populations were systematically targeted for massive bombardments. After Hitler’s *Blitzkrieg* devastated Warsaw

in 1939, it was clear that a new set of warfare rules was in the writing: it was now plausible to use advanced technology to encircle and destroy nonmilitary targets full of civilians in order to force a military surrender from their government. Between September 1940 and May 1941, German planes destroyed vast areas of London through intense bombings. As many as 30,000 Londoners died, and another 50,000 were injured. More than 130,000 houses were destroyed. The London “blitz” introduced the British, and the rest of the world, to a new strategy of terror and destruction: the furious offensive of 71 continuous major raids over civilian targets.

Ironically, the newsreels brought the images of the terrible destruction in Europe to the United States. The threat of aerial attacks thus begun to take shape in the imagination of the American public long before the attack on Pearl Harbor. By the time the threat had become a reality on the Hawaiian base, Americans were ready to speculate on the bombing of American cities and, in the absence of photographs of the disaster in Hawaii, they were ready to illustrate the news and their fears by drawing from their filmic experience (fig. 48).

Immediately after news of the bombardment were received in the mainland, a sense of fear began to spread through all layers of life in the United States, as evidenced in the images and discourses published by different media. Symptomatically, the Red Cross launched a War Fund campaign using the image of a small girl who, surrounded by a deep darkness, asked: “Are they coming over here to fight, daddy?” (fig. 49). On a more specific form of guesswork,

Life magazine began to speculate on “How Nazi Planes May Bomb New York.” The article showed a plan of the city being approached from the southeast by enemy aircraft, illustrating the effect of the bombs on the urban setting (fig. 50).

The first reactions of fear immediately gave way to protective actions. Air patrols were sent off to detect and intercept enemy planes and submarines (fig. 51) and anti-aircraft gun emplacements were set up along the coasts to protect major cities, harbors, and industrial plants (fig. 52). Interceptor commands were also set up overnight in New York and other cities, where both government officials and civilians spent long hours trying to identify enemy aircraft (fig. 53). According to the original caption of this photograph, published in 1945, “men and women, old and young, learned to identify friendly and enemy planes.”³⁷

The large extent to which the new conditions of urban life required the involvement of civilian population in the protection and defense of their cities is an important fact to keep in mind when looking at Weegee’s photographs. *Life* reported on the immediate effects of Pearl Harbor by presenting the emergence of this civilian response in an article entitled “Air Alerts & Blackouts: Both Coasts Prepare for Attacks from Air” (fig. 54). The article showed a night view of New York City with its countless windows flanked by a couple of vigilant air-raid wardens established atop the Empire State building, and reproduced images of people crossing out with

tape their apartment windows and blacking them out with thick cloth after replacing their electric lights with candles. The situation was described as follows:

In no time at all, the civilians got a taste of war. Air-raid alarms shrieked on both coasts. Big cities blacked out, or tried to. There were dozens of casualties, mostly from auto accidents in the darkened streets. The tests showed that the citizens had very little idea of what to do when bombers come. But they also showed that the country was quick and eager to learn. Monday night, air-raid alerts startled the West Coast. Enemy planes were reported coming in over San Francisco. Searchlights could not find them and they dropped no bombs [...] In Los Angeles and San Diego, the great aircraft center, there was a test alert on Wednesday which sent 17,000 men home from darkened plants. Next day companies began painting windows black to save the vital night-shift work. In Hollywood the darkness fell impartially on movie star and stumblebum alike. The citizens of the city of klieg lights and floodlit grocery stores found a new beauty in simple starlight. [...] Seattle had practiced blackouts last spring, went at the problem with a comparatively professional air. First blackout night 2,000 citizens went on a window-smashing spree, broke the fronts of 26 stores which did not turn their lights off. The eastern U.S. had its air-raid alarm on Tuesday when news came that enemy planes were coming in at New York from the Atlantic. Some army men afterward classed the news as a "phony tip," others as a test alert. Interceptors whirred up to meet the enemy.³⁸

Life magazine contributed, as did every source of news of the time, to promote the fear of attack and to incite a collective effort of civilian defense. In its December 22 issue, one of its articles discussed "How to Identify Enemy Craft that Might Attack the U. S." (fig. 55) With a fatalistic tone, the article stated: "How to spot Japanese planes is made easy on this and the

following pages. If you see the full underside silhouette (shown left above), a bomb may hit near you in the next split second. If you see the full front view (above center), you should throw yourself flat on the ground against possible machine-gun fire. If you see the side view (above right), you are still in danger of being gunned by the rear gunner in the bombing and observation planes.”³⁹

Along with the new forms of danger, an unprecedented discourse of frantic fear, surveillance, protection, and concealment was emerging in the urban culture of the United States. Taking the form of a vertical visual axis, the city was found to be threatened from above by the powerful eye of the enemy, to which the only effective response lay in either of two strategies: being able to detect and neutralize the agent of aggression with searchlights and anti-aircraft guns, or covering up potential targets with different forms of protective blankets in order to at least neutralize its menacing gaze. The United States itself used the aesthetics brought about by the imminent threat and its new visual axis for its own purposes. Images of American warplanes and their aerial gunners pointing their machine-guns at some target below were widely distributed in the popular media throughout the duration of the war (fig. 56), as were all kinds of aerial photographs of destruction of enemy sites produced by the allies (fig. 57).

Thus, public space in most large cities of the East and West coast of the United States began to be construed as being under continuous surveillance by the enemy. Before the war,

when the early plans to prevent downward visibility over urban areas were conceived in prevention of attacks like those over London, they were done thinking of the threat exclusively as a nighttime problem and solutions prescribed in terms of blackouts. However, discussions extended to all sorts of camouflage against potential daytime raids. "Smokeouts," which consisted in producing dense clouds of smoke over energy plants and key military sites, became a daytime alternative to blackouts (fig. 58). Countless government documents focused on seeking ways to conceal gunners and urban and military landmarks by using different elements such as paint, foliage and decoy targets.⁴⁰ However, the discourse behind, and the planning of, concealment strategies did not remain limited to the governmental sphere. Citizens received through newspapers and pamphlets abundant information on how to use blankets, paper, exterior paints, and full-foliage trees in the concealment of their dwellings, and they set out to put it in practice. Colleges and universities also joined the cover-up endeavor: right after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the College of Fine Arts at Syracuse University added a course on protective concealment to its curriculum⁴¹; and, in February 1942, the first generation of artists with special training on military camouflage graduated from the Art School of the Pratt Institute in New York⁴².

The extent to which the threat on American cities was understood even at the time as part a new form of visual politics is illustrated by the very sources that disseminated the

discourse of protection. The Office of Emergency Management distributed in 1942 a poster in which the enemy was depicted as a menacing pair of eyes watching from beneath a stylized version of a Nazi helmet. The poster warned: "He's watching you" (fig. 59).

Despite all creative enterprises focused on daytime concealment, darkness remained the main refuge and symbol of protection for a wartime public who understood the reduced probability of daytime raids, due to the increased chance of detecting enemy planes as they approached. Ironically, even when the night seemed to represent the daunting battlefield of the new war, daylight presented even a more terrifying threat. If planes were to attack urban centers by day it would be impossible to protect the city as a whole, and the only hope would remain for those official structures or landmarks concealed or camouflaged under different identities. Conversely, complete obscuration of a city during nighttime air raids would reportedly provide effective protection for a wider section of the population. Thus, in response to the rise of a new visual politics, we see emerging in the public arena of the United States a new conceptualization of danger and safety, and a completely new reappraisal of darkness⁴³.

Weegee's move into an exploration of the spatial problematic of the movie theater coincides with this very moment of rediscovery of the city and its visual vulnerability. It is important, then, to juxtapose the images of abandoned sleepers and comfortable couples that Weegee captures in the dark with the exterior context from which those subjects have, indeed,

“escaped”: a society obsessed with the fear of its own visibility and excessively concerned with a connection between survival and darkness. It is important here to go back to Weegee’s 1942 photograph, *Joy of Living* (fig. 22), and to note that both the theater façade –which announces the “pleasures” of “life” beyond its doors—and the protective “clothing” being set up over the dead man’s body, point to the very essence of the problematic of public space at the moment the photograph was taken. The effective and metaphorical clothing or cover provided both by the paper over the victim and by the darkness of the movie theater neutralize two levels of pervasive and violent systems of vertical visibility. While the paper renders ineffective the downward examination of the urban spectator over the corpse, the structure of the movie theater disables the omniscient eye of the enemy over New York.

It is not surprising that it is the movie theater and not any other urban structure that serves as shelter from this line of sight. As the darkest public space within the urban fabric, the experience attained within its walls clearly resembled the idealized protection that darkness was able to provide for a community in the process of discovering the ultimate extent of their visual vulnerability⁴⁴.

Visual Violence at Street Level

The discourse of danger was not limited to the vertical threat that enemy planes posited over the American territory. Although this was the most popular and most widely distributed rendering of the threat, its representations evolved until there were also instances that depicted the effects of the enemy's presence at the level of the street. Thus, the vertical axis of visual violence intersected with a horizontal axis of threat at the urban level. This perpendicular hinge is clearly illustrated by two posters produced by the Kroger Grocery and Baking Company as part of its effort to support the distribution of patriotic messages to the American public in 1942. The two posters—whose main objective was to summon the viewer to purchase war bonds and stamps—employ similar representational strategies, but situate the enemy in different terms in relation to the city, producing two divergent but complementary depictions of danger. On the one hand, one of the posters emphasizes the need to buy war bonds “before it’s too late”, while depicting the blurred, deep black silhouette of an urban setting, against which a woman and a child embrace each other in terror under the menacing image of an enemy bomber that flies just above their heads (fig. 60). While the child’s hands hold on to the woman’s clothes in desperate fear, the woman looks up at the source of danger, her facial expression revealing a profound anxiety. Contrastingly, in a second poster, it is not the image of the enemy’s machinery but of

the enemy itself that is presented. In this case, a much closer reference to the city serves as the background: a typical American neighborhood brick wall in front of which a street lamp bears an American route sign. In the foreground, the figure of a man in Nazi uniform looks back at the camera, his gaze reaching the viewer horizontally as he menacingly brandishes a bayonet. With this image of an embodied enemy established already at ground level in the United States, the poster pleaded: "Keep him off your street!" (fig. 61).

