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The Aesthetic of the Crime Scene Photography:
The Case of Arthur "Weegee" Fellig .

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The author deposes that he based his/her work only on the sources and literature named in the Acknowledgments and that the Dissertation is original text of his own. Signature.

Annotation.

The forensic photography has a great practical significance as it serves as one of the main means of capturing the initial appearance of the crime scene and physical evidence of various objects that have evidentiary value in criminal cases. Photography as a means of permanent, authentic, accurate and objective record of the reality thus very often plays pivotal role during criminal investigations and court proceedings. For these purposes, crime scene photography has to follow particular set of rules, techniques and methods (be in focus, presence of scales or rulers, central composition focused on the main subject etc.). The present paper aims to describe the crime scene visual rhetoric and explain how the crime scene photography aesthetic has been co-opted by photojournalism. The argumentation of the thesis is based mainly on the analysis of the 1930s and 1940s photographs taken by tabloid-news photographer Arthur "Weegee" Felling. On a base of a chosen topic for writing this work, I set myself goals both as theoretical (introduction into brief explaining the concept of forensic photography, it's development) , as a practical (opening the topic of the aesthetic through analyzing works of Arthur Weegee Fellig, with the help of a literature sources, trying to answer the question about psychological perception of an image ,role of the image of a frightful in art, etc.) . In my research I intend to speak about a value of this kind of photography which has been only used for a strict purpose, but had unintentionally become creative.

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1. General introduction.

Photography from its discovering has been known existed and described in many ways and with different backgrounds, and along with that kind of photography which used to be considered as art , there always were ways for some to serve as an instrument of picturing the occurrence. It was something that, at the beginning, wasn't destined to become a complete and self-dependent creation, as it was created for a certain need and for a technical purpose.

In my work i want to touch the topic of an applied photography, (photography itself which is meant to be a n instrument for a research) and art photography, (that, oppositely, included the concept and narrative aesthetics) In my research i would like to open a topic of the aesthetics of a forensic photography : how and why these kinds of plots were attracting the attention, what is the visual secret that had allowed forensic photography make a step beyond courtrooms and police stations and divide on many parts and, with that, not only become the individual science, but put the seeds into subsequent development of a big creative field, a huge leap into the world art . As the photographer, who's works I'm going to analyze for making this reasearch, I have picked Athur Fellic, mostly known under the nickname "Weegee" – one of the brightest and memorable tabloid news photographer of 20th century, the person with a tough destiny, who's crime scene images became world famous once they started to get into newspapers and fully satisfy the human desire to see juicy, intriguing and scary news – when photography has been serving as an element (and the process of photographing as a way) of imprinting something that can not be either staged or altered, or that exists within the framework of only one thing that happened - the moment of the uncovered essence of the occasion ,and with that it represents the mortal post factum in a combination with an aesthetically acceptable evidences of a blooming life. The aim is to explore , through what kind of thorns «a filth " and the most unpleasant comes out to the masses , how and why, in what way the photo of this kind becomes a manifestation of the genre, what is that something that attracts even unsophisticated minds.

Through analyzing the examples taken from the works that I have chosen as the particular samples of a clear crime scene aesthetics, I will try to describe what is, in my opinion, that mysterious charm that allows the viewer with attention and interest, and, sometimes, with awe and trepidation, perceive the horrible scenes depicted in photographs, with which life leads side by side of each of us, but forces us to avoid this by any means at least in the form of a visual representation of reality, and to keep it unexplored, unnamed, unheard and unannounced to masses; with the help of which presentation, concept and visual secrets, it happens to be possible, despite the most ancient and the biggest fear of humanity – the fear of death.

2. Crime scene photography : historical reference.

2.1. A brief history of forensic photography .

«The first serious successes in the development of the common photography, which marked the transition from experiments, successes and failures to the period when the basic principles and techniques of photography were finally formed, fell in time with the first attempts to use it in crime. Photography was one of the first methods widely and organically perceived by criminology and creatively adapted to the specific conditions of research of physical evidence. One can say with certainty that the appearance of photography served as a kind of impetus for the development of the science of criminalistics in general. The end of XIX century. and the beginning of the 20th century. were equally critical for photography, which turned into a technically equipped and scientifically grounded branch of practical knowledge, and for criminology, formed into a self-sufficient science.»¹

The history of forensic photography as such originates in the second half of the nineteenth century, a little after the invention of the photography itself, the official date of which is 1827. Before the start of employment of photography in a forensic examinations, the means for it were served by more complicated techniques . Until the moment the photo series had started to be used, newspapers were presenting gravures made by a painter, from which the printing had been made, and the original images, appearing in the very limited number of editions, has been shown on the exhibitions. The appearance of camera and oversensitive films, along with more powerful flashes, put the beginning to the necessary transformation and development of the informative photography.

The idea of picturing criminals and evidences had first come to a French lawyer Alphonse Bertillon (1853-1914), who were familiarized with a complex system of identification more than the others - back in the days all the description of suspects had to be done in a written form and, a little bit later, by measuring. (The so called «bertillonage" - a technique of examination by

