

# CONEY ISLAND

VISIONS OF  
AN AMERICAN DREAMLAND  
1861-2008

1/29/15

Robin Jaffee Frank

*For Charlie, with warmest  
thanks, JGF*

WADSWORTH ATHENEUM MUSEUM OF ART  
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NEW HAVEN AND LONDON

Charles Musser

***I did shoot Little Fugitive to a degree as if I was shooting stills.  
I had spent a lot of time on Coney Island shooting  
candid photographs and it wasn't all that different.*** MORRIS ENGEL

***While he was shooting Coney Island U.S.A., Carroll [Siskind]  
always had a 35mm camera around his neck.*** JACK KRATSAS

# Cameras at Coney

1940–1953

On June 18, 1940, New York City's newest daily newspaper hit the stands and sold out. Called *PM*, its first issue reported on a meeting between Mussolini and Hitler as well as the entrance of German troops into Paris. Five days later, the robustly illustrated tabloid published its first official photograph of Coney Island. Taken by Weegee, quite possibly on the first day of summer, it shows three attractive women in bathing suits lounging on a lifeguard stand (fig. 9.1). What makes this image unusual is that the women are wearing large latex masks of three political leaders who were pushing the world into war. According to the Weegee-authored caption, "The phony dictators on Manhattan Beach lifeguard station are Mabel Cross, 18, Aquacade cutie, as Mussolini; Doris Rothback, 19, photographer's model, as Stalin; and Adele Abramson, 17, salesgirl, as a charming Hitler."<sup>1</sup> The carefully posed image is playfully surreal in its incongruities. The Hitler and Mussolini characters hold large knives and are poised to stab their Stalin counterpart. World events intrude upon summer fun—or perhaps summer fun makes light of a still-distant war. (Chaplin's *The Great Dictator* would be released later that fall.) The masks were something of a fad, and this allegorical image in bad taste acted as product placement for a novelty shop that supplied the merchandise. Weegee was already well known for his photographs of murder scenes; and in his own knowing way, he had his models enacting a murder scene for this photograph as well. Underneath the photograph's playful, "first-day of summer" buffoonery lurked something dark and deeply disturbing.

By the late 1930s, Coney Island was seemingly caught between three sets of representations. One was the simple, short, travelogue-style inventory of rides and crowded beaches that had changed little in thirty years.<sup>2</sup> As Josh Glick has pointed out in the previous essay, Hollywood offered another kind of sanitized and often-faked Coney Island: here couples could meet and fall in love, a brief stopover in the formation of the modern family. Finally, Robert Moses had declared the resort to be seedy, poorly planned, unsani-



Weegee's *New York*, 1948/54 (detail of plate 130).

tary, and frequented by the wrong sort of people — an ideal site for urban renewal. “There is no bemoaning the end of the old Coney Island fabled in song and story,” he concluded. “The important thing is not to proceed in the mistaken belief that it can be revived. There must be a new and very different resort established in its place.”<sup>3</sup>

These perspectives, which overlapped in interesting ways, were actively rejected by a group of photographers, many of whom had long-standing personal ties to the seaside resort. They were members of the Photo League, a radically inclined but non-doctrinaire organization (both politically and artistically) that flourished between 1936 and 1951.<sup>4</sup> Three of its members went on to make films at Coney: Arthur Fellig, better known as Weegee, had joined the Photo League in 1941 — about the time that the organization gave him his first one-man show, *Murder Is My Business*. Half of *Weegee's New York* (1948/54), his experimentally inclined motion picture, focuses on Coney Island. Carroll Siskind had taught a variety of photography classes at the Photo League from 1939 to 1946 and was particularly close to Weegee; he shot the award-winning documentary short *Coney Island, U.S.A.* (1951). Morris Engel had joined the league in 1936 after buying his first

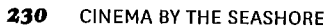


PM admits this comely pyramid is spoiled by the faces, but they tell the story of New York's latest and hottest fad. The unprepossessing pans of Europe's dictators are seen everywhere, on beaches, at parties. Made of molded latex and hand-painted, they're selling like hot cakes at a dozen novelty stores. The Hitler false face, at \$1.75 to \$3, is most popular. The phoney dictators on a Manhattan Beach lifeguard station are Mabel Gross, 18, "Aquacade cutie," as Mussolini; Doris Rothback, 19, photographer's model, as Stalin; and Adele Abramson, 17, salesgirl, as a charming Hitler. These masks came from Ward Novelty Co., Vanderbilt Concourse, Grand Central Terminal. — G. M.

Fig. 9.1 Weegee, photograph published in *PM*, June 23, 1940. International Center of Photography, New York. Museum Purchase, 2007, 2007.15.10.

**Photographing the People's Playground** As Weegee remarked in his autobiography, every newspaperman and photographer in the country was angling for a job at *PM*. In his case, the newspaper's editor-in-chief, Ralph Ingersoll, pursued Weegee and offered him a retainer. Weegee recalled: "I had a roving assignment from *PM* for the next four-and-a-half years. I picked my own stories. When I found a good one, I brought it in. All they had to do was mail me a weekly check for seventy-five dollars—which they did."<sup>5</sup> Weegee, renowned for his fascination with crime, enjoyed a new freedom. He broadened his range of subjects, and Coney Island became a key component of this new mix. By having Weegee write tough-guy captions and commentaries for his photo spreads, Ingersoll did his photographer another favor.<sup>6</sup> The results were already evident in an introductory issue of *PM*, for which Weegee provided two photographs. One showed "a few of the nearly 100 lost children rounded up at Coney Island yesterday." It was surrounded by images of an adult male stowaway, a "New Jersey killer," and a gangster meeting with his lawyers—a disquieting set of juxtapositions.<sup>7</sup> The other was a two-page spread that featured a Coney Island beach crowd (fig. 9.2). For his accompanying text, Weegee wrote:

**Fig. 9.2** Weegee, photograph in article “Yesterday at Coney Island” published in *PM*, June 17, 1940. Microfilm. New York Public Library.



The photographer was quickly elaborating a hard-boiled, wisecracking, self-promoting persona.

Weegee's most famous photograph of Coney Island—taken on Sunday, July 21, 1940—reworked his image in *PM*'s warm-up issue (fig. 9.3; see plate 84). Again published as a two-page spread, it is a high-angle shot taken from Steeplechase Pier, looking down on a beach jammed with people as far as the camera eye can see. It differs from most previous photographs taken of Coney on hot summer days in that Weegee had jumped and screamed to gain the attention of his subjects, who responded with smiles, hand waving, and cocky poses. Despite crowded surroundings, their friendly reactions convey a cheerful exuberance that puts to shame Moses's ungenerous characterization of these Coney Island beachgoers. While the upbeat mood does much to account for the image's long-term popularity, its publication was accompanied by a column of prose that complicates its mostly sunny sentiments. As Weegee reported it, he had driven over early in the morning, only to discover illicit lovers on the beach, hiding under blankets and none too eager to identify themselves. Returning later in the afternoon, he parked illegally in front of a fire hydrant. After snapping the happy beach crowd, he discovered 150 "lost kids" cooped up in a cage under the boardwalk, awaiting rescue by their parents.<sup>9</sup> These and other remarks offer a sardonic view of the summer resort—a scruffy, almost surreal encounter. Weegee may have written this text with the expectation that *PM* would use more of his images from that remarkable day of camerawork, many of which apparently survive (figs. 9.4–9.5). Weegee also took numerous shots of the emblematic crowd scene on that day. The negative and photographic print published by *PM* apparently disappeared because Weegee had to provide the newspaper with a variant for publication in a January 1941 issue. A third version appears in *Naked City* (1945), his book on New York City, while still other variations are in museums and available through photographic licensors.<sup>10</sup>

Fig. 9.3 Weegee, photograph in article "Yesterday at Coney Island . . . Temperature 89 . . . They Came Early, Stayed Late," published in *PM*, July 22, 1940. International Center of Photography, New York. Museum Purchase, 2007, 2007.15.55.

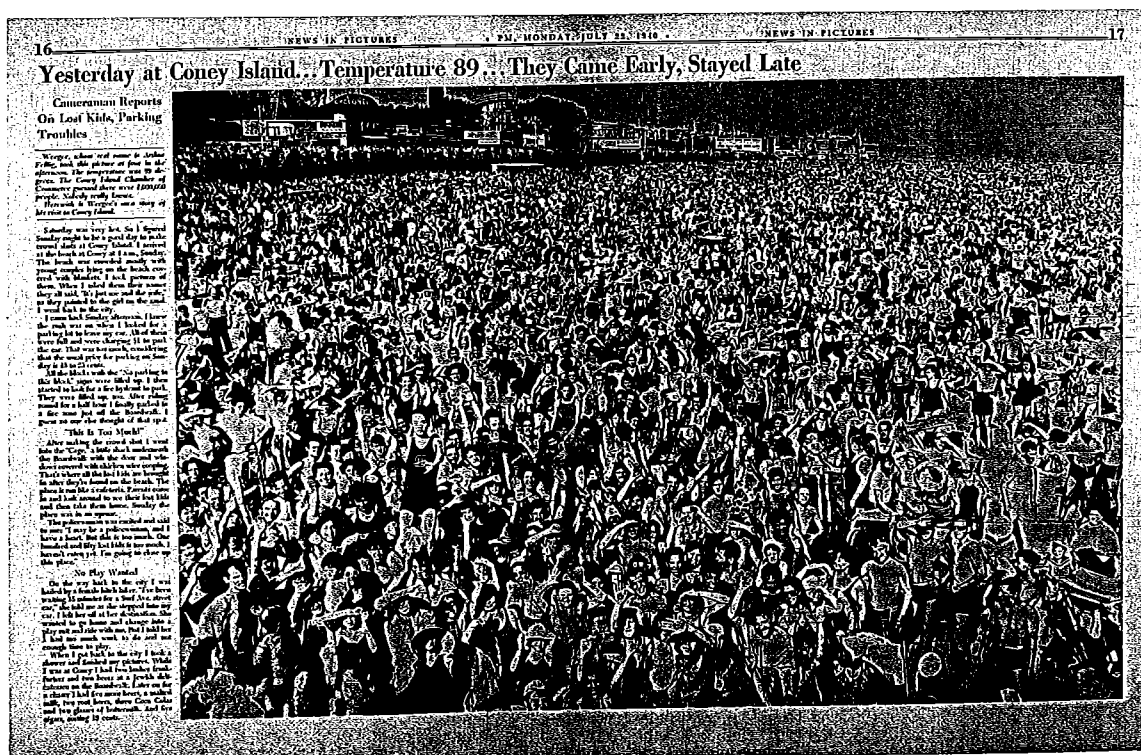




Fig. 9.4 Weegee, *People Under the Boardwalk at Coney Island*, July 21, 1940. Photograph. Bettman Collection, Corbis.