Beyond the rhetorical maneuvers that established the immediate neighborhood street as a potentially threatening space, the reality of urban interaction was already evidencing itself as an increasingly dangerous arena. One of the early instances of this violence were the attacks carried out by American civilians against people of both Chinese and Japanese descent in an attempt to retaliate for the attack at Pearl Harbor (an initiative that would later be supported by the government, as we all know, with the forcible internment and relocation of people of Japanese ancestry in different camps in the West Coast). According to *Life*, the threat to Chinese immigrants on the street was so serious, that their consulates were prepared to "tag their nationals with identification buttons."⁴⁵ The article pointed out the unfair nature of these attacks not for being exerted on civilians as a whole, but for being directed at "innocent" Chinese, "whose homeland is our staunch ally."⁴⁶ In this context, *Life* took the opportunity to provide what they thought to be a form of public service: in order to be able to distinguish

Japanese from Chinese civilians, the magazine “adduced” “a rule-of-thumb from the anthropometric conformations that distinguish friendly Chinese from enemy alien Japs.”⁴⁷ The article, published on December 22, 1941 and entitled “How to Tell Japs from the Chinese”, included anthropometrical analyses laid over the photographic portraits of two famous Japanese and Chinese government figures: Ong Wenhao, Chinese Minister of Economic Affairs, and the Japanese Premier and General, Hideki Tojo. Along with these facial studies, the article included generic full-body comparisons of Chinese and Japanese adult men (fig. 62). *Time* magazine similarly published an article entitled “How to Tell your Friends from the Japs,” on December 22. *Time*’s photographic comparisons of Japanese and Chinese men did not display measurements or annotations over their portraits. However, the social aim of the article was the same as the one published by *Life*.

Thus, the experience of the street had changed dramatically from the days before the United States entered the war. Streets had become battlefields where some citizens were ready to retaliate over the attack on Hawaii, while others had to wear identification buttons in order not to be attacked. It is interesting to notice that, even in the case of intersubjective relations on the street, the problem remained within the sphere of visibility. Close visual analysis of faces allowed the average American to distinguish between friends and foes, while graphic shields

such as identification buttons became a form of protection whose effectiveness depended precisely on being examined by strangers as part of that intensified form of visual interaction.

In addition to this violent visual negotiation on the street, there were, however, physical dangers in the urban setting that affected U.S. residents in general, regardless of their nationality or racial background. The first blackouts carried out immediately after the attack on Pearl Harbor, for example, produced numerous injuries and casualties: people were hit or run over by cars on the darkened streets; others walked into sewers and canals or fell down steps in the total darkness of the sidewalks. Within the confusion that prevailed in the city during the blackouts, panicked Americans crashed their cars into buildings or were shot for not stopping at military checkpoints. In fact, the drastic effects of the blackout at street level were partially predicted by the Office of Civilian Defense who, in its educational manual entitled "Blackouts,"⁴⁸ warned citizens of the dangers they would encounter and suggested preventive measures to avoid or counteract them. The manual, published and distributed in 1941 as the probability of attacks over American cities began to rise, includes, on page 24, a series of explanations of the imminent dangers the average citizen would be exposed to during a blackout, among these: running into other people or tripping over unleashed pets, getting lost, going unnoticed in the dark while gravely injured, or inadvertently alerting the enemy by directing a flashlight onto a

reflective surface. The manual illustrated this section with a series of obscure and dreadful depictions of urban space (fig. 63).

Later, in its brochure “What to do in an Air Raid”, dated 1941 and distributed most likely right after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Office of Civilian Defense posited the home as the safest place in an air raid. The brochure warned: “Stay off the streets. The enemy wants you to run out into the streets, create a mob, start a panic. Don’t do it!”⁴⁹ However, life within the space of the home itself was transformed and threatened by the need to accommodate special defensive measures. The brochure instructed:

Whether or not black-out is ordered, don’t show more light than is necessary. If planes come over, put out or cover all lights at once –don’t wait for the black-out order. The light that can’t be seen will never guide a Jap. Remember a candle light may be seen for miles from the air. If you have portieres or curtains, arrange a double thickness over your windows. Blankets will do.⁵⁰

Proximity to the windows was similarly proscribed:

Stay away from windows. Glass shatters easily, so stay away from windows. Don’t go to windows and look out in an air raid. It is a dangerous thing, and helps the enemy. (...) Again we say, get off the street if planes come over. At night, there is danger of being caught in blast from explosives. Antiaircraft fire means falling shrapnel. You are safe from it indoors, away from windows.⁵¹

The need to totally enclose the house, transforming it into a window-less black box with no visual relation to the outside world, practically established a siege over domestic space. Within it, the whole family was obliged to collide and interact under the most anxiety producing of situations. The image that illustrates this section of the Office of Civilian Defense's pamphlet even seems to acknowledge the stressful conditions to be lived indoors: while a young woman shuts the curtains and her brother tunes in the radio, the father turns off a lamp with an exasperated gesture. Similarly, the mother shows a frankly distressed expression as she carries a platter of food to the center of the room, where the family will gather for an unknown number of hours (fig. 64).

To this far from comfortable domestic situation, we can see how the movie theater acted as a counterpoint: a windowless, completely dark space in itself, the conditions prescribed by the official protective discourse prevailed within its structure, at the time it continued to provide a potential alternative sphere of fantasy. In the cinema, the screen served a twofold task: firstly, that of providing a site for imaginary escape for those eager to watch, and secondly, that of neutralizing the gaze of other spectators over those who would rather escape the general politics of wartime visibility to experience the immediate space of the theater as they kissed or slept. In the latter case, as I have already argued, the escape would be effectively carried out by remaining in a space away from any ideological interpretation of the current reality of the city, a

space suspended between two spheres of rhetorical, as well as potentially real, bombardment. If we add to this that, besides the problematic negotiation of space at street level, the horizontal mobility also became restricted by gas rationing and the limited opportunity to travel by train due to the increased need to move troops across the country (see fig. 65), we can think of the movie theater as the closest and most accessible site for entertainment, as well as the most readily available psychological substitute for an air raid shelter in the local community. In contrast to the violent space of visual negotiation that the street entailed, and away from the enclosed, fearful environment of the house, the protective, permissive, anonymous sphere of the movie theater established itself as an ideal alternative.

3

Theater as Shelter

An official pamphlet on communal air raids published by the Office of Civilian Defense and distributed in 1942 stressed, beyond the need for real protection from the attack of the enemy, the importance of psychological aspects when choosing a shelter. In this sense, the pamphlet described the benefits of the communal shelter over the domestic one for the anonymity it allowed while still promoting reciprocal help among those sheltered:

The psychology of sheltering from air raids is very difficult to evaluate. There is good evidence, observed during actual heavy air raids abroad, that in a raid, people like company. Some families will prefer to take refuge in small domestic shelters, which may be safer than their own homes, but will be less comfortable. Others will prefer more company than the family affords, and also will take account of the fact that the head of the family may not be at home. Therefore, they will prefer the joint comfort and moral support which is possible in the communal shelter, together with the possibility of more effective joint action in an emergency. Some people will prefer to be sheltered underground for purely psychological reasons, and others will, for similar reasons, prefer to be sheltered on the surface. In either case the preference will be emotional rather than logical.⁵²

Interestingly, Sigmund Freud's study of non-pathological anxiety, that is to say, the one produced by real, external dangers as opposed to the pathological, internalized fear produced by psychological stimuli, may support the Office's theories. Freud's writings establish a strong causal connection between anxiety and withdrawal, that is to say, between the experience of danger and the search of alternative, safe, spaces. According to Freud, "the psyche is overtaken by the affect of anxiety if it feels that it is incapable of dealing by an appropriate reaction with a task (a danger) approaching from outside."⁵³ If we think of the movie theater as a natural shelter from the generalized threat over the city between 1941 and 1945, our description will closely correspond to the Office's psychological considerations and to the Freudian explanation of withdrawal as a defense mechanism from anxiety: "in the case of external danger the organism has recourse to attempts at flight. The first thing it does is to withdraw cathexis from the perception of the dangerous object; later on it discovers that it is a better plan to perform muscular movements of such a sort as will render perception of the dangerous object impossible even in the absence of any refusal to perceive it—that it is a better plan, that is, to remove itself from the sphere of danger."⁵⁴ It is, then, through effectively advancing into a radically different space, and not only through mere voluntary distraction that, according to Freud, the psyche is better able to deal with a real danger that is too powerful to confront.

Interestingly, Freud once referred to the act of birth as “the first experience of anxiety, and thus the source and prototype of the affect of anxiety.”⁵⁵ Freud’s disciple, Otto Rank, later suggested that all attacks of anxiety were in fact attempts at recalling the original experience of birth. Could we be looking then at a sort of collective response to anxiety in the form of regression, since the spatial prototype into which Weegee’s anxious subjects retreat recalls the mother’s womb, that is to say, the only spatial structure that antedates the subject’s first experience of anxiety? With its single entrance, its total enclosure, and complete darkness, the movie theater strikingly resembles the very space within which the psyche’s original memory of undisturbed safety resides.

For these same reasons, it is possible to advance the thesis that the movie house complied with many of the physical and psychological requirements for the communal air raid shelter during the war, but was even more effective in counteracting a threat that was very intensely defined in terms of visual violence. We have already established the general advantages that the movie theater as a site presents in the neutralization of visual negotiation as an effect of its unique spatial conditions. We have analyzed its characteristic enclosure and how its near-total darkness provides protection from the gaze of others. Now, after examining the plethora of examples that allow us to reconstruct the ideology of threat and protection that emerged with the entrance of the United States into the Second World War, it is not difficult to

understand the movie theater as a kind of circumscribed blackout space within which the violence of vertical as well as horizontal visibility was rendered innocuous. This may explain why Weegee's subjects seem to have consciously retreated into the movie theater to enjoy its enclosed, dark, and permissive space, and why Weegee found their activities to be particularly interesting. Nonetheless, the neutralization of intersubjective visibility is particularly important if we analyze Weegee's interest in subjects who sleep or kiss in the dark. Besides the importance the movie theater holds in relation to the general logic of escaping the visual vulnerability of the city, for these two groups there were even further discursive enterprises that could explain their retreat into its visual vacuum. It is impossible to ignore, when looking at the solitary individuals who recline on the theater's seats, abandoning their bodies and consciousness to the drifting rhythm of dreams, that outside, in the space dominated by fear and propaganda, a powerful campaign demanded Americans to exercise their patriotic duties in different ways, one of which was engaging in non-stop work.

The beginning of the war required not only that the American industries shifted from producing consumer goods to war materials, but also that they increased productivity in order to supply the army with the necessary tools to defeat the enemy. After completely obscuring all of their windows, factories of all sorts began to produce military goods around the clock. Employers and labor unions urged workers to make individual sacrifices by increasing the hours

of their shifts and the quality of their work. Government offices and private companies launched an intense campaign reminding workers that, since they were not themselves on the battlefield, their patriotic duty was to at least provide those who were risking their lives with the necessary materials to fight the enemy. In 1942, a poster produced by General Motors motivated their workers by claiming that “Non-stop work will win” (fig. 66). In a more guilt-producing tone, one published by Walter Kidde & company showed a cartoon of Adolph Hitler congratulating a lazy worker: “Thanks for loafing, pal!” (fig. 67). The Navy Department similarly reminded workers that “The enemy never kills time”, and, in a more dramatic fashion, North American Aviation claimed that “Killing time is killing men” (figs. 68-69).