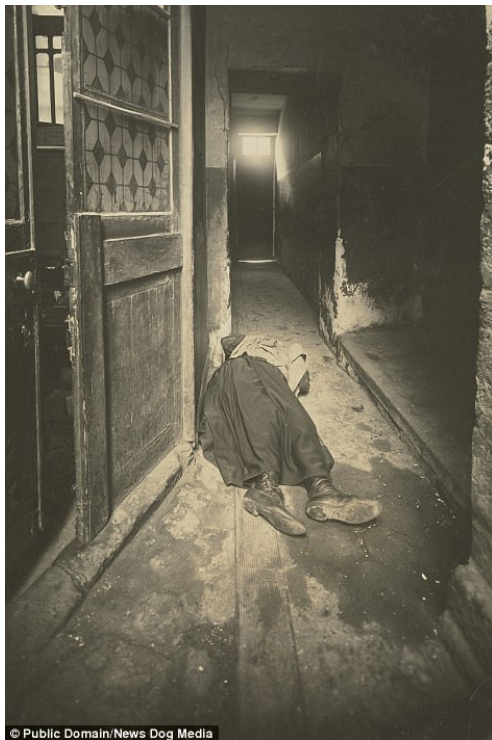
¹ «Судебная фотография» С.В. Душеин, А.Г.Егоров, В.В. Зайцев, В.Н.

measuring the anthropometrical data of each criminal, which was also invented by Bertillon as the first step towards pushing obviously uncomfortable technically useless, and adopted further by the Paris police force in 1883.) Later on, this man has invented the method of visual fixation of a criminal data – the system of photographing criminals, picturing their faces from three sides: front side, three-quarter, and profile, later on being simplified to just two of these angles – now known to everyone as “mug shot” (“Mug” used to be the equivalent slang for “face”.) Basically, he just took the idea of transforming that method into a systematic work, as the information about using the photographic images was historically captured before, (for example, in Belgian jail “Forest” in 1843) but all the images that were taken had exclusively experimental concept and nobody took much care of them as the concept itself hasn’t been taken seriously.

Simultaneously, Bertillon started to perform an outer photo examinations, for which he constructed large format cameras (13 x 18 cm, 18 x 24 cm, 24 x 30 cm,) that were allowing to take the full quality research right on a scene of a crime. Later on this method was called as identification shooting. These pictures were unique in a full power of a word, as, back in the days, in difference with harmless mug shot, such an «attitude» to dead bodies was considered as unrespectable, gruesome and nearly unacceptable, as they were undisguised, but despite that, as most of the things the real value of which was being unrecognized at the beginning, these pictures, along with the mug shot, became the big beginning of a great stream - and had their certain aesthetics- some of them look barely static, though they are, as yet bulky technical equipment practically couldn’t allow to manoeuvre.

On the example of pictures 1 and 2 we can witness how the first outer crime scene recording had looked like. Both pictures certainly attract, and i might even say, that such a result of first examinations seems to be more than unexpectable for these truly one of a kind images, as there was nor much space, neither a good quality of the technique and ability to move freely to documentate everything that is nessesary (though the essential detailing was not that common in forensic photography yet, as it was just at the beginning of the development), but the depth of a contrast, composition, and the tranquility of the victim along with

surrounding just astonish. It's hard to even understand that depicted people are real dead bodies , as they nearly dissolve in shadows and become the part of the interior. This was this exact aesthetic that gave the nourishment for both who further needed art or science – in both ways these first images of corpses, that, back then, became officially allowed, performed as a huge push forward.



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1. A. Bertillon. «Untitled»



2. A. Bertillon. «Monsieur Gala was killed asleep in his apartments. Paris,» 1905.

2.3. From forensic to masses - recognition by viewers.

The development of forensic photography as itself hasn't meant to make it creative at least because of the summary of certain rules, though the idea, along with the idealistic freedom of photographing criminals and corpses was almost immediately taken up by the journalists later in the beginning of 20th century, most intensive period of which falls on times of the Great Depression. Through times of so called «Depression era» was the golden time for tabloid photographers: rapid and controversial plots were becoming more and more essential and called for, as they were less and less rare, happening in various kinds of occasions. With their aesthetics dirty criminal images began to move further and further beyond the courtrooms : they ran apart through thorns of big cities which existed as the drama itself, and, with that - unlimited field for making money together on a human grief and a human lust. Invention of more sensitive and portable technical equipment, such as, for example, Leica – small 35 mm camera that first was put on market in 1925, could allow taking the fast image right on a place of one event – and be flexible enough to move to another right away, and this ability was the key benefit for a journalism.

Criminal life was striking in it's entire screaming disgust and newspapers were working weary to be able to provide the most fresh and intriguing news.

The camera had become the tool, and photography - the main physical evidence and the way of documentation, and very soon this duet became an irreplaceable part of a daily human life .

In her article "The Transforming Aesthetic of the Crime Scene Photograph: Evidence, News, Fashion, and Art", Brittain Bright writes: "The work of tabloid news photographers became a staple of the inter-war visual vernacular, particularly in the United States. Tabloid newspapers were the main source of public distribution of crime scene photography, and it is largely from these sources that the idea of the crime scene as a consumable image arose. The New York Daily News was established in 1919, and helped create the hunger for sensational news still prevalent

today. The idea of “human interest stories” took hold during this period as well: suddenly, anyone could be news. In a way, it was a far more democratic media culture than our celebrity-centric one, but this sort of celebrity came at great cost: one became news only by dying. ²

Further on, flashes of cameras, previously seen distorted corpses, crying grimaces and burning houses, began to shed their light on beautiful faces, glamorous images, stages pictures – the beautiful death had become a cult.

Though in my research i will not go through the time when forensic photography has been accepted by the masses before the formation of the fashion photography , but I will write about those works that were born when forensic photography gave something to branch off and become not only an independent genre of creative stream, but get the acceptance by the global audience.

I will talk about time when the crime scene shot may have been a unique in it’s context, but not purposely caring any aesthetical value - before images that are not unique in a context of illustrating criminals, evidences and tragedies, started to first of all be aesthetical. About the time when the crime scene had not yet become a fashion mainstream, but already started to impetiously and deservedly move towards breaking through the world of beauty, despite her, from the first sight, outer ugliness.