Fig. 9.5 Weegee, *Three Children Seated at Coney Island*, July 21, 1940. Photograph. Bettman Collection, Corbis.

In comparison to other newspapers, *PM* uniquely valued its photographers. It ran credit lines with their images, and its Sunday editions offered a seven-page "Picture Gallery" that was designed to show off the talents of a single photographer. On the very day that Weegee was prowling Coney Island, *PM* featured a selection of images "by a 22-year-old Brooklyn boy"—Morris Engel. Six of the ten images in the portfolio were taken at Coney Island. Many of these had appeared in his first one-man show at the New School for Social Research in December 1939, for which Paul Strand wrote an admiring introduction.<sup>11</sup> The cover features a slightly cropped version of *Coney Island Embrace*, *New York City*. *Man with Cape* focuses on a slightly eccentrically dressed man who half-poses for the camera while people around him remain absorbed with their own beach activities, oblivious to the cameraman's presence. Four shots of Coney Island sunbathers shared a third page. Lacking Weegee's irony, Engel offered strong, intimate compositions that respected and humanized his subjects. As *PM* editorialized, "We think these pictures prove that the lives of ordinary citizens in a peaceful democracy can be dramatic and exciting and amusing; that, given a decent opportunity, people can learn to have fun without bullying other people. Really!"<sup>12</sup> Engel's stills embodied a Popular Front culture that focused on working-class life without being explicitly ideological: as Paul Strand remarked, Engel's subjects were treated as human beings rather than types.<sup>13</sup>

Engel had grown up in Brooklyn and gone to Abraham Lincoln High School, only a few blocks from Coney Island's beaches. His "Picture Gallery" photos received many compliments, and he soon joined *PM*'s staff, meeting Weegee on the main floor of the newspaper's Brooklyn office. As he later recalled, "I said, 'Hello, I am Morris Engel' and he said 'I am Weegee the Famous.' Possibly because I was very young, he did not thrill me.



Morris Engel, *Coney Island, N.Y.*, early 1940s (detail of plate 85).

Morris Engel, *Coney Island Embrace*, *New York City*, 1938 (detail of plate 86).

Morris Engel, *Mother with Children*, 1938 (detail of plate 95).

Morris Engel, *Shoe Shine*, *Coney Island, NYC*, 1945 (detail of plate 96).

Possibly I thought this is what you expect or have to expect on papers.”<sup>14</sup> To be sure, they approached photography (and life) very differently. Engel was a well-mannered, unassuming “boy,” while Weegee was in his forties — a brash, outrageous performer with his own nom de guerre. *Photo Notes* editor Lewis Clyde Stoumen enthused that Engel “has made a really new photographic statement. He has a new technique of seeing, and with it he has already made memorable pictures.”<sup>15</sup> Engel’s technique “is candid and documentary; it is long waiting for the right aspect” (see plates 85–86, 95–96).<sup>16</sup> In contrast, Weegee kept his subjects at an ironic distance. He confronted them and often put them on edge. As he explained his technique at about this time: “You catch as catch can. . . . If people laugh in the back ground of [a] murder shot, well—that’s life.”<sup>17</sup> Paul Strand admired Weegee and heaped praise on his book *Naked City*, but remarked that his “treatment of Coney Island is less warm and subtle than Morris Engel’s.”<sup>18</sup>

The years 1939 and 1940 offered a moment in which Coney Island took on new meanings and, for many artists and intellectuals, a new importance. War in Europe and the influx of refugees from overseas were counterpoints to a growing labor militancy, unionization, and the end of America’s decade-long economic depression. All contributed to New York’s new status as the world’s arts capital. At a moment when larger-than-life dictators and their war machines were on the march, Coney Island was a place where “you wear what you please, do just about as you please.”<sup>19</sup> It was the “People’s Playground”—a liberated zone where nonviolent, democratic values reigned. In this public place, all races and classes mingled, even as amusements, food, and everything else were geared toward people with a modest budget. Not surprisingly, many Photo League members photographed people on the beaches of Coney Island in the 1940s, including Sid

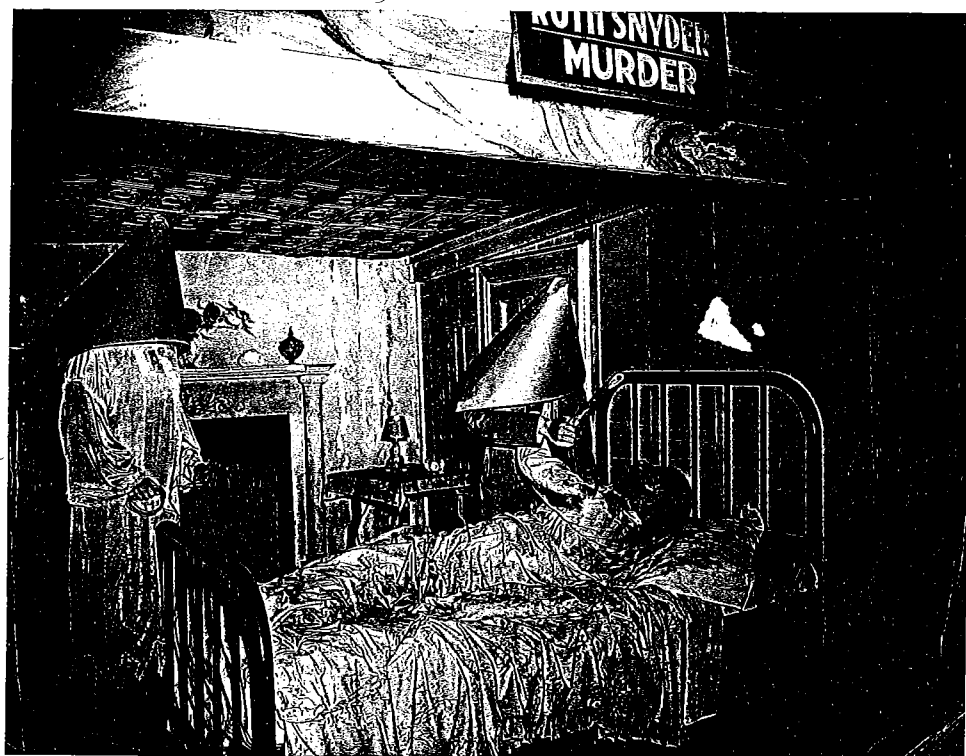


Fig. 9.6 Weegee, [“Ruth Snyder Murder” Wax Display, Eden Musée, Coney Island, New York], 1941. Gelatin silver print, 10½ × 13 in. (26.7 × 33 cm), image; 11 × 14 in. (27.9 × 35.6 cm), paper. International Center of Photography, New York. Bequest of Wilma Wilcox, 1993, 7221.1993.



Grossman, Margaret Bourke-White, Lisette Model, Leon Levinstein, Arthur Leipzig, and Lou Bernstein. The people in their images resonated with John LaTouche's lyrics for "Ballad for Americans" (1939), which Paul Robeson recorded in May 1940:

SOLO: I am the etceteras and the "and so forths" that do the work.

VOICE: Now Hold on here, what are you trying to give us?

SECOND VOICE: Are you an American?

SOLO: Am I an American?

I'm just an Irish, (African), Jewish, Italian,

French and English, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Polish,

Scotch, Hungarian, (Jamaican), Swedish, Finnish, (Dominican),

Greek and Turk and Czech

And (Native American).<sup>20</sup>

This patriotic cantada became an instant hit and was sung a few weeks later at the national convention of the Communist Party USA, but also at the Republican National Convention in late June. LaTouche followed "Ballad for Americans" with another song: "Coney Island Ballet" (1940).

One of Weegee's ongoing projects for *PM* was to photograph Coney Island not just in the summer, but at different times of the year. He returned in the dead of winter: Sunday, January 19, 1941. "Weegee Revisits Coney Island: Not Dead, Only Sleeping" declared the headings for the full-page spread that was published on the following day. Images and written commentary strongly evoke the photographer's already-famous Coney Island crowd shot. Two images of the beach appeared underneath the headline, taken from the same camera position but six months apart (July 21 and January 19). Three photos of the Coney Island Bowery lined the bottom of the page and knowingly played with Weegee's self-reflexive construction of his persona as a tabloid photographer. A sunbather, dressed in a winter coat, huddles in the nook of a shooting gallery (a sign reads "10 Shots 10"). A second shot shows a workman dusting off a carousel horse, which was to be repainted. The third shows the wife of the Eden Musée's proprietor dusting off a waxworks of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Waxworks and wooden horses are, of course, dead objects: lifeless, lifelike entities—though not lifeless like Weegee's murder victims. Weegee shot one other photograph at the Eden Musée that day, which showed a waxworks of "The Ruth Snyder Murder" (fig. 9.6).<sup>21</sup> Weegee might have wanted it in the layout because it mocked and further complicated the piece's headline. The photograph also emphasizes the affinities between the Musée and Weegee himself—a man who earned his living making graphic depictions of murders and dead bodies.