Hence, the exhausted sleepers in Weegee’s pictures seem to have found in the movie theater not only a protective shield from the violent visuality of the enemy at different levels but also a safe haven away from the reality of non-stop productivity. In this sense, we may speculate whether Weegee’s photographs reflect an implicit “support” of this particular kind of “escapist” activity in the theater, or whether he is documenting, as he did in his murder pictures, the “evidence” for a crime committed by sleeping workers who deviated from their patriotic duty.

A similar context exists for the kissing couples in Weegee’s photographs. When, on December 29, 1941, *Life* magazine published the recently released official pictures of the disaster at Pearl Harbor, nine full pages were dedicated to images of smoke, wrecked planes,

burning cars and buildings, as well as wounded soldiers and corpses. However, the last page of the section presented a full-blown photograph of a kissing couple with the following caption: "After the attack: a staff sergeant and his wife find each other alive and unhurt" (fig. 70). This would mark the emergence of the kiss as part of an iconography of relief, hope, and unity that would permeate the next few years of press photography in the United States. Kissing, and love in general, appeared in this context as the perfect antidotes to distress, and their representations would stand for a reiteration of the country's ultimate capacity to survive. As explained by American Army Sergeant John Horn Burns, "in a war one has to love, if only to reassert that he's very much alive in the face of destruction. Whoever has loved in wartime takes part in a passionate reaffirmation of his life."⁵⁶

Not surprisingly, immediately after the attack, Christmas leaves were canceled for most army personnel, and journals began to abound with images of young girls and soldiers kissing each other goodbye before the latter went back to their camps (fig. 71). The advertising industry soon cashed in on this new romanticized emblem of American patriotism and made effective use of the powers of kissing to sell from after-shave lotion to toothpaste. By January 1942, Listerine toothpaste ads that were previously illustrated with the image of a man holding a daisy (fig. 72) would now show a lonely woman and a couple kissing passionately in the background and ask, "When's the last time you were kissed?" (fig. 73). A shaving cream ad similarly

presented the potential consumer with the picture of a couple who kissed and, after asserting that the heart tends to grow “fonder with absence”, it alerted male readers of the importance of giving a closely-shaved good-bye kiss with “Barbasol” (fig. 74).

It is not surprising then, that Weegee’s couples would so eagerly enjoy the newly re-discovered and romanticized nature of kissing, nor that he would be interested in photographing this popular icon of the time. However, the connections between eroticism and the movie theater at this particular time are not only iconographic. In fact, they are embedded in a more complex sexual politics that operated during the war. On the one hand, histories of sexuality in the United States claim that World War II, as most wars, was a period of heightened sexual energy and relaxed moral constraints. John Costello, for example, has pointed out that the war “stimulated the urge to love and be loved.”⁵⁷ According to him, within the context of strictly rationed goods and constant threat experienced by the population, sex was construed, especially by young men and women, as “one of the few wartime pleasures available to all.”⁵⁸

The increasing anxiety of young couples who were about to be separated by the war (especially those who were not married⁵⁹), as well as the economic and social freedom recently found by women who were entering the urban workforce away from their domestic enclosure, played a role in this sudden transformation of romance and sexuality. Let us remember that, in fact, psychoanalytic theory connects fear of death and fear of losing a loved object with

increased sexual urgency. Again, Sigmund Freud, in his *Thoughts on War and Death*, suggested that wartime disillusionment and stress produced in the average subject an involution from the civilized forms of the “social” into the egoistic instinctual nature of the “erotic.” Similarly, Costello posits the intensification of sexual activity as an effect of the traumatic events which the population was forced to undergo at the time of the war: “the lives and moral attitudes of many millions of people had undergone an extensive emotional trauma, and in the unsettled conditions of wartime many social inhibitions had lost their restraining force. Making the best of the present without thinking about the future had led to pleasure-seeking and increased promiscuity.”⁶⁰

Indeed, this “urge” for love eventually came to be expressed as sharp increases in rates of venereal disease, illegitimate births, and sexual delinquency. However, even sexual favors acquired a patriotic tint. During the war, one of the most interesting phenomena in the sexual arena was the emergence of what the American press called “patriotutes”: young girls who went “uniform-hunting” at railroad stations and bus terminals to engage in what The American Social Hygiene Association later called “sexual delinquency of a non-commercial character”. In other words, they performed sexual favors for young soldiers who were leaving to the front, without asking for any payment in return. When detained by the police, these girls often claimed that

they did this because it was their “patriotic duty” to “comfort the poor boys who may go overseas and get killed.”⁶¹

The dramatic relaxation of the sexual politics in America turned the attention of the disciplinary forces of the government against juvenile sexuality. Young women began to be considered a health threat for the soldiers. The army warned their men against engaging in sexual relations with girls of high school age, who were considered the army’s biggest enemy as a potential source of disease. Later, political discourse began to link military victory in the war with a return to forms of pre-war morality in the United States. Former president Herbert Hoover has been quoted as saying, in 1944: “The moral life of America is in danger [...] We must accept the fact that total war relaxes moral standards on the home front and that this imperils the whole front of human decency”⁶². Reportedly, he went on to suggest that military victory in the war should be accompanied by moral victory in the home front. Thus, the logic of this formula somehow constructed a bizarre equation between the atrocities of the enemy at the European front, with the liberated sexual behavior of young Americans, both of which had to be stopped and overcome.

As the newly revived forms of sexuality became more evident, police surveillance began to target any public display of affection that would suggest moral relaxation. In New York, a Wayward Minors Court had to be instituted to deal with the large number of cases of female

minors arrested for not being “properly escorted” after ten o’clock in the Times Square area. Thus, like it did with the sleepers, the movie theater began to receive throngs of young couples and to shield them from the ideological apparatus that had been established against sexuality. Sheltered from the official surveillance that targeted even subtle forms of physical affection in public space, inside the theater they were free to engage in passionate encounters for the duration of a film.

On a more architectural note, the layout of the theater also echoed the structures intended to provide physical protection against the powerful effects of real air raids over American cities. Immediately after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the American Construction Company, which advertised itself as the “builders of the California Cottage” began the construction of underground bomb shelters in Los Angeles (fig. 75). By February 14, 1942, the *Christian Science Monitor* reported that the Los Angeles Defense Council was also beginning to sell plans of “American-style” air-raid shelters (fig. 76). The aim of this initiative was to institute an “official” model that would counteract the effect of contractors beginning to advertise themselves as “specialists” in air-raid shelters. At forty cents apiece, the project was also expected to dissipate the public fear that protection was beyond the reach of the average American’s budget. As specified by official recommendations by the U.S. Office of Civilian Defense, and echoing the typical architecture of the movie theater, including its darkness, the

shelters were “almost bare”, had no windows, and were laid out on free floor plans with one or several rows of seats and a single entrance. According to the *Christian Science Monitor*, “no provision [was] made for wired lighting or heating. Candles, flashlights, and sweaters or coats will be all that’s necessary.”⁶³ Interestingly, in the case of the American Construction Company, it was this very layout which made it possible to tell their clients that, if no air raids were to be deployed over the city, the shelters could still be converted into either of two “California delights”: “a swimming pool or a sound-proof rumpus room.”⁶⁴

Thus, what would appear to be a set of extremely opposed functions of architecture, namely, the most basic and immediate protection of life, and the allocation of the most mundane and escapist pleasures of entertainment, coexisted during the war within the same architectural structures and functioned under similar spatial politics. The air-raid shelter and the movie theater paralleled each other during World War II in their duty of providing protection and entertainment at once. While both ended up fulfilling both ambitions, the one attempted to provide a physical protection from an attack that never came; the other, an effective protection from the anxiety that the *possibility* of those attacks, and the reality of the violent visuality on the street, entailed.

Conclusion

Weegee took his last picture inside a movie theater in 1950. After that, he rarely returned to infrared photography. He focused instead on producing portraits of celebrities and politicians where he altered the proportions of their facial traits and distorted their expressions. In relation to the rest of his work, the movie theater period was established in such a strict parallelism with the war that it is impossible to think of it on its own, that is to say, as severed from the aesthetic and political discourse that, as we have argued, ended up establishing the movie house as a protective site in a time of national crisis. However, within the violent systems of public visibility that we have explored so far, namely, the threatening eye of the enemy over the city and the horizontal menace of the different levels of visual negotiation of public space, Weegee's camera assumed a privileged position. Let us remember that Weegee's photographs were produced with infrared film and invisible flash, which allowed the photographer to capture the scene of his choice without alerting his subjects of his presence. In contrast to the widely advertised threat of Japanese or Nazi planes over the city, Weegee's secret surveillance went unnoticed and his gaze did not encounter any form of resistance. Thus, his photographs in the movie theater

embody the ultimate victory of sight over concealment. He, the photographer, remained the only individual effectively protected from everyone else's gaze.

It is important to remember here that World War II not only produced an aesthetics of concealment, which has been up until now our main interest for its effects in the perception of urban space; it also made evident a completely new culture of espionage. Newspapers and magazines continuously reported on the threat that enemy spies, particularly German, presented to the country, and on the way in which their techniques of infiltration were used to gain access to vital and otherwise inaccessible secrets. Photography, not surprisingly, occupied the center stage of these technical resources. From microfilm reproductions of secret documents to aerial photographs of military sites, pictures remained the most reliable and widely used medium for the transmission of visual information to the enemy. In the case of aerial photography, even though it was invented in the mid-nineteen century⁶⁵ and used for war purposes shortly after this, it reached a completely new dimension during World War II. The interpretation of documents of aerial photoreconnaissance became in this period a highly sophisticated and systematic procedure. Specialists in communication, defense, radar, aircraft and submarine production, scrutinized the images looking for information on the enemy's resources and activities. Fliers were able to produce as many as 3,000,000 prints every month, and film was developed in modern machines that were able to turn out as many as 500 prints

per hour⁶⁶. Thus, the generalized discourse of concealment that we have analyzed above was counterbalanced with an aesthetics of intrusion, of which Weegee's work serves as a powerful example. In this sense, Weegee almost appears to assume the position of the enemy over the unsuspecting subjects photographs. The invasive nature of his enterprise and, particularly, his use of technical features such as infrared film, position him within the sphere of reconnaissance. Nonetheless, while he adheres to the strategy of the spy, the nature of his pictures present him more as an advocate of the pleasurable life inside the movie theater than as its denouncer. We shall remember that his photographs juxtapose in a very dramatic way a chaotic interpretation of life on the streets of New York with a sympathetic take on those who escape its harshness by retreating into the dark. His camera strips the children, lovers, and sleepers from their camouflage, but by doing so, the images establish and advertise the movie theater as a party scene, a secure refuge, a womb. Hence, his pictures contribute to the undoing of a desperate logic of fear and hopelessness; they counteract a pervasive discourse of political adherence, and recover the basic pleasures of the individual body and of life. All, ironically, while leaving intact the delicate shield of darkness under which the subjects take cover, leaving it undisturbed under his infrared flash. Darkness remained, after all, the element most carefully preserved in Weegee's photographs. Precisely at a time when it embodied the most definite trait of the urban

condition, Weegee managed to leave it untouched, capturing for posterity the distinctive politics of space that emerged at this moment in history.