² “The Transforming Aesthetic of the Crime Scene Photograph: Evidence, News, Fashion, and Art” , Brittain Bright, Concentric: Literary and Cultural Studies 38.1 March 2012: p. 83

3. Weegee and his works and their aesthetics.

3.1 Short biography and general information (narrowed introduction).

Arthur Fellig, when he was just known as Usher Fellig, was born on June 12, 1889, as a second kid among three siblings, on a territory belonged to Austria, modern Ukraine, in a village named Zloczew, from where, later on in 1909, the whole family had immigrated to USA and settled down in a Lower East Side in New York, following the father, Bernard Fellig, who moved there first in 1906. Usher had officially become Arthur. Upon arrival, the life in a search of a daydream was hardly alike with a fairy tale : the family was expanding, and, together with a lack of work and following Orthodox Jewish prescripts, putting the ends together seemed to be more and more impossible, so young Arthur had to skip the study to provide extra support to the family. Hence, in order of helping parents, he started to get different jobs, such as a photographer's assistant, after a while taking photos on a street of his district, until, at the age of eighteen, he got apart with his family and started to make his own way up, which has not been easy - it was a tough period of a literal surviving : living on a street, moving from bench to bench, he was making money on the hardest and low paid short term jobs. Later on he became the studio staff, where he was getting the experience of working in a darkroom, and then, in 1921, was hired at the New York times, on a base of the helper, from where he left and became the employee at Acme Newspictures, where he became the darkroom technician on a steady base. Simultaneously, he started to cover night fires on a base of a photojournalist, and these were the first step towards reportage, which brought him to these images the whole world had spoken about soon. In 1935 Arthur left Acme and continued his way as the independent night event photographer. In the article named "Weegee's Voyeurism and the Mastery of Urban Disorder", dedicated to American art, Miles Orvell writes :

«Weegee left home as soon as he could, choosing to live on the streets and in flophouses - to sink and swim on his own. And it was years before he did swim, working his way through a variety of odd jobs, including, most significantly, such positions as photographer's assistant, and, later on, darkroom technician. Throughout the main part of his professional life, even after the success of *Naked City*, Weegee would maintain the somewhat impermanent, nomadic life he had mastered early on.”³ That says exactly about that In his photographs Weegee was capturing a life similar to the one that once led him to success, the thorns through which he had recently passed himself, and though they made him famous, his life was never luxurious : he would always keep on with a habitual modesty , as deep inside he was always staying the same streetwise child, hard worker, the warrior and the victim of New York's slums - the same as all these people, who, further on, had become main characters of his photos.

The unconventional «Weegee» was born from the unique sensation to the event to be happen, like he could literally foresee an occurrence he was meant to photograph - hence, the rumor about interacting with higher powers and spiritual background demanded to be interpreted into the appropriate nickname, and «Weegee» was born from the misspelling the name of the magical «Ouija» board. Though, even if he did have the inner presentiment, that, in his case, was a ray of luck as it could lead him to the right place of the happening tragedy he needed to depict, the real secret of such an ability was the police radio, especially the automobile one which he was granted to have the access to. The signals about murders, fires, car accidents, were caught by him while short naps in his apartment, or in the specially equipped car while dashing around the night city - signals that were received and reacted on right away, so it was rather not a sensation, but first a hard work in keeping the attention as alert as possible. With that, Weegee usually could perform the shooting from five to six events per night, developing photos immediately in the car, which also happen to serve as a portable darkroom, and presenting them in time by the issue of a morning newspaper. With the Graphic Speed in his hands, he became an irreplaceable part of each night event. Miles Orvell

³ «Weegee's Voyeurism and the Mastery of Urban Disorder”, Miles Orvell, The university of Chicago press on behalf of Smithsonian American Art Museum, *American Art*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Winter, 1992), p 24.

comments his look like: «The roughness of Weegee's appearance was no mere pose but a persona that, once having evolved, he deliberately perpetuated. In the many photographs of the photographer himself (he loved to have his picture taken), we often see the same persona- two day's beard, a constant cigar, blunt features, a warm, at times leering expression, and clothes that looked slept in. (Later in life, when he could afford it, he had London tailors make his suits two sizes too large to achieve the same look at the higher level)".⁴

He also adds :

«Weegee operated as a kind of tour guide to New York, offering the privilege of looking at the bizarre world of urban misfortune and pathos without making any serious demand for involvement or action. Weegee served a world that was growing tired of such demands , and his cultural function was in part to provide a kind of entertainment that was integral to the economy of the urban newspaper in the thirties and forties."⁵

In 1945 he released the book "Naked City", that very soon became world famous. Later – "Weegee's people" in 1945, "Naked hollywood" in 1953, "Weegee by Weegee" in 1961 and "Weegee's creative photography" in 1964. In 1946, after the most intensive time of producing the brutal photos of night horrifying events, Weegee had stepped back from his unrepeatable journalistic genre, and in fact, never truly came back to it. He connected his life with cinematography, where he achieved certain success : from playing secondary roles in movies to working as the special effect advisor with Stanley Kubrick, and finally to creating his own short meter films: «Weegee's New York» in 1948, «Coctail Party» in 1950, and «The Idiot Box» in 1965. Thus we can say, that fifties and sixties had become the new way of experimenting , for example the «Naked Hollywood» had become well known because of cynical distorted portraits of celebrities, which, nevertheless, attracted less interest than exposed truth about vicious streets full of night,

⁴ «Weegee's Voyeurism and the Mastery of Urban Disorder", Miles Orvell, The university of Chicago press on behalf of Smithsonian American Art Museum, American Art, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Winter, 1992), p 21.

⁵ «Weegee's Voyeurism and the Mastery of Urban Disorder", Miles Orvell, The university of Chicago press on behalf of Smithsonian American Art Museum, American Art, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Winter, 1992), p 27.

filth, loneliness and misery.

