

Jason E. Hill

"Weegee's Modernism"

ABSTRACT

The New York based press photographer Weegee (1899–1968) was among the first generation of photographers to come of age amidst a culture wherein daily newspaper reporting was conducted with a camera and encountered, via half-tone, photographically. From its beginnings around 1900 that culture was characterized by a journalistic ethos aspiring toward a condition of total instantaneity: the press photographic ideal required that the space and time between the news-worthy event and its documentary image's appearance on the newspaper page be minimized absolutely. Beginning with a consideration of Weegee's thirteen-years-too-late photograph of Ruth Snyder's murder of her husband in 1927—a tabloid sensation and landmark in the early history of press photography—this presentation will consider the various ways that Weegee, despite a well-worn mythology to the contrary, worked to resist this then dominant discourse of instantaneity, opening instead a more considered, even reflective daily press-photographic environment.

BIO

Jason E. Hill is Terra Foundation postdoctoral teaching fellow in American art at the Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art in Paris, France. He teaches on modern and contemporary American art and visual culture at Ecole Normale Supérieure and at Sciences Po in Paris. He completed his PhD at the University of Southern California in 2011. His writings have been published in *Photography & Culture*, *Etudes Photographiques*, and *X-TRA*.