It does not seem difficult now to characterize World War II in the context of the United States as a period of darkness that began to “lighten up” after 1945. While this set of circumstances can only be detected from a certain historical distance and by looking at different sources of news, images, and discourse, articles of the time seemed to predict what later generations would encounter when looking back at this period. A few months before the end of the war, *House Beautiful* published an article on domestic systems of lighting entitled “Brighter Nights for your Postwar Days” by Florence Paine (fig. 77). The article was in fact an analysis of how the development of modern systems of lighting would change, in the near and far future, the quality of domestic space in America. However, in what would appear to be the display of an acute sense of historical consciousness, Paine’s first sentence read: “Ten years from now you will look back on today as the ‘dark ages’. We mean that quite literally.”⁶⁷ It is now a lot more than ten years after the war, but through our exploration of different discourses and representational strategies in the United States from 1941 to 1945, we have confronted an array of examples that allow us to do just that: to go back in time to rediscover a “dark age” and, by looking at Weegee’s photographs, to reassess the role of an urban site that effectively provided

concealment and protection for the dwellers of New York as they saw their city under siege: the enclosed, dark, and safe space of the movie theater.

Notes

¹ An interesting example is the work of Giuliana Bruno. See her *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map: Cultural Theory and the City Films of Elvira Notari* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

² Andre Bazin, *What Is Cinema?* Volume 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 102.

³ Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier*, Trans. Celia Britton, Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster and Alfred Guzzetti (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 96.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life" in Kurt Wolff (Ed.) *The Sociology of Georg Simmel* (New York: The Free Press, 1950), 410.

⁶ Ibid., 414.

⁷ Cited in Walter Benjamin in "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" *Illuminations* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968), 191.

⁸ Guy Debord, *The Society of Spectacle* (New York: Zone Books, 1995).

⁹ For more information on Seurat's work, see Robert L. Herbert et al., *Georges Seurat 1859-1891* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1991).

¹⁰ Cited in Giuliana Bruno, *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map: Cultural Theory and the City Films of Elvira Notari* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 48.

¹¹ See Bruno, *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map*, 43, 53.

¹² Born in 1899 in Lemberg, Austria, Weegee arrived in New York in 1910. Famous for his incisive portrayal of gangster murders in New York, his productive life started at age 14 as a photo assistant and taking street photographs of children in the Lower East Side. In 1921, he got a steady job as a helper in the darkrooms of the New York Times, and fifteen years later, he began his free-lance career centering his work around the Manhattan Police Headquarters, taking crime pictures, which he sold to different newspapers. "Murder is my business" was the title of his first exhibition in 1941. Two years later, some of his work was exhibited at the Museum of Modern

Art in New York. During the ten years of his free lance career he produced most of the pictures that would be later published in two collections: *Naked City* (1945 and 1973) and *Weegee's People* (1946 and 1976). Weegee died in New York on December 26, 1968.

¹³ For statistics and general information on theater attendance for the period 1941-1945, see Maggie Valentine, *The Show Starts on the Sidewalk: An Architectural History of the Movie Theatre, Starring S. Charles Lee* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), particularly chapter 6, "Newsreel: The Impact of World War II" and Appendix A.

¹⁴ East Coast exhibitor Bernard Myerson, cited in Barbara Stones, *America Goes to the Movies: 100 Years of Motion Picture Exhibition* (Hollywood, National Association of Theatre Owners, 1993), 115.

¹⁵ Stones, *America Goes to the Movies*, 117.

¹⁶ Valentine, *The Show Starts on the Sidewalk*, 128.

¹⁷ It is strange that Weegee's movie photographs have remained unexplored and almost unacknowledged to this day. As part of my archival research, I have been able to examine over one hundred prints of photographs of movie audiences that Weegee produced between 1943 and 1950. The sheer quantity of images captured by Weegee on this topic points to the project as an important moment in Weegee's work that still demands closer study.

¹⁸ The most popular account as to how Weegee got his nickname has to do with the immediacy and rawness of his photographs. It has been said that "Weegee" was a phonetic rendering of "ouija," which referred to his ability to predict where a violent death would happen. Others claim that an earlier nickname he got when he worked in the darkrooms of the New York Times, "squeegee boy" (referring to the tool he used to remove the excess moisture from the prints), transformed into "Weegee" later on.

¹⁹ The careful composition of the image, which roughly uses the body to transcribe a diagonal from the upper left to the lower right corner of the pictorial space, using regular parameters to locate it within a grid of lines that loosely divide the photograph in thirds, also suggests that Weegee was aware of his pictures as aesthetic products despite their seemingly evidential and documentary character.

²⁰ The title "Joy of Living" resonates with a representational tradition in a different medium: painting. In 1905-06, Matisse produced a work with the same title where he posited an idealized representation of bodies in harmony

with nature. Later, Picasso followed Matisse and produced, in 1946, a similarly idealized representation of “La Joie de Vivre.”

²¹ It is interesting to see that, by capturing sequential takes on activities that evolve through time, Weegee amalgamates the technique of photography with the aesthetics of “filmic” language.

²² Cited in Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Disenchanted Night: The Industrialization of Light in the Nineteenth Century*. Trans. Angela Davies (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 208.

²³ *Ibid.*, 209.

²⁴ Hugo Mauerhofer, “Psychology of Film Experience,” in *The Penguin Film Review* Vol. II, ed. Roger Manvell. (London: Penguin Books, 1949), 103.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 107.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 104

²⁷ It is important to acknowledge here that this photograph contains not only a spatial ingredient but also a powerful class critique. If we contextualize the photograph (1943) within the space of restrictions that the Second World War entailed, the image appears as an evident attack on a social class was cynical enough to show off their jewels at the opera house. As we will see later, while the governmental propaganda summoned the working class to produce around the clock, allowing no space for leisure, Weegee’s photograph captures the bourgeoisie while they comfortably enjoy their usual forms of entertainment, and refusing thus the “collective” spirit of work for victory.

²⁸ See Weegee (Arthur Fellig), *Weegee by Weegee: An Autobiography* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1975), 82.

²⁹ Weegee (Arthur Fellig), *Naked City* (New York: Essential Books, 1945), 11.

³⁰ We should note that the emergence of television played an important role in drastically reducing theater attendance during the postwar years. Between 1947 and 1957, 90 percent of American households acquired a television set.

³¹ See Barbara Stones, *America Goes to the Movies*, 115.

³² See Maggie Valentine, *The Show Starts on the Sidewalk*, 129.

³³ Cited in Valentine, *The Show Starts on the Sidewalk*, 129.

³⁴ Weegee, *Naked City*, 94.

³⁵ Only the attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, has been compared to the attack on Pearl Harbor. As we will see, the effects of the recent terrorist attack in New York has produced spatial transformations and iconographic strategies that could be easily compared to those of the attack on the U.S. naval base in Hawaii in 1941.

³⁶ See "America Goes to War." *Life*, 22 December 1941, 13.

³⁷ See Herman C. Morris and Harry B. Henderson (Eds.) *World War II in Pictures*, Vol. II. (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1945) 280.

³⁸ "Air Alerts and Blackouts: Both Coasts Prepare for Attacks from Air," *Life*, 22 December 1941, 20.

³⁹ "Japanese Planes: How to Identify Enemy Craft that Might Attack the U. S.," *Life*, 22 December 1941, 36.

⁴⁰ See Camouflage Section, Engineer Board, Fort Belvoir, Virginia. *Notes on Modern Camouflage* (Fort Belvoir, Virginia, September 18, 1941) and "Paints for Protective Concealment" (Fort Belvoir, Virginia, September 18, 1941).

⁴¹ See "Syracuse Trains in Camouflage," *New York Times*, Sunday, 24 May 1942. Interestingly, the article also describes the use of photography to determine the effectiveness of the concealment strategies put into place by the students in models of hypothetical situations. We will see this very model at work in Weegee's portrayal of the moviegoers.

⁴² See "The Artist Goes to War," *PM*, Monday, 29 December 1941, p. 14.

⁴³ It is not coincidentally that the films produced and released during this period were to be later identified as "dark film" or "film noir", a style considered now typically American and limited to the early nineteen forties. The issues of obscurity, sexuality, violence, and mystery present in the urban sphere imbued even filmic production. On the relationship between the wartime urban environment and film noir, see Nicholas Christopher, *Somewhere in the Night: Film Noir and the American City* (New York: The Free Press, 1997). In an interesting note, a number of scholars have also considered Weegee's work to be connected with the aesthetics of film noir. See, for example, Alain Bergala, "Weegee and Film Noir," in *Weegee's World*. Ed. Miles Barth (Boston: Bulfinch Press, 1997) 69-77.

⁴⁴ Antonia Lant has explored the relationship between films, movie theaters, and urban space in England during World War II. An interesting difference between the experiences in England and in the United States is that, whereas the English public sphere was effectively immersed in aerial bombardments, in the United States similar

reactions were produced only by the possibility of enemy attacks over the city. Furthermore, whereas the experience of England under these circumstances has gone into history as a fact, in the case of the United States the public fear experienced during the war has remained almost undocumented and unacknowledged. For more on the English case, see Antonia Lant, *Blackout: Reinventing Women for Wartime British Cinema* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

⁴⁵ See "How to Tell Japs from the Chinese: Angry Citizens Victimize Allies with Emotional Outburst at Enemy," *Life*, 22 December 1941, 81.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ United States War Department / United States Office of Civilian Defense, *Blackouts* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, August 1941).

⁴⁹ United States Office of Civilian Defense, *What to Do in an Air Raid* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1941).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² United States Office of Civilian Defense, *Communal Air Raid Shelters* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, November 1942), 1.