After his death in 1968 the world had gotten five thousand negatives and fifteen thousand prints, that got under response of Wilma Wilcox (1903–1993)- the last friend of Weegee, along with being his partner, co-worker and muse since they met each other in 1956 and lived together further on.

These were many and many different photos to analyze, but today, according to the topic, aside from the street photography, portraits, films, we will focus exactly on the crime scene images.

4.2. The analysis of works.

As we know, the major time of Weegee's most attractive photographs has been during mid 30th to mid 40th- years of being in cooperation with the police, as a result of which the world got lucky to know his most famous images, some of which I'm going to talk about in my research. Brittain Bright says that Weegee "provided not only mass entertainment and human interest, but also an aesthetic that defined an era and style of photography.» So, let us dig deeper into his photographs and look over the works to concrete the meaning of a research based on the revealing the certain (and uncertain) aesthetic demonstration. In my analysis i will have to take the Weegee's position and abstract myself - being into and being aside at the same time, as we all know, that to make a good analysis, one needs to get rid of the empathy. I will take a risk to tell not only that these pictures are unique and magnificent, but why I consider them as such.

To begin with the analysis i would like to mention the whole aesthetic of the time the picturing of happening has been done. The thirties are getting represented as we used to see it - the time of arising criminal of the Depression era, which, though, became stunning: shining labels on police hats, dresses and heels, hats and coats, the time when everyone could perform on a picture in a role of a Hollywood star-in fact, even a corpse. Though the main role of the scene was taken by the contrast. All that was coming out with a contrast, being underlined by a photographer, and brought its value- the grace of existing with the horror of dying, what was making the death itself graceful ,and with that- real, and the existing fake ,and with that - questionable.

Marc Svetov in the article «Weegee and film noir» was writing about his style :«Weegee called it his "Rembrandt light" as he caught the human protagonists in the white glare of his photo flash, the scene otherwise enveloped in darkness. Weegee's news pictures were never haphazard snapshots, albeit they were taken by a man who had happen- stance and chance as his helpmates; he and his camera, with its flash, seem to have a fateful meeting with his human subjects; pictures seem perfectly arranged, and

what we focus on is their human content. Weegee is the quintessential noir photographer. Night was the terrain Weegee's subjects inhabited; his photos were torn from the dark streets—photographs that have become virtually synonymous with noir.»⁶

One of the stylistic organizer became the time of a major number of shootings - a night, when rapidness of nearly everything perceptibly intensifies. The city on Weegee's photos performs as a vision of something that appears thin, fragile and vulnerable in the dark. Used to the rhythm of a daily life, people are taken aback by the crushing fire, shouting police or ambulance siren, or a shot into the head, that comes unexpectedly to interrupt the dream. Weegee plays on a contrast, underlining all fear, shame, misery and madness, and, with that, showing the night full of crime as the night full of dirty fun: as a giggling joking beast entertaining the crowd, diluting the life with the thrilling occasions. He knew that life ceases being safe after sunset, so did viewers who were waking up in their warm beds and going for a morning newspaper with a lust of discovering what happened recently, most probably, right behind their window, who wanted to pay lavishly for seeing something eerie, brightly captured, so Weegee served as a night knight, making his sleepless ride turns in order to make the final image as hot as a morning toast with butter, and for him, in particular, the time that was a competition, a performance, a hard work, and the life herself with the police radio soundtrack at once.

As we already know, Arthur didn't have any special education, and all he knew was the experience of previous labour –though a tough one. He didn't put the creativity of the image on a summit of his goals , thus, at the first sight, the process and the result itself seemed to be far from being poetic. Though the work, with the stream of time and increasing amount of experience, was mechanical, that we can notice one of the features we are looking for - all photographs are way more far than just a basic documentation. The needed distance is ignored in some way, and pictures are always done one step closer. Sneaky and, at the same time, dashing percolation through the most shocking events, was allowing Weegee to get far enough to illustrate each cuss and each prayer. He says : « "I work alone and i don't use ...

⁶ "Life and death (mostly death) on a street : Weegee and film noir." , Marc Svetov, Noir City Sentiel , fall 2010, p25.

extension lights ... tripods ... exposure meters. I haven't got the time for gadgets because all my energy is concentrated on the drama which is taking place before my eyes»⁷.

Of course, the second important forming element was a flash. Additional light has served as a brave destructor of a scene, which, without that light, was supposed to look radically different. Because of the poorly lightened night events, the huge flash had become the irreplaceable instrument on a scene. Sharp artificial lighting caused a cold and heavy feeling, making the contrast deeper and, shapes more flexible and textures more visible, though the elemental purpose was more simple - the low quality of newspapers demanded for a maximum visibility and noticeable difference between black and white to lower the unnecessary tonality range. Despite that, due the constant using of a strong flash, rapid harsh contrast became characteristic.

Composition that seems not to be accidental - photos are taken from many possible angles and positions that visually tells the viewer that maybe the process itself was mechanical, but the result was not.

The book «The Naked City, the front page of which says : «To you, the people of New York»

The people of new york- alive and dead.

As a headnote of the chapter named "Murders" there is placed a regular bill of Weegee's income for night shift, and it says «Thirty five dollars for two murders» - and this bill is far from being there for waste, it plays a very certain role. That paper ironically underlines the regularity and routine of bloody events Weegee had to record on a daily base.