Weegee returned to Coney Island again on Sunday, March 23 (the first Sunday of spring). Once again, *PM* offered a two-page spread for a Weegee photograph; but in this instance, it was a front and back page wraparound of the newspaper showing people bundled in coats as they strolled the boardwalk and stopped to look at Weegee's camera. Weegee was offering another seasonal evocation of his iconic photograph. The inside pages of *PM* featured Weegee's return to the Eden Musée, where waxworks of a kissing couple and disapproving cop had been placed outside on the walkway—again recalling his pictures of living people kissing on the beach—forever frozen, immobile in time. Weegee completed the cycle when he returned to Coney on Sunday, June 8, 1941. This resulted in

yet another two-page spread entitled "Coney Island Revisited . . . Pictures and Words by Weegee." The shift from June/July 1940 to June 1941 "was the number of soldiers in uniform on boardwalk, looking over the gals on the sand below."<sup>22</sup> The layout included four different photos: one was a now-generic shot of people waving and gesticulating for Weegee's camera.<sup>23</sup>

Perhaps it was not by chance that *Sodom by the Sea: An Affectionate History of Coney Island* was published at this time.<sup>24</sup> Nor that Weegee was inspired to review it:

I have been going to Coney Island for 30 years, and I guess, like the millions of others, I've taken the whole show for granted. But, after reading this book, which I found more thrilling than a Warner Brothers gangster movie, boy, I thought, what a record Coney Island has!

The authors haven't overlooked a thing. It also has many photographs, including one I made of the crowded beach on a Sunday, which appeared in *PM* and which I was very much surprised to see in the book.<sup>25</sup>

Weegee's crowd of onlookers also evoked the crowds of excited onlookers he photographed at murder scenes and fires. The following year, the United States was at war: on July 4, 1942, Weegee took another Coney Island crowd scene, this time with a masked man standing on the shoulders of two sailors. It was an Independence Day celebration that once again strongly evoked the iconic crowd scene taken two years before.<sup>26</sup>

Carroll Siskind was exempt from military service during the war due to a bad hip. Siskind took photos for the government and had a security clearance, while relying on income from commercial and fashion photography. He also continued to teach at the Photo League, which remained a center of intellectual and artistic excitement.<sup>27</sup> One of his students was Diana "Deen" Heller, whom he met and married in 1944. Although Weegee "seemed like an old guy and had not yet become famous,"<sup>28</sup> he soon became one of the couple's close friends.<sup>29</sup> Like many members of the Photo League, Siskind shot Coney Island in the 1940s using a 4 x 5 camera and available light. One still, dated 1945, is the portrait of a ventriloquist with a life-sized stuffed animal as a dummy (fig. 9.7). Another shows part of the Luna Park facade—a modest storefront advertising "Old Time Movies" for five and ten cents. Its storefront is covered with portraits of Chaplin, Valentino, Keaton, and other silent stars. Both are empathetic and faintly nostalgic in subject matter and treatment. These reveal little of Weegee's influence, despite Siskind's admiration for Weegee's work and envy of his self-promoting talents.

**Moving into Cinema** As they moved into filmmaking in the postwar era, Weegee, Siskind, and Engel were part of a larger phenomenon. Photo Leaguer Helen Levitt began to film her short *In the Street* (1948) in the mid-1940s. She also did much of the cinematography for *The Quiet One* (1948) and contributed to the script.<sup>30</sup> Stanley Kubrick was a *Look* photographer who completed his first documentary short, *Day of the Fight*, in early 1951. This was a path already trod by Paul Strand and would be continued by Robert Frank, among others. Nevertheless, the circumstances of these leftist, Jewish photographers became more tenuous as the Cold War emerged and the Red Scare mounted in intensity. Most obviously, the attorney general listed the Photo League as a subversive organization in December 1947, forcing it to close shop in 1951. If only subtly, this changed political and

cultural context was refracted through the lenses of their cameras, which were now often shooting film.

Weegee left *PM* in April 1945, departing on good terms as he looked toward the imminent success of his photo book *Naked City* (July 1945). It was divided into chapters, one of which features Coney Island and reprised many of the scenes that had appeared in *PM*. Weegee quickly followed his best-seller with a second: *Weegee's People* (November 1946). For this, he claimed to present New York in "a happier and gayer mood."<sup>31</sup> Although a somewhat pale version of his earlier achievement, he used its publication to announce his move into filmmaking, for which he used a 16mm Bolex (a silent camera). His first film, *Manhattan Moods*, was scheduled for showing in Detroit to the local camera club in February 1947. It was billed as "a study of the city in black and white, and color; realism and fantasy; silence and sound."<sup>32</sup> By March 1948, he was ready to debut *Weegee's New York*, "a two-reel travelog with scenes on Fifth Avenue, in Central Park, Coney Island, the Statue of Liberty, the Bowery and other places where Weegee's imagination led him." Characterizing the film as "experimental," critic Barnett Bildersee remarked:

The movie crossed beyond the borders where you can use the usual standards of cinematographic measurement.

This is impressionism instead of the realism that is the camera's traditional medium. Here is a movie with touches of Dali and plain newsreel, of abstract concrete, of poetry and unadorned reporting, of real and unreal. It's Gertrude Stein with a movie camera.<sup>33</sup>

For a time, *Weegee's New York* was an open, evolving text.<sup>34</sup> At some point, Amos Vogel of Cinema 16 became involved in the editing, and eventually a music track was melded with the film.<sup>35</sup> Cinema 16 and then Grove Press distributed a version commercially. Newspaper reports and available prints suggest that *Weegee's New York*, introduced as "the Travelogue

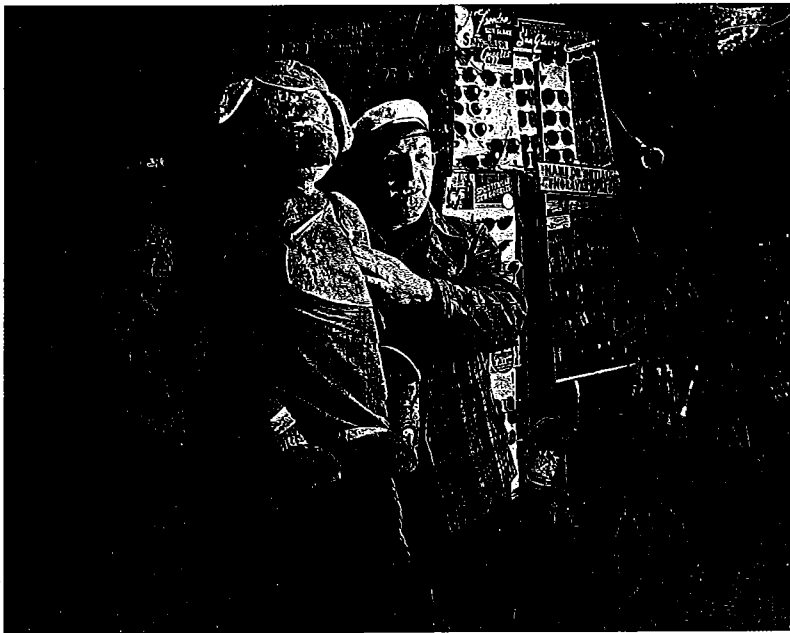
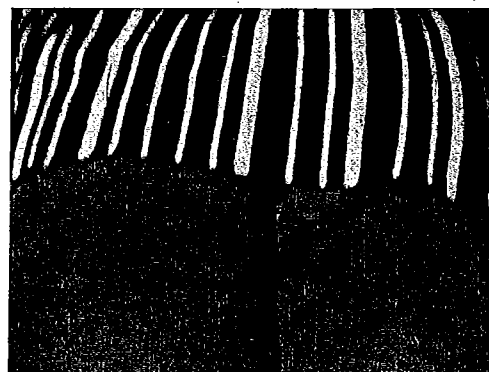


Fig. 9.7 Carroll Siskind (1917–1998), *Coney Island Ventriloquist*, 1945. Photograph. Collection of Lynn Ahrens.



with a Heart," was an umbrella term for what eventually became two distinct films totaling twenty minutes in screen time—each with its own head title and a concluding "the end." The first, entitled *New York Fantasy*, shows Manhattan almost entirely at night using an array of cinematic techniques (a fish-eye lens, multiple exposures, extreme close-ups, fast and slow action, dynamic editing, and so forth). This creates an abstract and distorted view of the city, in a manner that places this eight-minute piece as a radical reinterpretation of the city symphony film genre that began with Paul Strand and Charles Sheeler's *Manhatta* (1922). Its use of abstraction, color, and an experimental camera anticipates later films such as Stan Brakhage and Joseph Cornell's *Wonder Ring* (1955), Francis Thompson's *N.Y. N.Y.: A Day in New York* (1957), Shirley Clarke's *Bridges-Go-Round* (1958), and D. A. Pennebaker's *Daybreak Express* (1958). Certainly *New York Fantasy* was a radical departure from Weegee's tabloid-style photographs of the city's life and mayhem.