⁵³ Sigmund Freud, *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*, Trans. Alix Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton, 1959), 6.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁵⁶ John Horn Burns, cited by John Costello in *Virtue Under Fire: How World War II Changed Our Social and Sexual Attitudes* (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1985), 307.

⁵⁷ John Costello, *Virtue Under Fire: How World War II Changed Our Social and Sexual Attitudes* (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1985), 10.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ During the first stages of the war, marriage and parenthood served as deterrents to being drafted. Under the 1940 Selective Service Act, fathers with young children had a lower rating.

⁶⁰ Costello, *Virtue Under Fire*, 258.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 207.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 260.

⁶³ See "Los Angeles Sells Plans for Raid Shelters," *The Christian Science Monitor* (14 February 1942).

⁶⁴ "Speaking of Pictures: Southern California Company Builds its Air-raid Shelter No. 1 in a Vacant Lot," *Life*, 29 December 1941, 21.

⁶⁵ The idea of aerial photography was born with aviation itself. In 1858, Nadar produced the first photographs of Paris from a flying balloon and in 1859, he declined an invitation by the French Minister for War to apply his experiments to the military field. According to some historians, the first photographs for a military purpose were taken from a balloon in 1862. The prints were used to explore the position of the Confederate troops during the American Civil War.

⁶⁶ For more information on aerial photography and its uses in warfare see Constance Babington Smith, *Evidence in Camera: the Story of Photographic Intelligence in World War II* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1958) and Beaumont Newhall, *Airborne camera: The World from the Air and Outer Space* (New York: Hastings House, 1969).

⁶⁷ Florence Paine, "Brighter Nights for your Postwar Days," *House Beautiful* 48, no. 2 (February 1945), 62.

Illustrations



Fig. 1

Georges Seurat
Cirque, 1890-91
Oil on canvas. Musée d'Orsay, Paris



Fig. 2

J. R. Eyerman
*Audience Watches Premiere of Bwana Devil
Wearing Polaroid Spectacles to Enjoy the
Three-Dimensional Sequences*, 1952
Gelatin silver print



Fig. 3

Weegee (Arthur Fellig)
Children, Palace Theater, c. 1943
Gelatin silver print, from infrared negative



Fig. 4

Weegee (Arthur Fellig)
Children, Palace Theater, c. 1943
Gelatin silver print, from infrared negative



Fig. 5

Weegee (Arthur Fellig)
Children's Performance, c. 1943
Gelatin silver print, from infrared negative



Fig. 6

Weegee (Arthur Fellig)
At the Movies, c. 1943
Gelatin silver print, from infrared negative



Fig. 7

Weegee (Arthur Fellig)
At the Movies, c. 1943
Gelatin silver print, from infrared negative



Fig. 8

Weegee (Arthur Fellig)
Young Woman Sleeping at a Movie Theater
c. 1943
Gelatin silver print, from infrared negative
© Weegee / International Center
of Photography / Getty Images



Fig. 9

Weegee (Arthur Fellig)
Sleeping at the Movies, c. 1943
Gelatin silver print, from infrared negative

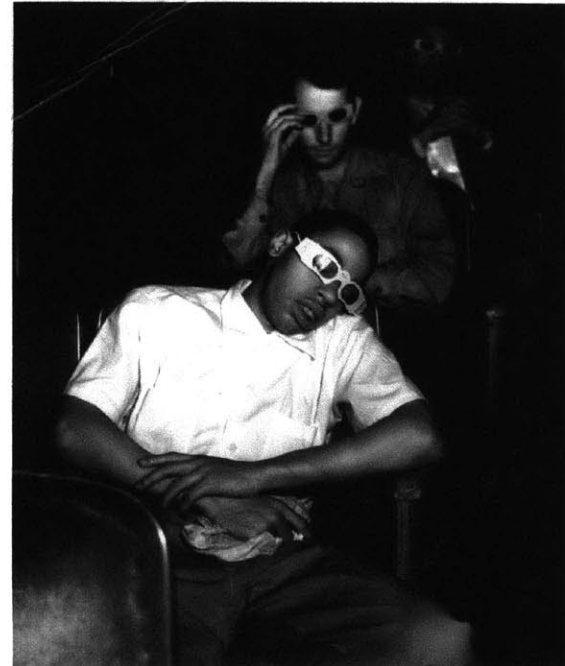


Fig. 10

Weegee (Arthur Fellig)
*Man, Wearing 3-D glasses, Sleeping
in a Movie Theater*, c. 1943
Gelatin silver print, from infrared negative
© Weegee / International Center
of Photography / Getty Images



Fig. 11

Weegee (Arthur Fellig)
Lovers at the Movies, c. 1943
Gelatin silver print, from infrared negative



Fig. 12

Weegee (Arthur Fellig)
Lovers at the Palace Theater, c. 1945
Gelatin silver print, from infrared negative



Fig. 13
Weegee (Arthur Fellig)
The Opera Opened Last Night, Dec. 3, 1940
Gelatin silver print



Fig. 14
Weegee (Arthur Fellig)
A Bunch of Cops, n. d.
Gelatin silver print



Fig. 15

Weegee (Arthur Fellig)
Bar Mitzvah, n. d.
Gelatin silver print



Fig. 16

Weegee (Arthur Fellig)
Corpse with Revolver, August 7, 1936
Gelatin silver print



Fig. 17
Edoard Manet
Dead Toreador, 1864
Oil on canvas

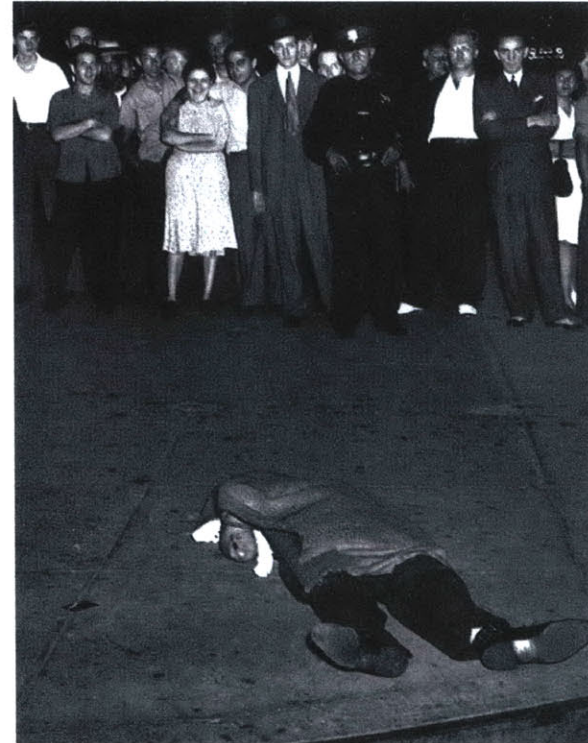


Fig. 18
Weegee (Arthur Fellig)
Auto Accident Victim, 1938
Gelatin silver print

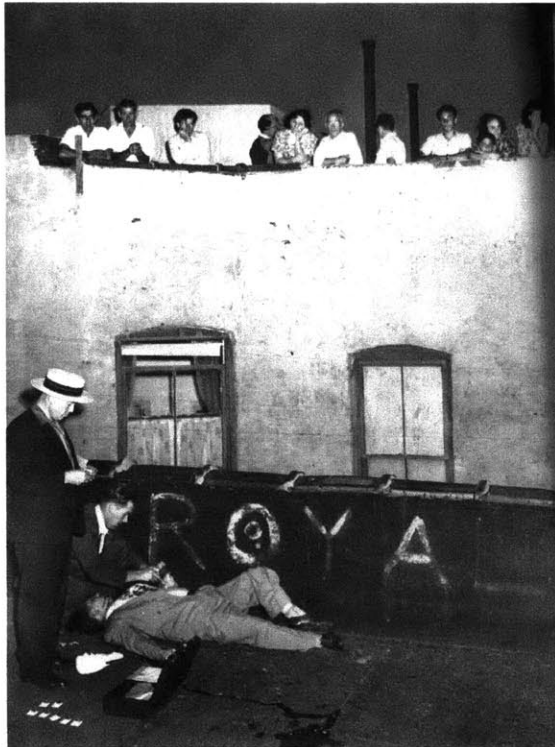


Fig. 19

Weegee (Arthur Fellig)
Murder on the Roof, August 14, 1941
Gelatin silver print



Fig. 20

Weegee (Arthur Fellig)
Murder in Hell's Kitchen, c. 1940
Gelatin silver print



Fig. 21

Weegee (Arthur Fellig)
Their First Murder, October 9, 1941
Gelatin silver print



Fig. 22

Weegee (Arthur Fellig)
Joy of Living, April 17, 1942
Gelatin silver print



Fig. 23

Weegee (Arthur Fellig)
*Woman Looking at Electric Sign on the New
York Times Building, June 7, 1944*
Gelatin silver print



Fig. 24

Weegee (Arthur Fellig)
Time is Short, March 23, 1942
Gelatin silver print

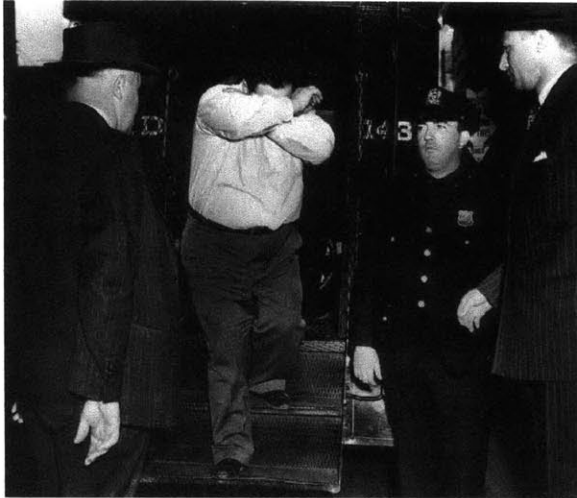


Fig. 25
Weegee (Arthur Fellig)
Barber confesses to Murder of Einer Sporer,
March 21, 1937
Gelatin silver print

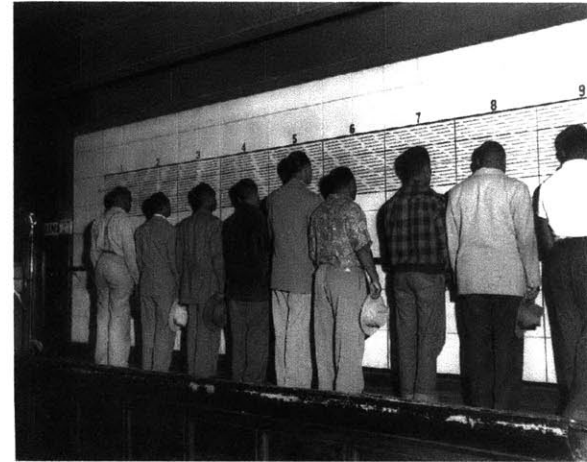


Fig. 26
Weegee (Arthur Fellig)
The Lineup, 1939
Gelatin silver print



Fig. 27

Weegee (Arthur Fellig)
*Charles Sodokoff and Arthur Webber Use
Their Top Hats to Hide Their Faces,*
January 27, 1942
Gelatin silver print