We are looking at pictures of murders. Dominating role in a visual structure plays the question of surrounding, and with that, deprives the space of any determined main character. The aesthetical part contains, of course, meant above beauty of the time. Let's look at the picture 3. On is a corpse at the left corner at the image, and a cop, putting a ray of light on his figure. The policeman himself looks fabulous on duty - costume, clean boots, buttoned shirt, lined trousers; he is kept in a sort of relaxed and, at the same time, exhausted pose (at least with no obvious

⁷ «Naked city by Weegee » , New York :Da Capo Press,1973, ISBN : 9 780306 812040.

tension) , that underlines the regular plot of the daily life, which gives all the others a stream of shudder. The other officer is seemingly busy with some organization questions, he only brings a tiny piece of the fuss on a scene, but the time had literally stopped between the first policeman and a body. They nearly have inner dialogue, which gets interrupted by a central compositional object, that happened to be an infant carriage, and it begs the question as doesn't seem to belong the scene at all. That brings up a lot to think of, though the carriage , together with a policeman's look, present this exact time reflecting spot. Again the beauty of not - implication, mix of objects that unexpectedly match together, gathered at one picture by one grief.



3. Weegee , "Murder", 1940.

The impression it gives doesn't leave the viewer untouched – there is a corpse, mutilated lifeless corpse, that allows one to witness the life that's been over, and then there is the policeman around - standing still, doing their work, with the perfectly ironed and fitting suits, and there comes the inner satisfaction, the vision of a sarcastic mock ; there comes the analogy with superheroes that came for a while to versus the evil – they make their work, give you a smile and fly back to the sunset. All that, at some point, brings the feeling of a relief everyone is looking for deep inside.

Dissonance was turning into the harmony - here is where the aesthetic was growing from. Even the uncovered drama was

vividly asking for interaction. Seems like the depicted grief is going open up, all the victims, together with a witnesses ,are on a way to come together, align onto the improvised stage and perform jazz - unrepeatabe atmosphere of the death in a post war city.



4. Weegee, "Crime and punishment".

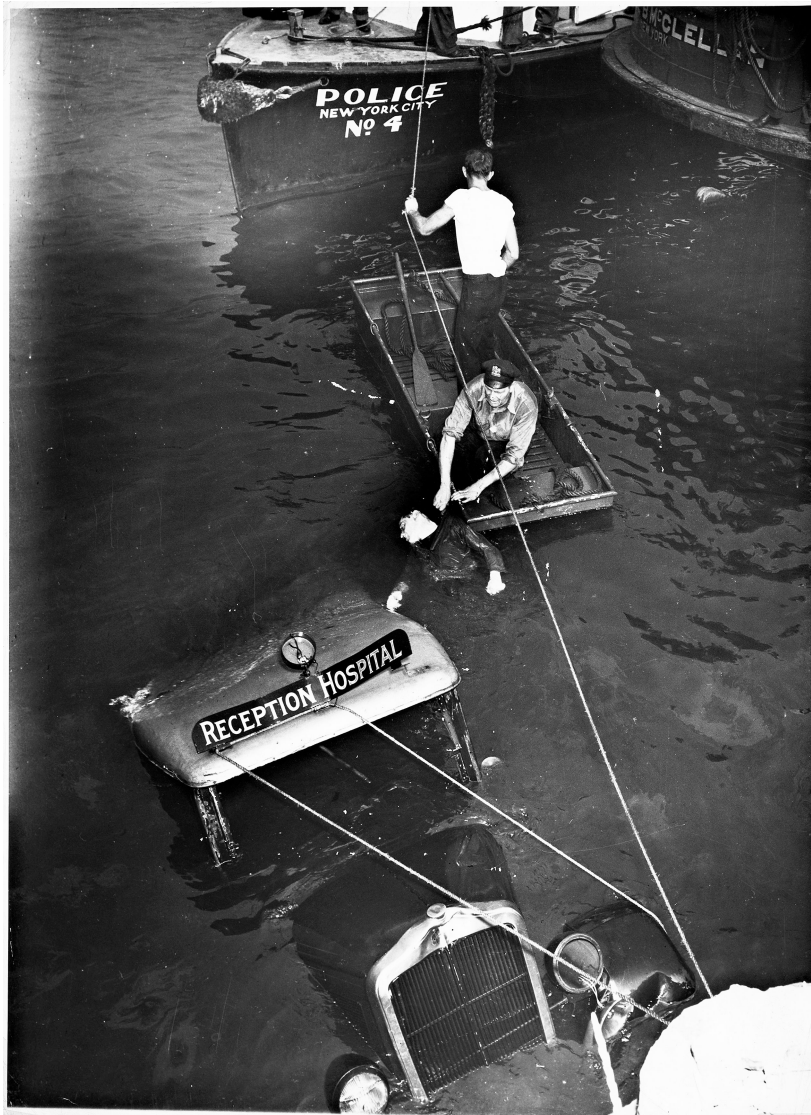
Throughout all the works we can find many images with wrecked vehicles, which is also interesting to look at. Now let's take in account the image number 4. On this particular picture we can see the magnificent car on a dusk of it's fame, helplessly hanged from a bridge, and it looks like it tries to hold as tight as possible. The nerve of a situation is literally tense as a string, it keeps the viewer in a wrenching pressure, as illustrates a moment, when everything is bad after a period of time when everything was better and before it all, most likely, goes to the worst. It's hard to defend if the fence plays the role of support, or it just gets cowardly curved under the huge weight, so the car is still alright, but you are caught with the feeling of that you don't know what is going to be the ending- and the secret is that you will never know. It is exactly something what was always warming the human interest to the trembling in the body - realizing the short-living, terminating and fragility of the luxury, which was, literally, made with hands. The fear of it's end was harder because the value was higher as it was happening long before mechanical engineering ceased being manual and identical forming almost destroyed the uniqueness of each product. Fear of losing turns not into the grief, but into the admiration, despite not being completely aware of what's the tragedy is hidden inside the carcass from a damaged iron- the same death in different path. The crowd, depicted above, on the image compositionally forms a mass of shapely cloned spots, and these are people that simultaneously don't know what to do, so they stand there as ghosts. It's worth to notice that people in a crowd are sloped to the side and the line of each bias nearly imitate the bias of a person illustrated on a painting of Edward Munch "The Scream", and this association makes them an alive symbol of a silent frustration and grief. Moreover, such a strong image shows up one of the biggest fear of humanity- suddenly not having a control above something, and here the very moment of this feeling is illustrated, as losing control is one of the scariest things that makes people swoon.