The second film, entitled *Coney Island*, displays an alternative impulse to *New York Fantasy*. Using a denotative or "straight" documentary style, Weegee's twelve-minute film repeatedly evokes his photographs of Coney Island from *PM* and *Naked City*. This is clear from its opening intertitle: "A Million people on the beach on a Sunday afternoon, is normal," which is followed by two shots that once again reprise his famous Coney Island images of crowds from July 21, 1940 (fig. 9.8). The camera position is virtually identical, and people wave with great enthusiasm, as if they know that they are being called on to perform a now-familiar summer ritual. In the second, wide-angle shot, two people are perched on the shoulders of fellow beachgoers. The musical counterpoint is "Civilization (Bongo, Bongo, Bongo)," as sung by Louis Prima:

So bongo, bongo, bongo, I don't wanna leave the Congo, oh no no no no  
Bingo, bangle, bungle, I'm so happy in the jungle, I refuse to go  
Don't want no bright lights, false teeth, doorbells, landlords, I make it clear  
That no matter how they coax him, I'll stay right here<sup>36</sup>

Weegee then moves off the boardwalk and fixates on women stripping and adjusting their bathing suits. He uses a telephoto lens, as if striving for the most salacious, intimate

view possible; not surprisingly, his persistent leering at their crotches often provokes strong reactions. It is shot and edited in a way that suggests a series of photographs in motion rather than a cinematically unified spatial-temporal world—except perhaps in the crude interpolation of shots of middle-aged men looking at the sexual spectacle before them, most noticeably with a telescope (plate 179). These images have a playful but uneasy relationship to Prima's song, which seems to speak for or about the male voyeurs with whom Weegee self-mockingly aligns himself. From crotch shots of women, Weegee moves on to show couples engaged in various public displays of affection, even as the music switches to Richard Crooks singing "Amour Toujours l'Amour (Love Everlasting)":

Ah Love, you have found me at last  
 In my heart in my song  
 I've dreamed of love in the past.  
 I have waited for you so long.  
 Love Everlasting<sup>37</sup>

This produces a number of sardonic juxtapositions—both in relation to the previous song and to the images for which Crooks's operatic voice is bizarrely inappropriate. Weegee then moves from "Love Everlasting" to Kay Kyser and His Orchestra performing "Why Don't We Do This More Often?" (1941):

Why don't we do this more often  
 Just what we're doing tonight  
 Gee, but it's great to get together again  
 Why does it only happen now and then?<sup>38</sup>

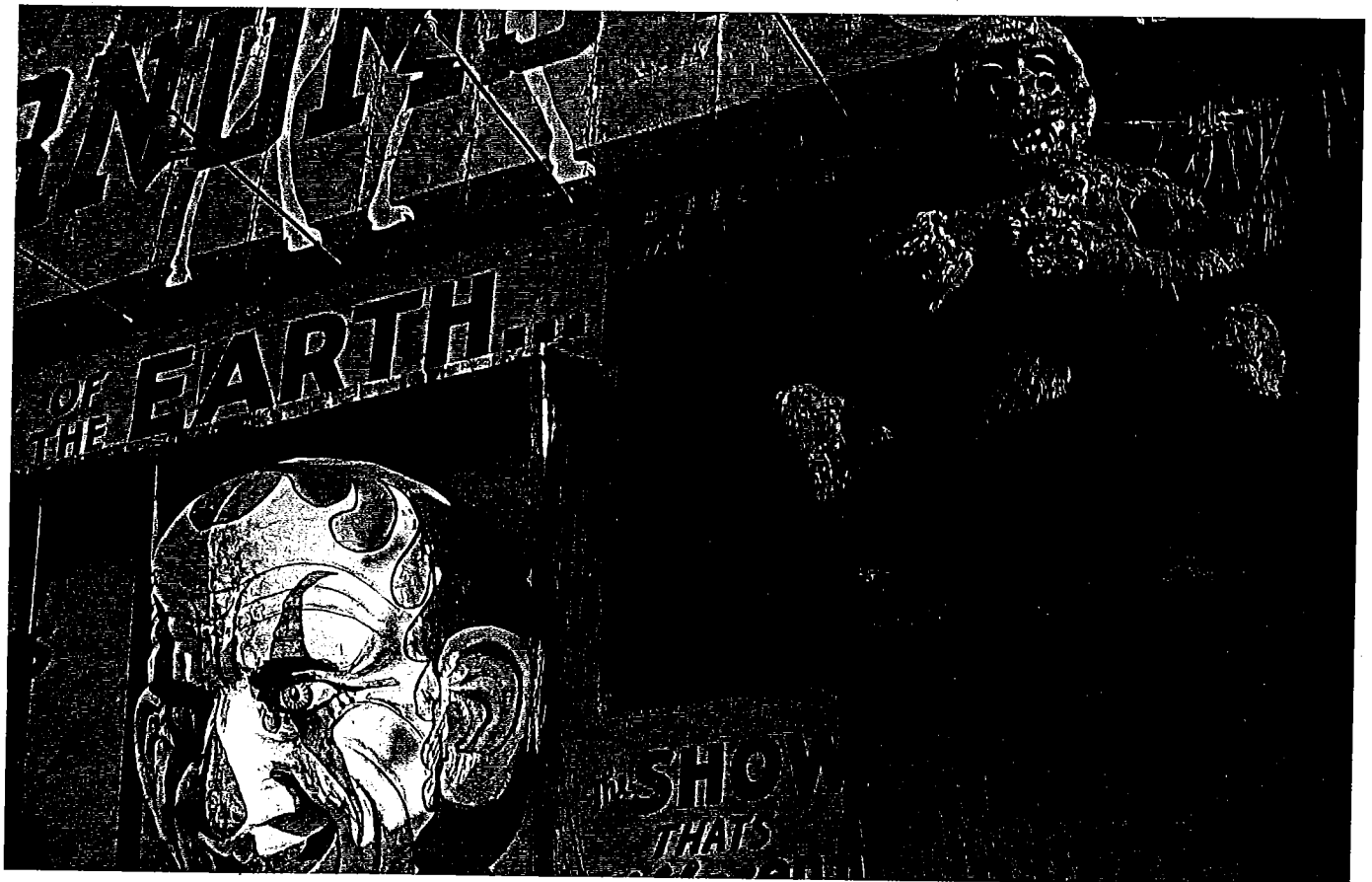


**Fig. 9.8** *Weegee's New York*. Film still. Directed by Weegee, 1948/54. International Center of Photography, New York.

The shots of couples making out on the beach recall Weegee's photographs of couples on the beach at night in 1940. Subsequent music includes instrumental versions of "Roll Out the Barrel Polka" as people of all ages dance on the beach, and "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes" as people get dressed to head home. The film concludes with scenes of the semi-deserted beach and a sunset. The musical incongruities and general insistence on off-colored raunchiness evoke the sensibility of Weegee's *PM* photos, though with the signaled difference that he is now an outsider looking in, rather than a participant who uses his camera to pick up girls. The raunchiness masks this sense of sadness, longing, and regret.

Valentine Sherry, a self-described businessman who "worked in various behind-the-scenes capacities in the theatre," either saw or heard about Weegee's *Coney Island* and decided to make his own film of the renowned entertainment center.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps he even tried to hire Weegee to shoot it. If so, Weegee undoubtedly recommended Carroll Siskind in his stead. Siskind was then working as a fashion photographer for Namm's department store on Fulton Street in Brooklyn. Knowing he would need a camera assistant, he hired Jack Kratsas, a young shop steward at Namm's. Kratsas remembers Siskind as remarkably agile, despite his bad leg. As assistant, he was only needed to do the heavy lifting, such as moving and setting up lights, as well as occasionally operating the camera for some physically demanding and risky scenes — such as filming from the front of a roller coaster.<sup>40</sup> According to Sherry, they shot three hundred feet of 16mm color film (less than nine minutes) at Coney Island during the summer of 1949 and another fifteen thousand feet

**Fig. 9.9** Carroll Siskind, [Untitled Coney Island Photograph], c. 1950. Photograph. Collection of Lynn Ahrens.



(roughly seven hours) of material in May 1950.<sup>41</sup> Kratsas recalls that some additional material was also shot in the first half of 1951. Although Sherry "paid the bills," Kratsas insists that it is Siskind who deserved the real credit for making the film. Siskind's official credit—for special effects—is, in his opinion, a travesty.<sup>42</sup> "Val was rarely there and when he was, he would get people to one side and get releases."<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, for this, his first film project, producer-director Sherry also brought in *New York Times* columnist Meyer "Mike" Berger (uncredited) to write the narration, which was delivered by radio and TV personality Henry Morgan.<sup>44</sup> Feature film composer Alex North, then working on his jazz score for *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951), was supposed to do the music, but the job went to Albert Hague, who would be known primarily for his Broadway musicals. Although Sherry planned to make a thirty-five-minute subject, he hired fledgling cutter Ralph Rosenblum, who shaped the film into a dynamic twenty-minute short. (Rosenblum would go on to edit Woody Allen's *Annie Hall* [1977], in which Coney Island also plays a major role, and other well-known feature films.)

Kratsas feels that much of the best material was left on the cutting room floor, but its shorter length allowed *Coney Island, U.S.A.* to compete in the shorts category at festivals and for the Oscars.<sup>45</sup> The documentary went on to win "some kind of prize at the [1951] Venice Film Festival" and opened a few months later at the Laurel Theatre in Los Angeles for Academy Award consideration, where one critic praised its "general zest, humor and inventiveness."<sup>46</sup> It also screened in various New York theaters as the short before a feature film.

Although *Coney Island, U.S.A.* avoids the amateurism, roughness, and purposeful bad taste of *Weegee's New York*, it remains indebted to the earlier film in subtle ways. It balances the realistic impulse of *Weegee's Coney Island* short with the more extreme cinematic experimentation of *New York Fantasy*. An arsenal of camera and post-production techniques are used to convey the energy and multifaceted attractions of Coney Island. Fun-house mirrors and other surfaces motivate and even provide the source of refraction for many of these images. "Watch the pretty lights . . . watch the world twist and bend and slide out of shape" incants Henry Morgan, sounding like a sideshow barker. Close-ups edge toward abstraction, even as they emphasize the energy and dynamism of the resort. They distort objects and space. According to Kratsas, Siskind always worked with a 35mm still camera around his neck, even as he was filming *Coney Island* with a Bolex (*Weegee's* own 16mm camera of choice) (fig. 9.9).