Fig. 28

Weegee (Arthur Fellig)
*Henry Rosen (left) and Harvey Stemmer
(center) Were Arrested for Bribing Basketball
Players, January 25, 1945*
Gelatin silver print



Fig. 29

Weegee (Arthur Fellig)
Woman Sleeping in Movie Theater, c. 1943
Gelatin silver print, from infrared negative

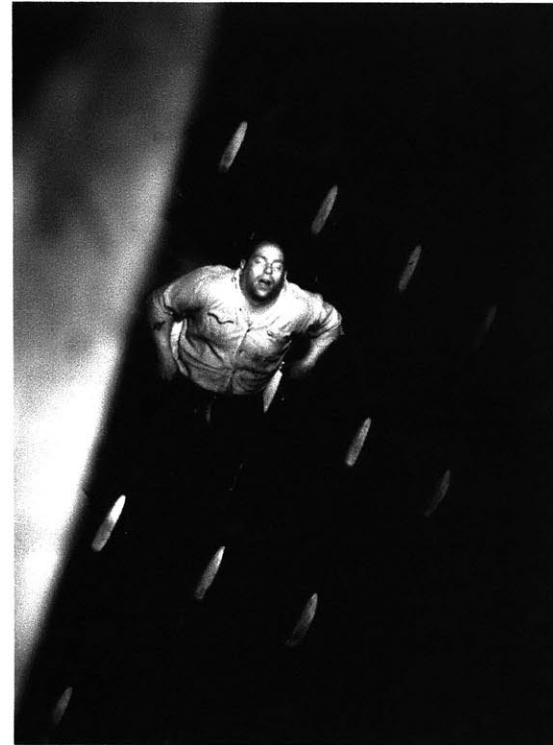


Fig. 30

Weegee (Arthur Fellig)
Overhead View of Theater Sleeper, c. 1943
Gelatin silver print, from infrared negative



Fig. 31

Weegee (Arthur Fellig)
Young Woman Sleeping at a Movie Theater
c. 1943
Gelatin silver print, from infrared negative
© Weegee / International Center
of Photography / Getty Images

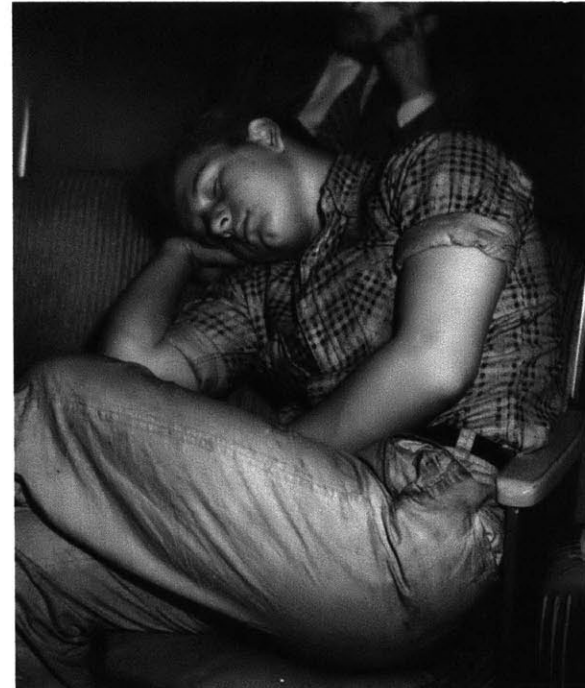


Fig. 32

Weegee (Arthur Fellig)
Man Sleeping in a Movie Theater, c. 1943
Gelatin silver print, from infrared negative
© Weegee / International Center
of Photography / Getty Images



Fig. 33

Weegee (Arthur Fellig)
Man Sleeping in a Movie Theater, c. 1943
Gelatin silver print, from infrared negative
© Weegee / International Center
of Photography / Getty Images



Fig. 34

Weegee (Arthur Fellig)
Lovers at the Movies, c. 1945
Gelatin silver print, from infrared negative
© Weegee / International Center
of Photography / Getty Images



Fig. 35

Weegee (Arthur Fellig)
Sailor and Girl at the Movie, c. 1943
Gelatin silver print, from infrared negative

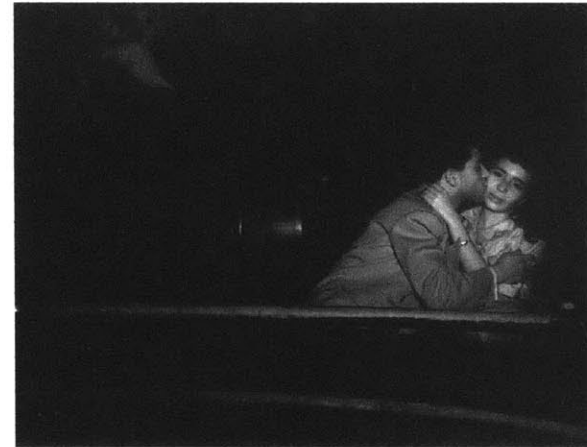


Fig. 36

Weegee (Arthur Fellig)
Couple at the Palace Theater, c. 1943
Gelatin silver print, from infrared negative



Fig. 37

Weegee (Arthur Fellig)
Lovers at the Palace Theater I, c. 1945
Gelatin silver print, from infrared negative



Fig. 38

Weegee (Arthur Fellig)
Lovers at the Palace Theater II, c. 1945
Gelatin silver print, from infrared negative



Fig. 39

Weegee (Arthur Fellig)
Lovers at the Palace Theater III, c. 1945
Gelatin silver print, from infrared negative



Fig. 40

Weegee (Arthur Fellig)
Lovers at the Palace Theater, c. 1945
Gelatin silver print, from infrared negative



Fig. 41

Weegee (Arthur Fellig)
Audience in the Palace Theater, c. 1950
Gelatin silver print, from infrared negative



Fig. 42

Weegee (Arthur Fellig)
The Fashionable People, December 6, 1943
Gelatin silver print



Fig. 43

Weegee (Arthur Fellig)
*In the Lobby at the Metropolitan Opera,
Opening Night,
November 22, 1943*
Gelatin silver print, from infrared negative



Fig. 44

Weegee (Arthur Fellig)
*Opening Night at the 'Met',
December 3, 1944*
Gelatin silver print, from infrared negative



Fig. 45

"Luisiana Purchase is a Good Example of Escapist Farce for Wartime Public"
Life, January 19, 1942



Fig. 46

"America Goes to War"
Life, December 22, 1941



Fig. 47

**"Washington Goes to War"
Life, January 5, 1942**



Fig. 48

**"Remember Pearl Harbor"
Life, December 22, 1941**

"Are they coming over here to fight, daddy?"

To. Sure, they're not coming over here — not if all the power of America's ships and planes, and all the might of America's men can stop them.

They may try.

They may, some may get through, for it is a wide sky, bombs may crash here as they crash on far-away soil and in the distant Philippines.

Even if they don't try, the work of enemies within our gates may bring fire, explosion, damage to our defense plants.

We must be ready — just in case.

With quick help for the hurt and the suffering, we will remain all that is still great in America's eyes, even in a world where such things as mercy and pity seem no longer to exist.

It is the job of the Red Cross — to dispense merciful care and help whenever necessary pain and suffering exist.

Big jobs that will call for every effort. On teams of thousands of Red Cross workers — every day.

Give and give generously — to meet local chapters — to volunteer activities. Give where you can, when you can, and reach out your hand.

Send contributions to your local chapter.

American Red Cross War Fund Campaign

Fig. 49

"Are they Coming over here to Fight Daddy?"
Advertisement for the American Red Cross War Fund Campaign
Life, January 19, 1942

ANATOMY OF BOMBS

TOKEN RAID WOULD BE COSTLY AND FUTILE

It is "Nazi" raid the Red Cross makes the most necessary preparation for that even more than before, and it is a fact that a raid would be costly and futile. The raiding of New York City is a serious matter. The raiding of New York City is a serious matter. The raiding of New York City is a serious matter.

HOW NAZI PLANES MAY BOMB NEW YORK

The raiding of New York City is a serious matter. The raiding of New York City is a serious matter. The raiding of New York City is a serious matter.

MAN FRONE **MAN BEING PARAPET** **MAN IN SCORNEY**

Fig. 50

Above, left: "How Nazi Planes may Bomb New York", illustrations for the article "Anatomy of Bombs"
Life, December 29, 1941



Fig. 51

Air interceptor command set up immediately after the outbreak of war to intercept possible air attacks on U.S.
Here, Patrol receives instructions before take off.



Fig. 52

Anti-aircraft gun emplacements were set up along both coasts to guard major cities, harbors and industrial plants.

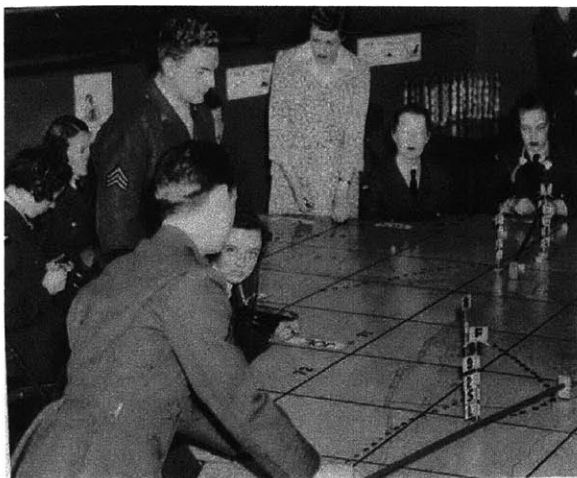


Fig. 53

Interceptor commands established along the coasts were modeled after those in England. Here, civilians sat through the night trying to spot enemy planes.