5. Weegee, «Pulling up Phillip Falco's car.»

Or, for example , image number 5. Here we can see another consequences of the car accident, but this time all the occurrence is being surrounded by a dark water. The post factum of a happened tragedy is expressed in a corpse , that is placed in the very center of the composition, between sinking automobile and small wooden boat that came from the police launch. Ropes that are extended through the whole image play a role of certain leaders through the main parts of the scene. There are three of these ropes : two lead to the car, and one - to the boat, and they sort of point on what had happened and where it goes, and the double line asks for increased attention. The zigzag shaped composition and certain rhythm underlines the way traced from complete helplessness to long-awaited salvation - even though there is no longer anything physical that might be saved. The further the movement goes, the higher it gets, and if we start to follow the pattern drawn by the captured motion of the image, we can see that the sinking car with it's glimmers looking like eyes that express the last gaze full of entreat, is symbolizing the despair, hopelessness and insanity ;then there is a corpse, being in the middle, not here, not there- not deep anymore, but still partly on the surface ,illustrates the transformation, indifferent peaceful transition from the horror of the hellish accident to quietness of a borderline state; the policeman, who's strong

hands are about to pull the body out from the water, express the effort , the necessary catharsis before the last road ; then the guy holding a rope in the same boat as the officer, turned away from the viewer, looking far, to where it all must bring, takes the vision of a purifying hope ; and, finally, the police launch - the termination, the destination, the absolution. Thus, happening on a scene becomes the certain road to Calvary.



6. Weegee, «Police officer and assistaint removing body of Reception Hospital ambulance driver Morris Linker from East River», 1943.



7. Weegee, "Auto accident victim", New York.

On a picture number 6 we see another scene of a crime - the victim of a car accident, the corpse, lying, seemingly, on a highway, under the white curtain, with a steering wheel in his hands which, most probably, was ripped away from the vehicle he had driven. The magnificence of this image goes from its simplicity- everything looks as peaceful as nothing really happened. The soft light of an apparently approaching morning gives the feeling that a night horror hum and racket dies away and makes things quiet down. Morning routine takes its duty back, as we see cars passing by, most probably people start riding to work. And though it's possible to imagine an unpleasant picture, an incredible power that stroke the man out from his driver's seat, the terrifying value of the crush- there is no visible evidence, so all that comes to mind stays below the border of possible. There is no glass, no car pieces, nothing except the guy who lays on a bricked road, holding the steering wheel, and, at some moment, looking like a steadily sleeping child with a toy in his hands. Cars, themselves, along with the wheel and the road, bring that exact detailing strike representing the epoch aesthetic- even in such a minimalistic picture the contrast between life being beautiful, blooming and peppy, passing by, following its own order, and life that got frozen, can't remain unnoticed. With their fragile grace cars perform as sort of a manifestation to the infinite stream of life- infinite until once it terminates. I will take the quote out of a context, "There are no spectators ... it's early

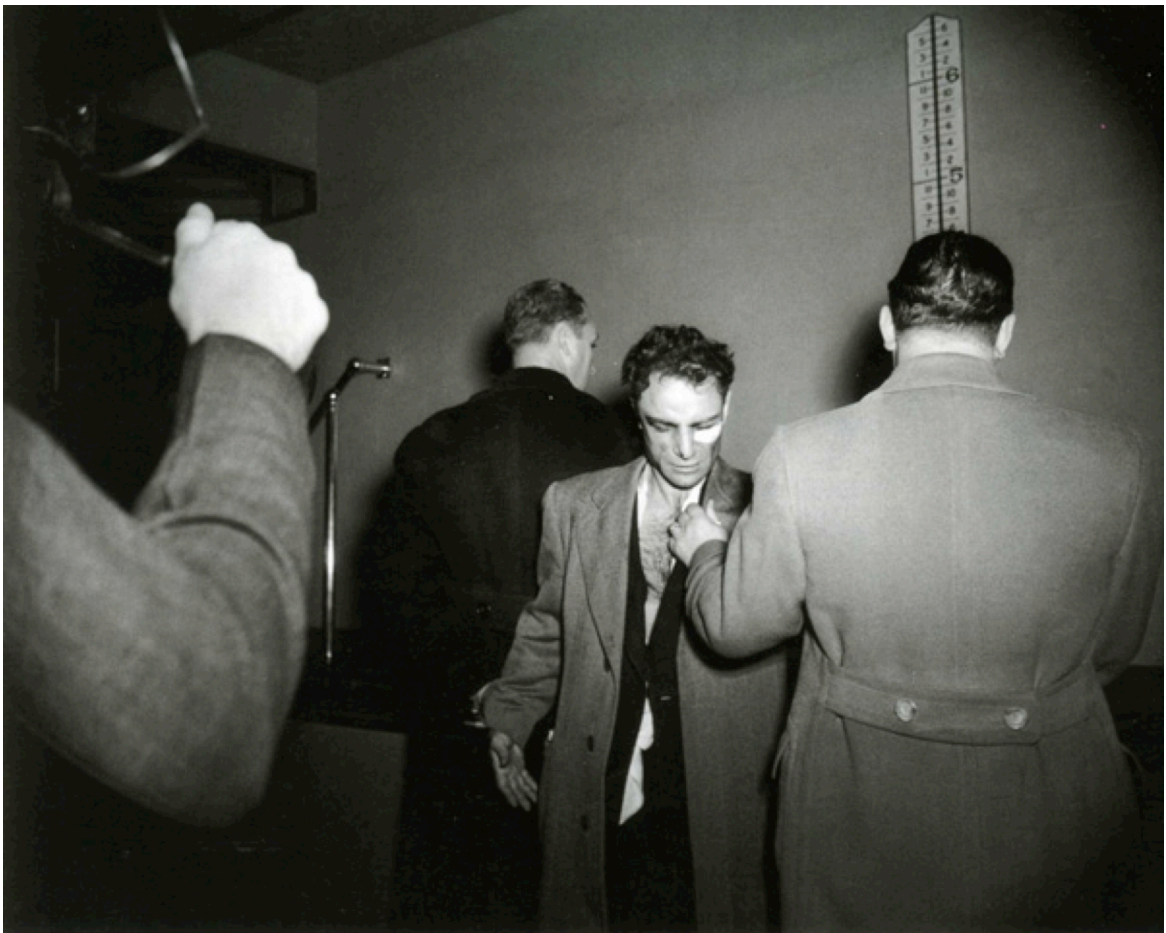
morning ... people are rushing to work ... and can't stop to look ... they'd be late ... and the boss will holler like hell."⁸