Val Sherry's original idea was to show the amusement resort through the eyes of a girl and her younger brother. This use of non-actors was still quite common in documentaries and perhaps also owed something to Vittorio De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves* (1948), in which a father and son move through Rome as they search for the father's stolen bike. Siskind, however, felt that the children would limit what could be shown of Coney Island, and they were dropped on his insistence.<sup>47</sup> This greater freedom is evident from the opening shots of the deserted beaches "when the big city is still in bed." Shots of the deserted boardwalk and rides are followed by the scenes of solitary workmen greasing the roller coaster and other amusement rides, recalling the opening of feature-length city symphony films such as Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929). As the day unfolds, *Coney Island, U.S.A.* emphasized what *Weegee* largely ignored in his earlier film: the rides, Bowery amusements, and sideshow entertainers who worked there. These include Albert-Alberta, who was "half man and half woman"; Jack Donahue, the Human

Automobile Tire"; and burlesque star Tirza (Leona DuVal), with her famed bubble machine and Wine Bath Girl Show (fig. 9.10).<sup>48</sup> There is also Pleasureland, with its old Mutoscope movie of bodybuilder Al Treloar (1905) and the Eden Musée waxworks—specifically, a scene of "The Snyder-Gray Murder," which Weegee had photographed ten years earlier when it was inaccurately labeled "The Ruth Snyder Murder." Asked why he chose to make his first film at Coney Island, Sherry responded, "Coney Island is, per se, a piece of Americana and as such would be interesting as an example of our culture."<sup>49</sup>

Sherry, Siskind, and Rosenblum reveal the garish, carnivalesque Coney Island, but present it in an elegantly exuberant way. Movement flows across cuts, with shots sequenced into brief scenes that quickly give way to other locales. Although this densely edited film frequently offers a rapid succession of fragmentary close-ups and point-of-view structures, it never shows actual people looking at these sideshow performers. Rather, the painted wooden faces and plaster figures that populated the Bowery amusements seem to be watching the performers. This attenuates the voyeurism that Weegee emphasized with his shots of leering older men. Consistent with its focus on the sights and sounds of Coney Island rather than the people who come to be amused, the film offers only one brief scene of beachgoers (including a few shots of embracing couples). The relative absence of people taking in the sights is filled by the moviegoer. This is also evident in the way the film narrator's own "spiel" is matched by the location sound gathered with concealed microphones, which features the spiels of Coney Island's barkers. As film viewers, we are, like the Coney Island amusement goers, feasting our eyes on a world of spectacle.

Did Morris Engel see *Coney Island, U.S.A.*? One must assume so. Was he aware of the film project during its production? Given that he apparently was toying with the idea of a film at Coney Island soon after his departure from *PM* in 1947, it seems probable, since he and Siskind remained members of the Photo League until its demise. Engel wanted to make a film about a young boy who runs away to Coney Island—a premise not entirely different from Val Sherry's initial idea. Of course, such ideas were in the air—creative variants of *The Quiet One* as well as *Bicycle Thieves*. Engel was accustomed to working collaboratively with writers on his assignments and looked for a collaborator on this new undertaking. He turned to his friend Raymond Abrashkin, who was "specializing in magazine articles about children, children's records and children's plays at the Provincetown Playhouse."<sup>50</sup> Likewise born in Brooklyn, "Ray" had been the education editor for *PM*, where the two had worked together. Abrashkin hesitated for almost a year before agreeing to collaborate on the screenplay, in which Joey is tricked into thinking he killed his older brother, Lenny, and flees to Coney Island. They tried to finance the project based on the script, entitled *Two Brothers*, and an eleven-minute documentary short, *The Farm They Won*, that Engel had recently completed. He had shot the film with a lightweight, handheld 35mm camera while taking stills for an article in *Ladies' Home Journal*.<sup>51</sup> Potential investors were frequently skeptical about the viability of *Two Brothers* as a feature, but by May 1952 Engel and Abrashkin had roughly half of their thirty-thousand-dollar budget.<sup>52</sup>

After a long search auditioning numerous child professionals, Engel and Abrashkin (who had assumed the screen name of Ray Ashley) finally found their young star on a Coney Island merry-go-round in early July. Six-year-old Richie Andrusco was there for the day with his sixteen-year-old brother. Although Morris and Ray had quickly secured his parents' agreement and started production, they did not submit a parental consent

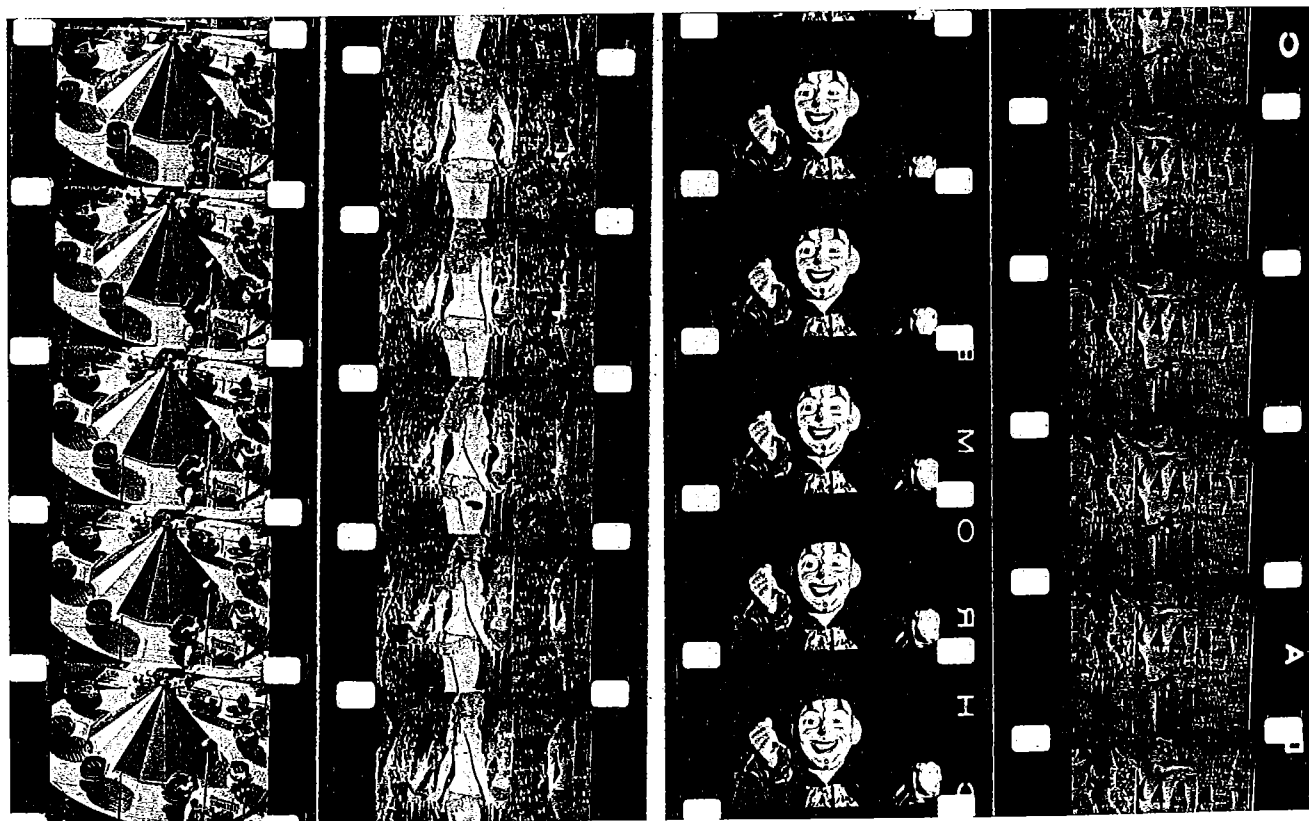


form to the New York City's Mayor's Office until July 21.<sup>53</sup> It was perhaps not coincidental that this was the day that Richie turned seven. In return, they received a permit for Richie to give one "evening performance" from four to seven P.M. "playing the role of young child playing on the beach."<sup>54</sup> The permit was just sufficient to gain the city's official blessing. More important authorization came when the Coney Island Chamber of Commerce wrote a letter of introduction and support on behalf of Morris Engel Enterprises, urging cooperation with the filmmakers: "Much good will come to Coney Island from their efforts and it is our wish that our people cooperate to the fullest."<sup>55</sup>

Engel, who filmed in 35mm black and white with a silent, battery-operated hand-held camera, preferred to work with a two-person crew (often Engel and his camera assistant, who carried battery belts and film magazines). This made it possible to work with a concealed camera, so as not to draw the attention of Coney Island's visitors. Not only could they operate below the radar of officialdom on what could appear to be a home-movie basis, but Engel's handheld, available-light cinematography also gave the film a powerful sense of improvisation and immediacy. Likewise, as Engel later remarked, it was not always clear who was directing the long Coney Island section of the picture. Sometimes it was Engel, and sometimes it was Richie, who just did what he wanted to do. The line between fiction and documentary was blurred.

Problems arose repeatedly. Morris and Ray had originally hired a professional film editor who dismissed the footage as uncuttable. Ruth Orkin, a photographer and Engel's girlfriend, soon took over the role of organizing the dailies and became the editor because,

**Fig. 9.10** *Coney Island, U.S.A.* Film stills (original in color). Produced and directed by Valentine Sherry; camera: Carroll Siskind, 1951. Collection of Lynn Ahrens.