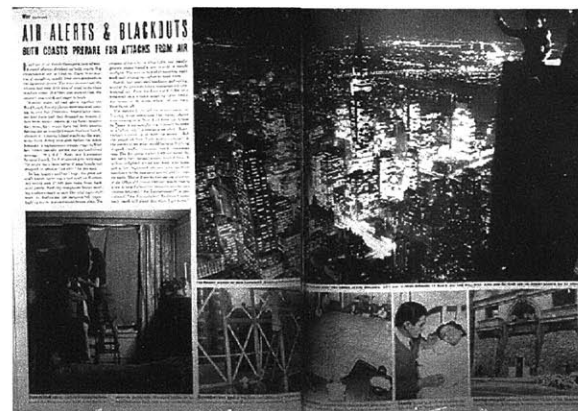


Fig. 54

“Air Alerts and Blackouts: Both Coasts Prepare for Attacks from Air”.
Life, December 22, 1941.

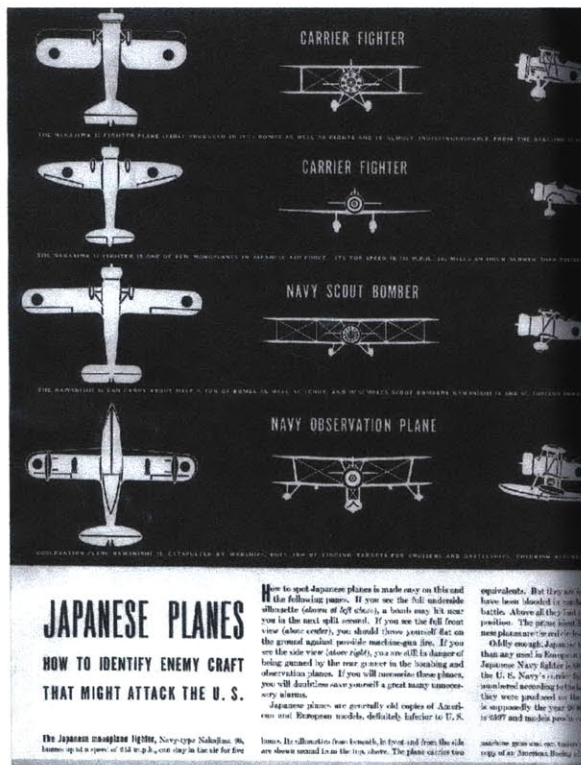


Fig. 55

"Japanese Planes: How to Identify Enemy Craft that Might Attack the U.S."
Life, December 22, 1941.

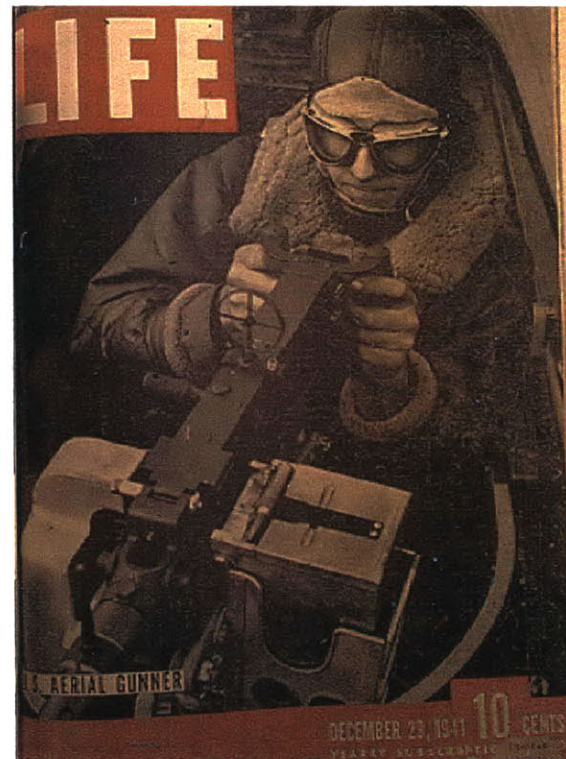


Fig. 56

"U.S. Aerial Gunner"
Life, December 29, 1941

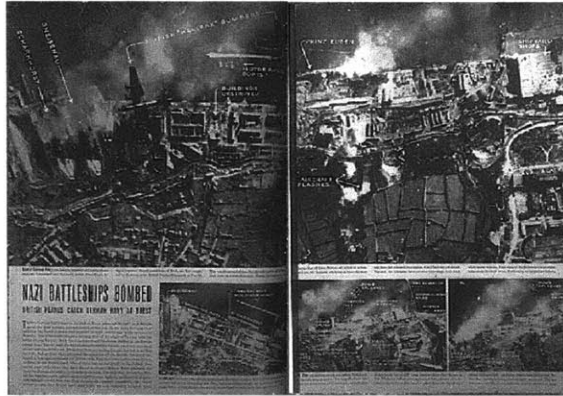


Fig. 57

"Nazi Battleships Bombed"
Life, Jan 19, 1942

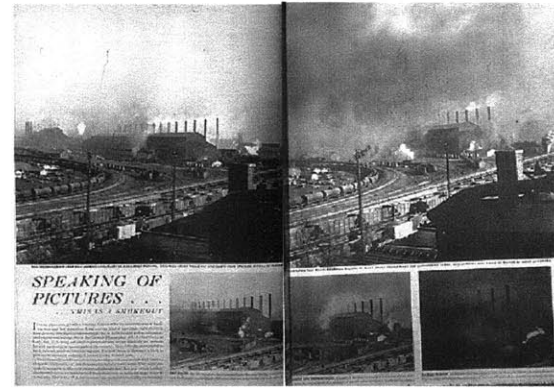


Fig. 58

"Speaking of Pictures: This is a Smokeout"
Life, Jan 12, 1942



Fig. 59

Office for Emergency Management,
Division of Information
Poster, 1942



Fig. 60

Kroger Grocery and Baking Company
Poster, 1942



Fig. 61

Kroger Grocery and Baking Company
Poster, 1942



Fig. 62

"How to Tell Japs from the Chinese"
Life, December 22, 1941



Figure 17—DO NOT run when air raid warnings sound after dark during blackouts.



Figure 18—Use your flashlight as little as possible, if at all. Never point it upward nor at any object that might reflect upward.



Figure 19—Know where you want to go and how to get there. Keep to the right.



Figure 20—Keep pets on leash if you take them out after dark.



Figure 21—If you are hurt, move to the nearest wall and ask the first persons who come along to report your injury to the nearest first aid station.



Figure 22—If you are unfamiliar with the neighborhood, ask someone who is or report to the first policeman or air raid warden.

Fig. 63

Drawings illustrating the different dangers to which the citizen would be exposed during a blackout..
 In "Blackouts", the official pamphlet on the subject distributed by the
 United States Office of Civilian Defense, August 1941



Fig. 64

Family preparing for an air-raid.
In "What to Do in an Air Raid",
pamphlet distributed by the Office of Civilian
Defense, 1941.

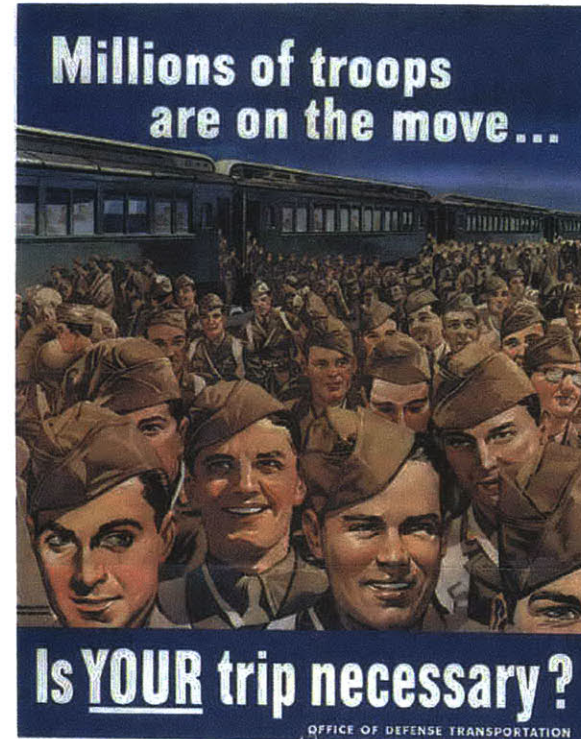


Fig. 65

U.S. Office of Defense Transportation
Poster, 1943
Artist: Montgomery Melbourne

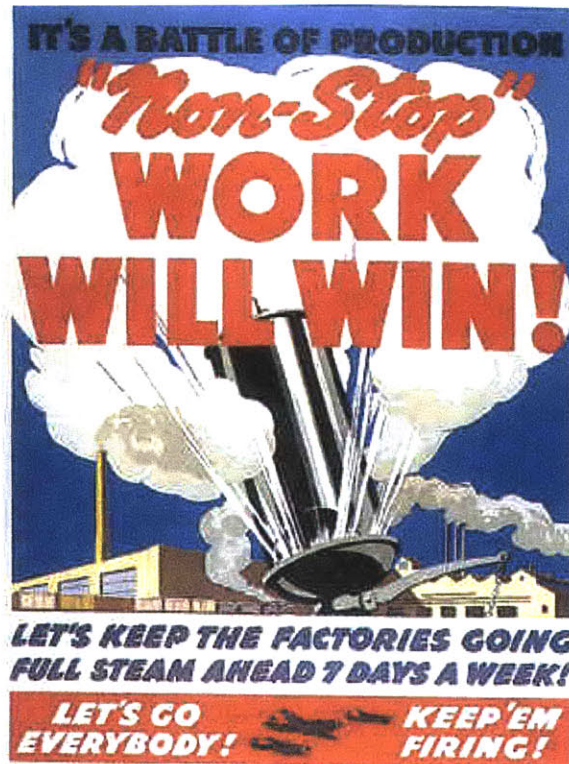


Fig. 66

U.S. Office of Defense Transportation
Poster, 1943
Artist: Montgomery Melbourne



Fig. 67

Walter Kidde & Company, Inc.
Poster, 1942

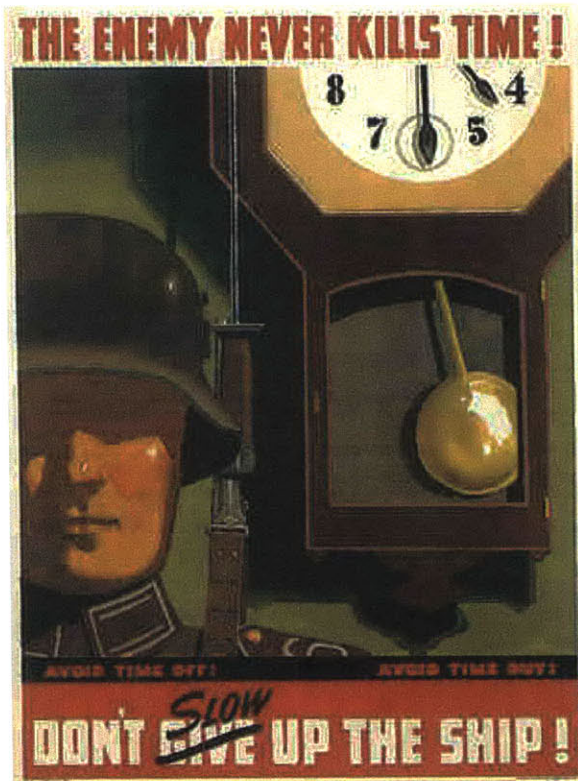


Fig. 68

U.S. Navy Department, Incentive Division
Poster, n.d.