Weegee's attitude to the misery he used to deal with was in many ways questionable. Once he got criticized by Walter Rosenblum (1919-2006), who happened to know him personally, for being cold hearted, indifferent and even inappropriately bold on a scene, explaining that basically on the example of the triptych from the chapter of "Naked City" named "Psychic photography", with a man dying under the car. Pictures of this series illustrate, one by one, the man, sitting on a ground, then the same man rolled over by taxi the moment after, and, at the end, the priest giving the last rite to this guy, which could stand on his two several minutes ago. It was the clear and brave presentation of the «death in action». Weegee was blamed for capturing the moment instead of intervening, as the photographs themselves could easily provide a truth that he actually could have prevented the tragedy, but stayed still with a camera in his hands, putting a blinking light at the occurrence from the very beginning to the very end. But this is the beauty of non implication, that would have become the hardest challenge if there was no armor-piercing spirit of not taking serious the death itself, but the work that needs to be made out of it, which is basically necessary as for a crime scene or forensic photographer, as for many other professions. This displacing of the focus angle, nearly a tiny distortion, served as a basement for staying aside despite that even a little move could provoke the entire scene to change into, though, less interesting material. Miles Orvell writes: «Both parts of Weegee's sensibility are essential as the same polar qualities of the typical thirties «tough guy», who likewise fulfilled a cultural need by embodying, in fiction and film, a persona that was sensitive yet obdurate enough to endure."⁹ The boldness, clear mind and tenacity, in this case, was granting, and if Weegee was the savior- he would never appear the first on a scene to shoot the murders for a morning newspaper. He, himself, in a chapter of «Naked City" named «Fires» was explaining his feelings from

⁸ «Naked city by Weegee » , New York :Da Capo Press, 1973, ISBN : 9 780306 812040, p 72.

⁹ «Weegee's Voyeurism and the Mastery of Urban Disorder", Miles Orvell, The university of Chicago press on behalf of Smithsonian American Art Museum, American Art, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Winter, 1992),

some of these night events he had to picture: "« This always makes me cry ... but what can i do ... taking pictures is my job ... and besides i'd rather take a picture of someone being rescued alive ... it makes a better picture.»"¹⁰ So, we can say that his emotions while being in action were just another body, another possible form of the empathy. Still he was there, still he was doing that – probably, because he couldn't cease. It was risky, risky not because a corpse could cause any harm, but because Weegee was coming too close to something that usually prefers to remain uncovered. He was bravely ripping these limitations, with a risk to one day, away from all the habitual grief, see something that once would be hard to forget- though, i don't think there was much he could.



8. Weegee , «Booked for killing a policeman», 1939.

¹⁰ «Naked city by Weegee » , New York :Da Capo Press, 1973, ISBN : 9 780306 812040, p 52.

«This guy killed a cop in a hold up. First he got a black eye...then the electric chair in Sing Sing¹¹ prison...»¹²

This picture illustrates a scene in a police station: a guy, apparently, getting prepared for measuring by policemen. He seemed to be partly unconscious, as he can stand, but the movement and broken pose gives off the instability, and his look with a beaten face and haphazardly buttoned clothes underlines his questionable freshness. Despite his vulnerability and pathetic condition it is clearly visible that he tries to resist: the position of hand, curved in a form of a silent indignation, and a head, which is pulled into the shoulders, with a forehead, boldly pushed forward - the simplified version of attacking pose. His eyes are closed, but placed under heavy brow line they imitate a vision of a heavy look. Seems that if he would open them - some dark, mournful and evil truth of the committed sin will show up. Dramatic and heavy mood is being created by a literally faceless surrounding - among four people on the image there are only one who's face is visible as it turned to the viewer. People that turned by a backside create the visual opposite motion against the criminal, and one of them, who has the direct tactile contact with this guy, has the hand on the his collar: most probably the officer's intention was to force him back to the wall where he tries to escape from, although, at some point, this gesture looks tender, and the expression of the figure itself is not a rage, but sorrow, and with that, the photograph full of terror somehow looks as the last blessing before the last trip, and people around become the hidden symbol of everlasting grief. This little game, tiny illusion, makes the viewer feel surreal about what is depicted, as the faceless silent event looks almost similar with a dream. The real straight spectacular drama would be if the man was captured in agony, set afire on his chair, and this would have been clear, this would have been straight forward, but we see the moment within the time when judgment was announced, that makes us understand that there is nothing to change, but yet life goes it's way- and this is the trick.