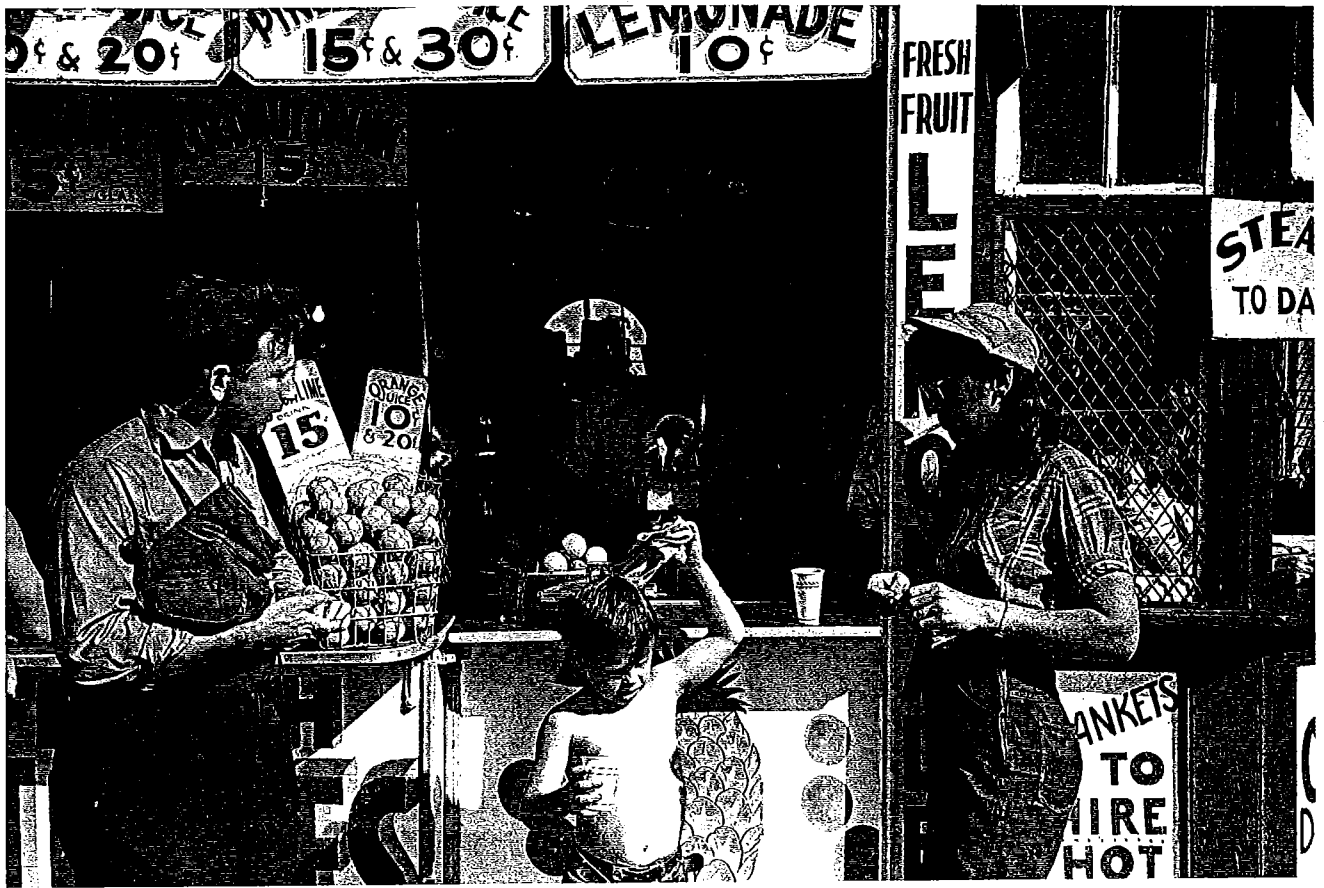
as Engel later explained, she understood the footage.<sup>56</sup> Her editing perfectly matched Engel's shooting style: it was improvisational and loose, with occasional jump cuts—for instance, when Richie eats watermelon.<sup>57</sup> Although there was an effort to take location sound, along the lines of *Coney Island, U.S.A.*, the results proved unsatisfactory. Following the lead of Italian Neo-Realist filmmakers, they recorded the entire sound in the studio: dubbed dialogue, Foley effects, and solo harmonica from February into April 1953.<sup>58</sup> Sadly, Ashley was stricken with ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease) over the course of the filming, limiting his participation during production and post-production.

Each member of the core collective received his or her own credit: screenplay, Ray Ashley; cinematography, Morris Engel; and [picture] editing, Ruth Orkin. The three then collectively shared the "writing and directing" credit. Certainly, Orkin was not only in the cutting room: she was often on location, taking numerous production stills and also appearing in some of those taken at Coney Island (fig. 9.11). In any case, Engel and Ashley also shared the producer credit. The film's title was also changed from *Two Brothers* to *Little Fugitive* as post-production neared completion.<sup>59</sup> The three collaborators each owned a part of the film, but it was unclear whether anyone would receive recompense. Potential distributors found the film to be hopelessly uncommercial. Fortunately, Joseph Burstyn, who distributed various Italian Neo-Realist films, including *Bicycle Thieves* with Arthur Mayer, helped to get the film into the Venice Film Festival, where it won a Silver Lion, launching its success.

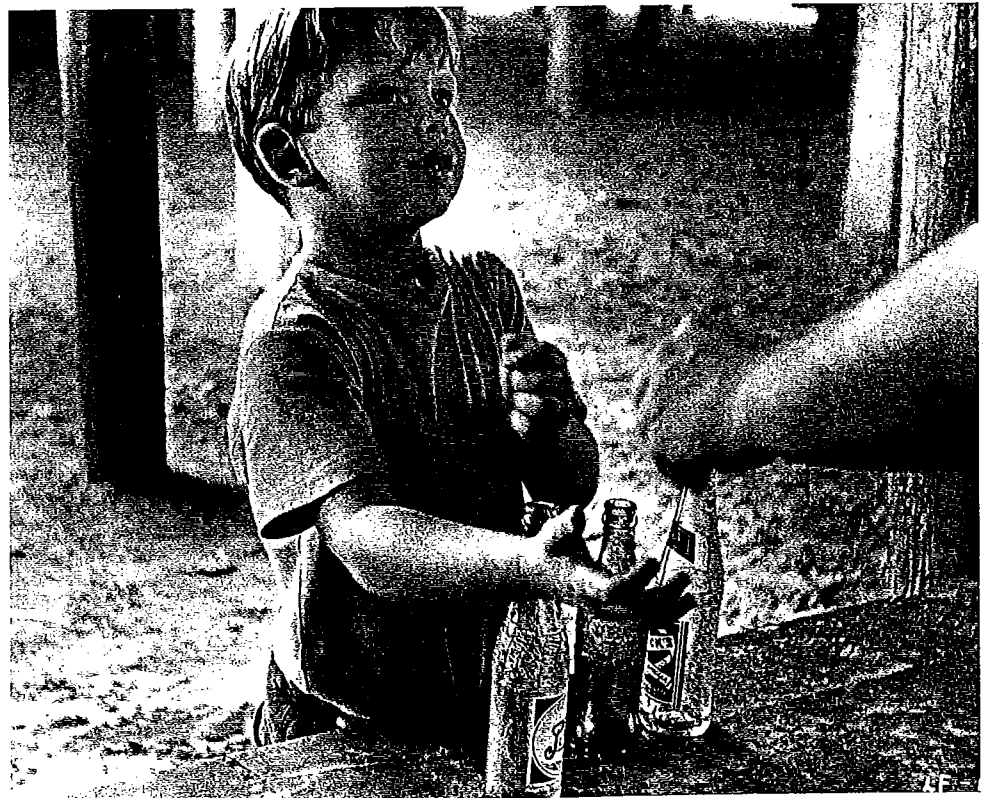
Joey, played by Richie Andrusco, flees to Coney Island, thinking that he had killed his older brother, Lenny. Scared and haunted by this traumatic event, he gradually recovers and learns not only how to play, but how to survive at this amusement resort. He finds soda bottles and turns them in for refunds so he can take pony rides and eat (fig. 9.12). He explores this new world and learns how to master it, just as he eventually learns how to knock over the bottles at one of the arcade games. By the time Lenny comes to retrieve him, Joey has achieved a new level of independence. In the process, we come to see and feel Coney Island from Joey's perspective. We inhabit his world.

These three films form a Coney Island triptych, offering distinct visions that resonate with each other. *Coney Island, U.S.A.* follows a convention of the city symphony film, opening at daybreak with shots of deserted beaches as the city sleeps and ending with the resort's nightlife. Weegee's *Coney Island* offers a more delimited time frame, beginning at midday but ending with the setting sun and Coney Island at night. Engel gives us the same kinds of scenes in *Little Fugitive*, but they are subsumed by a larger narrative: about two-thirds of the way through the film, Richie falls asleep next to the Coney Island boardwalk and wakes up to see the deserted beaches in the morning. Each picture offers a distinctive set of male, age-specific point-of-view structures. With *Little Fugitive*, we see Coney Island through a young boy's eyes—what scares him, what obsesses him, and what he just accepts and seeks to understand. This differs from Siskind's adult fascination with Coney Island, which includes Tirza and Albert-Alberta. Here the viewer becomes an omniscient surrogate who takes in the resort's many sights. Both differ from the comic but discomfiting voyeurism of aging men, who stare too long and too intensely at scantily clothed women and embracing couples, which is Weegee's own surrealist self-inscription.

All three men moved from photographing Coney Island to filming it, always expressing their love for a place that fascinated them. As the epigraphs that begin this essay



**Fig. 9.11** *Little Fugitive*. Production still (with Morris Engel, Richie Andrusco, and Ruth Orkin). 1953. A Morris Engel Production. Orkin/Engel Film and Photo Archive, New York.