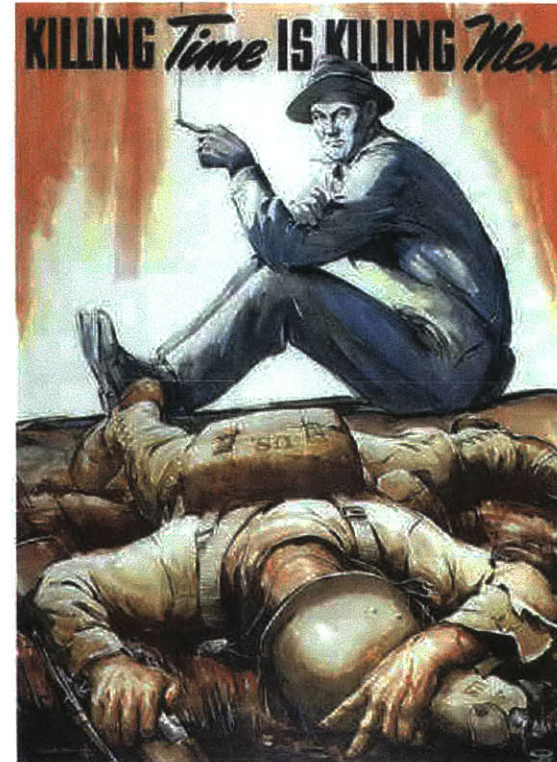


Fig. 69

North American Aviation
Poster, 1943.
Artist: Reynold Brown



Fig. 70

"After the attack: a staff sergeant and his wife
find each other alive and unhurt"
Life, December 29, 1941.

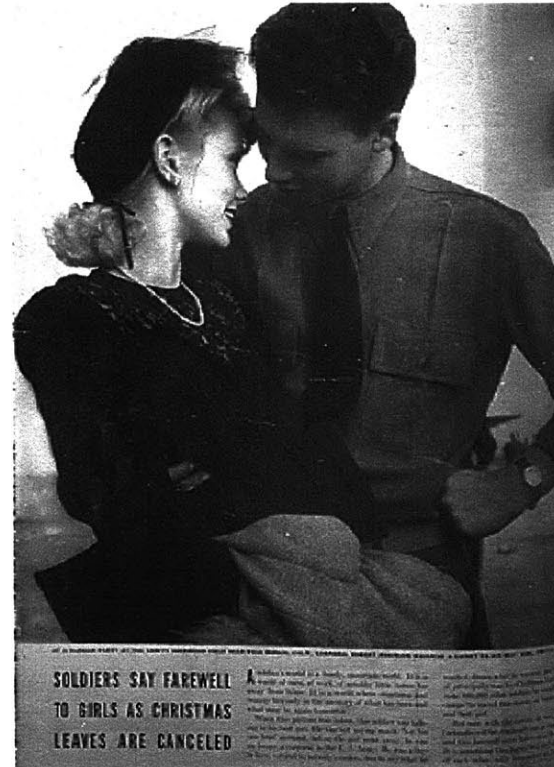


Fig. 71

"Soldiers Say Farewell To Girls As Christmas
Leaves are Canceled"
Life, December 15, 1941



**She loves me, YES,
She loves me, NO.
It's "NO" because
of DOUBLE O**

He wondered why girls went out with him a few times and then, without warning, they broke off. He thought he was a good fellow who was loved by the "Double O" (Offensive-looking teeth, Offensive breath).

What is the trouble?
If you've seen a girl about this double offense, why not get after it with the delightful Double O brand toothpaste that so many who are popular men and women use?

For the teeth: the new Listerine Tooth Paste. It's the result of a year's work on the part of experts in the field of oral hygiene. This new paste was created specially to help bring up the natural beauty of your smile. It does a remarkable job on bad, decay teeth, removing

stain, loosens deposits. Many people say they can see its beautifying effects in a surprisingly short time!

For a cleaner mouth: Listerine Antiseptic, of course. List's new quick-acting food fermentation in the mouth, a frequent cause of bad-smelling breath.

Deliciously Baby-Dentist.
If you want to make a good impression on others, never forget the "Double O" (Offensive-looking teeth, Offensive breath).

Start in today with the delightful Listerine Baby Dentist, your Listerine Tooth Paste for an attractive smile and Listerine Antiseptic for a more agreeable breath.

LISTERINE PHARMACEUTICAL CO., St. Louis, Mo.



Fig. 72

Advertisement for *Listerine* Toothpaste
December 1941



**When's the last time you were
Kissed?**

It's a man's greatest asset, the power to attract the opposite sex. It's a woman's greatest asset, the power to attract the opposite sex. It's a man's greatest asset, the power to attract the opposite sex. It's a woman's greatest asset, the power to attract the opposite sex.

For your teeth, Listerine Antiseptic, of course. It helps to keep your mouth clean and fresh. It's a man's greatest asset, the power to attract the opposite sex. It's a woman's greatest asset, the power to attract the opposite sex.

And the next, effective, anti-bacterial toothpaste, the new Listerine Tooth Paste.



Fig. 73

Advertisement for *Listerine* Toothpaste
January 1941



Fig. 74

Advertisement for *Barbasol* Shaving Products
January 1942

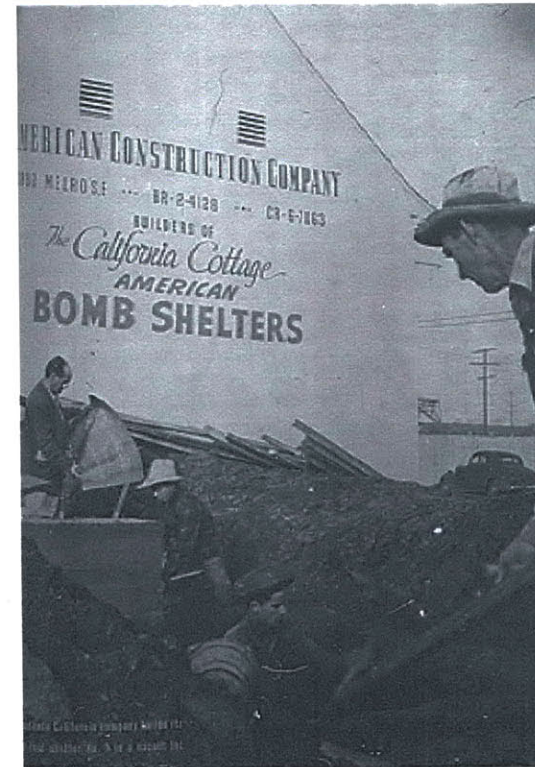


Fig. 75

"Southern California Company Builds its Air-raid Shelter No. 1 in a Vacant Lot."
Life, December 29, 1941.

Low Cost Bomb Shelter

25093

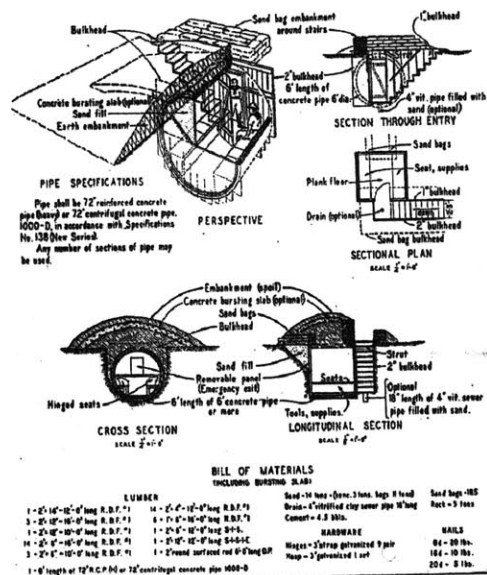
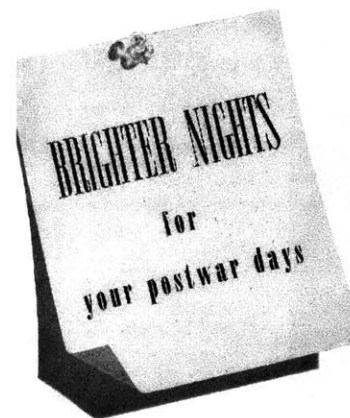


Fig. 76

Plan for Low Cost Bomb Shelter, in "Los Angeles Sells Plans for Raid Shelters." *The Christian Science Monitor*, 14 February 1942.



Modernized lighting program that lets home stager part, present and future, take advantage of the new lighting possibilities in a more sane and scientific manner.

In a decade a lighting system which offers only one level of light will be as obsolete as the unshaded bulb of the early 1900's. For you'll change your lights to suit your activities, moods, the seasons.

By Clarence Palmer

Then you'll see how you will look back on the "dark ages" of the past that were so dimly lit. If you don't believe it, try to recall you of when you thought you "plenty of light" in your twenty years ago? A cord hanging from the middle of the ceiling with an unshaded bulb was the national standard of electrical modernity.

If you wanted to be elegant, you draped and fringed the bulb with rope or chain shades hanging with thinning glass (paper). If you wanted to be respectable, you had wall brackets fastidiously simulating candleabra. People lectured in wicker armchairs. Rows of rows of rows, with shades lined with oil-flow. On the bright stained glass shades for Jacobean iron bases. Acutely cord for much light these works of art decorated. For wasn't it more light than our parents and grandparents had?

Then do you remember how such equipment failed? How obnoxious as incandescent lamps and fixtures began to be used in every room? Then it became our ambition to have a "modern" system, so one flick of the finger would turn on all the lights in a room simultaneously.

Fig. 77

"Brighter Nights for your Postwar Days" *House Beautiful*, February 1945.

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- Fig. 72. *Life*, 22 December 1941. p. 2.
- Fig. 73. *Life*, 29 December 1941, p. 4.
- Fig. 74. *Life*, 5 January 1942, p. 69.
- Fig. 75. *Life*, 29 December 1941, p. 21.
- Fig. 76. "Los Angeles Sells Plans for Raid Shelters." *The Christian Science Monitor*, February 14, 1942.
- Fig. 77. "Brighter Nights for your Postwar Days." *House Beautiful*, February 1945, p. 62.