¹¹ Sing Sing prison - maximum security prison in New York.

¹² «Naked city by Weegee », New York :Da Capo Press, 1973, ISBN : 9 780306 812040, p 162.

Now it's worth to pay attention to one important part- the describing notes that Weegee was adding to most of his photographs. Even though sometimes they were being called meanly sarcastic, I consider that in his texts Weegee was expressing rather peace, and barely from indifference. I can say that these notes say more about life as it is. They express the tranquility and make all pictures align at some level of equality between each other, they literally mean: If you can smile towards beautiful , you can also smile towards horrifying . They express the unbreakable calmness, which helped Weegee stay afloat amid all things he saw every day.



9. Weegee, «Fireman's holiday».

For example, on this photo from chapter «Fires», we see three firemen, apparently carrying their colleague that collapsed in action , and rushing to take him away from fire and bring towards any urgent medical help. The additional text says «A Fireman's Holiday”, and from the first sight it seems completely inappropriate and unconnected to what is depicted, as many of us would have expect some classical “The firemen carry their harmed co-

worker", but there comes something different, and if that was, for example, said out loud on a scene of an occurrence – the phrase would be considered as a mock of either mentally sick person, or the most heartless one, but it was not the case of Weegee, as , though, many people could say (and were saying) it was. Nevertheless, that phrase in a context of the image itself looks absolutely harmonic : because that witty – ironical note plays a role of a small catapult that toss the viewer away from the happening, back to the reality. It doesn't allow to cross the line, it keeps aside enough to take the compassion, but not to suffer along with victims, and that is, I think, the main power of humor, that was the restraining factor both for the photographer and for the viewer.

And that is the whole thing about Weegee and his nearly mean commentaries, notes, titles. As long as he needed to record the burning flame of a crime scene, he also needed to keep himself away from burns , and also ,carefully, lead the viewer to it There needed to be something between both sides of the spectacle, so the humour. blinking in almost everything that he did, was serving as a resonator from something, that once and for all, could destroy the correct perception of reality.

4.3. Conclusion

On a base of a research i can draw the conclusion , that the first and the main feature was the illustrating and reflecting of the time , which Weegee represented from A to Z. Making the tender and brutal novel about a city in which the tragedy used to be as regular as a dance , he performed successfully, as he knew what it costs – both in the literal and the figurative sense.

In the case of Arthur “Weegee” Fellig one of the secrets was simply not making the tragedy out of the tragedy, as first there was a call for money, and only then the call of honor, and thus we see what we see - practically, the simplest presentation of the most difficult, lamentable and dreadful situations. The viewer looks for a full presentation of a tight, raging, pumping drama, taking all over – and suddenly, alas, he doesn't get it in the expected way - and that causes the achieved “wow”. It opens that part of life which the viewer is afraid to uncover- because he doesn't wish to witness some things what he wasn't ready for, as the world is quite a scary thing, and one who happens to depict it - just does, and for the other “just” doesn't seem to be enough, as even if people do call for a spectacular slaughter, but subconsciously react at the same thing – even a tiny appearance of clean air and a little hope. The viewer looks for the beauty which is going to say that everything is better and far beyond than terrifying image of a death, and the death itself is no more than a part of a circle we are all familiarized with.

We do understand what leads the viewer to admire something that illustrated the triumph of life , but what brings him to admire deeper? The shown attitude to the situation. And this attitude was right, as one way or another it was deliberately adapted under the human interest, but at the end taking the death from another angle became interesting, inspiring, and the idea of playing with serious and dramatic plots became the infinite field for creativity.

The first on a crime scene was the first to go towards the uxexplored disgusting mystery, for which there needed to be a pioneer to bring it up, but carefully, as people needed tears as much as they needed laughter, and there had to be someone to

finally break through and combine the beauty and the beast of a world we live in.

Despite all , these plots became a manifestation of life, kindness and tenderness in hands of the one who dares to find the inner harmony to come close , get calmed , and, as he doesn't have a choice, see the dead without fear – and then to show the same to people, to spread the fearless result. Fearless- but not indifferent.

Thus, in my opinion, the secret of an interest and admiration, called by these images, consist not the captured misery, which is, even if it sounds strange, quite trivial itself in kind of expression that demands for a certain attention accenting, but the accent being divided on many and spread all over the picture, smoothing, or, oppositely, sharpening the angles of perception, and the exposed meaning lies not in the capability of depicting the death that draws the terror forth, but the capability of picturing the life beyond it, being as it is - funny, sad, ridiculous, luxurious, complicated, mysterious, dull, shocking, and incredibly beautiful ; the same old show, that, despite everything, must go on, and goes first. As Weegee was saying about his models, innerly greeting them and underlining the smooth attitude to a criminal world he used to photograph: « I will say one thing for men and women who kill...they are Ladies and Gentlemen [...] cooperating with me so i will get a good shot of them. »¹³

¹³ «Naked city by Weegee » , New York :Da Capo Press, 1973, ISBN : 9 780306 812040, p 160.

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6. List of reproductions

1. A. Bertillon, «Untitled»
2. A. Bertillon, «Monsieur Gala was killed asleep in his apartments». Paris, 1905.
- 3 .Weegee, «Murder».
4. Weegee, «Crime and punishment»
5. Weegee, «Pulling up Phillip Falco's car.»
6. . Weegee, «Police officer and assistaint removing body of Reception Hospital ambulance driver Morris Linker from East River», 1943.
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8. Weegee , «Booked for killing a policeman», 1939.
9. Weegee, «Fireman's holiday».