**Fig. 9.12** *Little Fugitive*. Production still. 1953. A Morris Engel Production. Orkin/Engel Film and Photo Archive, New York.

make clear, their still pictures and their motion pictures were intimately connected. Sharing the same subject matter, the move from one medium to another involved significant changes.<sup>60</sup> It inspired Siskind to produce a dense, wide-ranging, and remarkably accomplished inventory of images, in which Coney Island seems to be looking at itself, even as we look at the film. In his Coney Island motion picture, Weegee repeatedly cites his earlier photographs, even as he used popular songs to provide an ironic tension that he had previously provided through captions and accompanying text. Although color offered new means for conveying bad taste, his film had nevertheless become more introspective—a semi-comic and semi-angry, baffled reflection on his own advancing age. Without children, he sees himself in the lonely old men ogling young girls they will never know more intimately. He then seeks to escape this equivalence by embracing new forms of artistic experimentation. In his early photographs, Engel revealed a quiet delight in being at one with his subjects—being truly at home at Coney Island's beaches. He offered ephemeral epiphanies. Fifteen years later, he retained that sense of shared intimacy and identity (fig. 9.13). Not unlike Joey the little fugitive, who was told that he had shot and killed his brother, Engel had been told that he was part of an un-American, even criminal organization: the Photo League.<sup>61</sup> Coney Island had also become his escape. Perhaps this was true for all three photographer-filmmakers. As the Red Scare and Cold War intensified, they found new meaning in the place that had only recently embodied the new confidence of working-class people: Coney Island had become a place of refuge and subtle nostalgia.

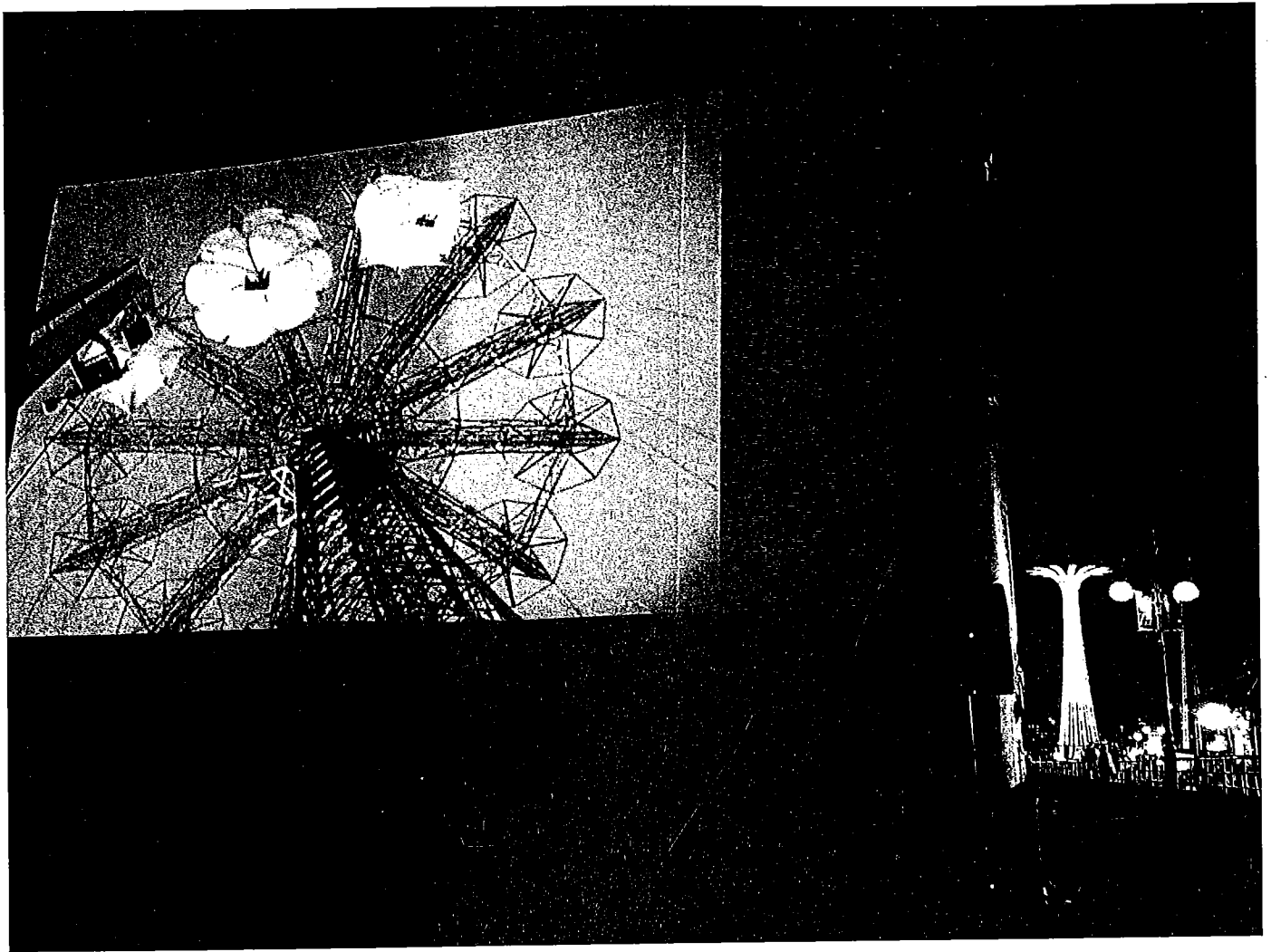


Fig. 9.13 Mary Engel (born 1961), [Screening "*Little Fugitive*" at Coney Island], 2013. Photograph. Orkin/Engel Film and Photo Archive, New York.

12. The Production Code was a self-regulatory response to protests by religious groups and social reformers against the perceived cultural deprivation of Hollywood. The first part of the code addressed "General Principals" for the treatment of morality; the second part focused on particular subjects that were forbidden from appearing on-screen. It was not until 1934, when Joseph Breen's Production Code Administration pressured studios to submit their films to a board for review and official approval, that the code was actually enforced. Richard Maltby, "The Production Code and the Hays Office," in Tino Balio, *Grand Design: Hollywood as a Modern Business Enterprise, 1930-1939* (Berkeley: University of California, 1993), 37-72. For more on how Hollywood engaged the Great Depression, see Lary May, *The Big Tomorrow: Hollywood and the Politics of the American Way* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 55-99.
  13. Mayme Peak, "Latest Revolution in Moving Pictures is in 'Sets' for Talkies," *Daily Boston Globe*, Nov. 12, 1929, 11; "Greta Garbo's Voice," *New York Times*, Mar. 9, 1930, 122; Maya Cantu and Robin Jaffee Frank, "Notes on Cinema Source, The Nickel Empire," 1-3, files for *Coney Island: Visions of an American Dreamland, 1861-2008*, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art.
  14. Audiences praised Garbo and Bickford's rough-hewn glamour and conflicted display of emotions. "Preview of Garbo Film Makes Hit," *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 12, 1929, A17; Robert E. Sherwood, "Greta Garbo's First Talkie Brings Cheer to Partisans," *Baltimore Sun*, Jan. 5, 1930, MR5; Edwin Schallert, "Garbo Debut Proves Event," *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 24, 1930, A11; Philip K. Scheuer, "A Star Falls to Earth!" *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 26, 1930, B15; Hubbard Keavy, "Garbo Easily Understood in New Talkie," *Baltimore Sun*, Feb. 9, 1930, MR7; Alma Whitaker, "Rugged Heroes Demanded for Screen," *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 29, 1929, B9.
  15. Most of the discussion in the press about location shooting for the film was devoted to the maritime battles that were shot near the Coronado Islands, off San Diego. "Seth Parker Is Breaking RKO Records," *Washington Post*, Nov. 22, 1931, A1.
  16. David J. Skal and Elias Savada, *Dark Carnival: The Secret World of Tod Browning, Hollywood's Master of the Macabre* (New York: Anchor Books, 1995), 11-43.
  17. Robert Bogdan, *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 54-58.
  18. "Dean on Way to New York for New Film," *Universal Weekly*, July 29, 1922, 12; "Plays & Players," *Photoplay*, Oct. 1922, 84.
  19. For example, Prince Randian, the "Human Torso," performed at Coney Island in addition to Huber's Fourteenth Street Museum and carnivals and circuses. The bearded lady, "Lady Olga," performed at Coney Island as well as with Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey and Royal American Shows. Little people Harry and Daisy Earles performed as the "Doll Family" as part of Coney Island's Dreamland Circus Sideshow. Marc Hartzman, *American Sideshow: An Encyclopedia of History's Most Wondrous and Curiously Strange Performers* (London: Penguin, 2005), 116, 138-39, 204, 215-16. Pip and Flip were at Wagner's World Circus Side Show at Coney Island. Oliver Pilat and Jo Ranson, *Sodom by the Sea: An Affectionate History of Coney Island* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Doran, 1941), 189; Edo McCullough, *Good Old Coney Island: A Sentimental Journey into the Past* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1957), 270-72; Bertram Reinitz, "This Year's Show at Coney Island," *New York Times*, July 8, 1928, 110. Peter Robinson met his wife, the "fat lady" Baby Bunny Smith, while working in a Coney Island sideshow; "Marriage Announcement: Living Skeleton Weds Fat Lady," *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 3, 1924, 15.
  20. For the most thorough and incisive scholarly treatment of *Freaks*, see Rachel Adams, *Sideshow U.S.A.: Freaks and the American Cultural Imagination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 60-85.
  21. *Ibid.*, 60-62.
  22. Muriel Babcock, "'Freaks' Rouse Ire and Wonder," *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 14, 1932, B9.
  23. Mae Tineè, "Film of Circus Freaks Is Well Acted, but . . ." *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Apr. 13, 1932, 18. For other negative reactions to the film, see, for example, Philip K. Scheuer, "'Freaks' Film Side Show," *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 15, 1932, 7; for praise of the acting in the film, see, "'Freaks' Is Headline on Palace Bill," *Hartford Courant*, Mar. 12, 1932, 14. For acknowledgment of Browning's innovative story and the film's quality acting, see, "'Freaks' Is Showing at Buckhead Theater," *Atlanta Constitution*, Mar. 1, 1932, 11; and "'Freaks' at Stanley," *Baltimore Sun*, Feb. 20, 1932, 5.
  24. Nelson B. Bell, "Picture-Gazer's Dream Fulfilled by 'Coney Island,'" *Washington Post*, July 15, 1943, 20.
  25. "Coney Island," *Hartford Courant*, July 8, 1943, 7.
  26. "Critic" cited in the review by Norbert Lusk, "'Coney Island' Arouses East's Usual Arguments," *Los Angeles Times*, June 21, 1943, 15.
  27. Bosley Crowther, "'Coney Island,' Another Period Musical Film, with Betty Grable and Geo Montgomery, Opens at the Roxy Theatre," *New York Times*, June 17, 1943, 17; Philip K. Scheuer, "Pin-Up Girl Makes Coney Island Hers," *Los Angeles Times*, June 18, 1943, 15. Grable's performance in "high brown" paint, flanked by a troupe of blackface performers during one of her closing numbers, did not go unnoticed. Some critics saw this as disparaging and a missed opportunity to represent what was ostensibly supposed to be an inclusive, multiracial, and unified home front. See, for example, E. B. Rea, "Hollywood Would Rather Blacken White Faces than Use Hi Brown," *Baltimore Afro-American*, Mar. 20, 1943, 10.
  28. The opening sequence featuring "New York, New York" was shot on location in New York City. Most of the film, however, was shot on the MGM lot. James Sanders, *Celluloid Skyline: New York and the Movies* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), 332.
  29. Bosley Crowther, "'On the Town,' Yuletide Picture at Radio City, Is Musical to Please the Family," *New York Times*, Dec. 9, 1949, 37.
  30. Earl Conrad, "She's Mixed, Merry and Musical," *Chicago Defender*, Apr. 14, 1945, 11. Osato discusses other minority actors who were part of the cast. For a positive review of how the film's many elements worked well as a whole, see Lewis Nichols, "The Play," *New York Times*, Dec. 29, 1944, 11.
- Cameras at Coney, 1940-1953**  
Epigraphs: *Morris Engel: The Independent* (2008), produced and directed by Mary Engel; Jack Kratsas to the author, Apr. 28, 2013.
1. *PM*, June 23, 1940, 11.
  2. Castle Films produced *Coney Island—A Nation's Funland* around 1939 (or may have bought home movie rights for the travelogue from a major studio such as Paramount). See Scott MacGillivray, *Castle Films: A Hobbyist's Guide* (Lincoln, Neb.: iUniverse, 2004), 68.
  3. Robert Moses to Fiorello LaGuardia, Nov. 30, 1937; repr. in *The Improvement of Coney Island, Rockaway and South Beaches* (New York: Department of Parks, 1937), 4.
  4. Mason Klein and Catherine Evans, *The Radical Camera: New York's Photo League, 1936-1951* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).
  5. Weegee, *Weegee: An Autobiography* (New York: Ziff-Davis, 1961), 86.
  6. Weegee, *Naked City* (New York: Essential Books, 1945), 241.
  7. *PM*, June 17, 1940, 15. The *PM* photo shows six children. A separate photo of the boy in the middle of the frame was published by the *New York Times* on the same day (17).
  8. "Yesterday at Coney Island," *PM*, June 17, 1940, 16-17.
  9. "Yesterday at Coney Island . . . Temperature 89 . . . They Came Early, Stayed Late," *PM*, July 22, 1940, 16. An earlier photograph that anticipates Weegee's can be found in Michael Immerso, *Coney Island: The People's Playground* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 149.
  10. See "First Drafts," *WEEGEEWEEGEEWEEGEE*, Oct. 10, 2010, <http://weegeeweegeeweegee.net/2010/10/22/first-drafts/> (accessed Jan. 13, 2013). The different shots reveal his efforts to fill the frame with people so that the beach itself is obscured.
  11. Paul Strand, "A Statement," *Photographs of People by Morris Engel at the New School for Social Research*, Dec. 1-13, 1939.
  12. *PM*, July 21, 1940, 33.

13. For a discussion of Popular Front culture in the United States, with an emphasis on the 1930s, see Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Verso, 1997).
14. Morris Engel, "Interchange," *International Center of Photography*, transcript of panel discussion, Oct. 16, 1977, International Center of Photography Study Center.
15. Lewis Clyde Stoumen, "Function of an Annual," *Photo Notes* (Jan. 1943): 4.
16. *Ibid.*
17. "Murder Is My Business," *Photo Notes* (Sept. 1941): 2.
18. Paul Strand, "Weegee Gives Journalism a Shot of Creative Photography," *PM*, July 22, 1945, M14.
19. "On Coney Island Beach, Sun and Fun Are More Important than Looks," *PM*, July 4, 1940, 26.
20. "Paul Robeson Ballad for Americans Lyrics"; music: Earl Robinson; words: John LaTouche, [http://www.lyricsfreak.com/p/paul+robeson/ballad+for+americans\\_21037092.html](http://www.lyricsfreak.com/p/paul+robeson/ballad+for+americans_21037092.html) (accessed Mar. 24, 2014).
21. The waxwork scene is, in fact, an improper depiction of the "Ruth Snyder Murder," in that it seems to be showing the murder of a woman (i.e., Ruth Snyder). However, Ruth Snyder was in fact the murderer—she and her lover killed her husband.
22. Weegee, "Coney Island Revisited . . . Pictures and Words by Weegee," *PM*, June 9, 1941, 16. This photograph is often incorrectly dated as June 9, 1941—the day it appeared in *PM*.
23. Two pictures from this spread reappeared in *Naked City*: a mother sewing her daughter's pants (while the daughter was in them) and a smiling policeman holding the first "lost child" of the summer season (the child is crying ferociously). Weegee returned to his lost child theme the following month (*PM*, July 20, 1941, 49).
24. Oliver Pilat and Jo Ranson, *Sodom by the Sea: An Affectionate History of Coney Island* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Doran, 1941).
25. Weegee, review of *Sodom by the Sea*, *PM*, July 13, 1941, 43.
26. "Coney Island at Noon Saturday," *PM*, July 5, 1942, 7.
27. Lynn Ahrens, "One Man Show," *Narrative* (Spring 2007), <http://www.narrativemagazine.com/issues/spring-2007/one-man-show> (accessed Mar. 26, 2014).
28. Diana Heller Siskind to the author, Mar. 17, 2013.
29. A Western Union telegram was sent to Weegee—Arthur Fellig, 5 Center Market, NYK on Apr. 19, 1946: "SNDAY BREAKFAST AT ELEVEN. FRIED MATZOHS. PLEASE BRING PICTURES OF CHILD SLEEPING ON FIRE ESCAPE AND OTHER PHOTOS SHOWING POOR HOUSING CONDITIONS. IMPORTANT==DEEN AND CARROLL SISKIND." Weegee Collection, International Center for Photography, New York, acc. no. 21579.1993.
30. Jan-Christopher Horak has written about a number of photographer-filmmakers, including Helen Levitt, in *Making Images Move: Photographers and Avant-Garde Cinema* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997).
31. "Weegee's People," *PM*, Nov. 10, 1946, M10–11.
32. "Weegee Tries His Hand with Flickers," *PM*, Feb. 9, 1947, M18.
33. "Mr. Weegee Shoots the Works," *PM*, Mar. 14, 1948, 18.
34. The first reel began with the Feast of San Gennaro, a scene that does not exist in the currently circulating print.
35. Scott MacDonald, *Cinema 16: Documents Toward a History of the Film Society* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002).
36. "Civilization," lyrics by Bob Hilliard and Carl Sigman. The recording by Louls Prima and his orchestra was made in July 1947 for RCA Victor.
37. Rudolf Friml and Catherine Chisholm Cushing, "Amour Toujours l'Amour (Love Everlasting)," copyright 1922. The Richard Crooks recording was released by RCA in 1930 (HMV—DA1142).
38. Allie Wrubel—Charles Newman, "Why Don't We Do This More Often?" Columbia (36253 [1941]).
39. A. H. Weiler, "By Way of Report," *New York Times*, Nov. 26, 1950, X5; Jack Kratsas to the author, Apr. 28, 2013.
40. Kratsas to the author, Apr. 28, 2013.
41. Weiler, "By Way of Report," X5.
42. Kratsas to the author, Apr. 28, 2013. Carroll Siskind was not able to receive a cinematography credit because he was not in the proper union. However, there were other credits available (such as associate producer) if Sherry had wished to more adequately acknowledge Siskind's contribution.
43. *Ibid.*
44. *Ibid.* See also Wikipedia, "Henry Morgan (comedian)," [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry\\_Morgan\\_%28comedian%29](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Morgan_%28comedian%29) (accessed Mar. 26, 2014).
45. Kratsas to the author, Apr. 28, 2013; "Laurel to Show 'Coney Island,'" *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 15, 1951, 8.
46. Philip K. Scheuer, "'Emperor's Nightingale' Endearing Puppet Movie," *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 21, 1951, B7. In fact, Scheuer's skepticism about the nature of the prize was not unfounded, since it goes unreported in trade journals and elsewhere.
47. Kratsas to the author, Apr. 28, 2013. To offer one example: in *A People's Convention* (Union Films, 1948), the filmmakers have us experience the 1948 Progressive Party's national convention in Philadelphia through a surrogate named Joe.
48. "Tirza, Mother Burned When Cleaning Fluid Explodes," *Billboard*, Sept. 11, 1948, 59.
49. A. H. Weiler, "By Way of Report," *New York Times*, Nov. 26, 1950, X5.
50. Norton and Condon, Inc., "FYI—Little Fugitive," [1953], Morris Engel Archive, New York. Abrashkin was then scripting the comic strip daily *Timmy*, which was centered on a young boy coping with his somewhat oblivious parents. (Wikipedia, "Raymond Abrashkin," [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raymond\\_Abrashkin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raymond_Abrashkin) [accessed May 29, 2013]; Lambiek Comiclopedia, "Howard Sparber," [http://www.lambiek.net/artists/s/sparber\\_howard.htm](http://www.lambiek.net/artists/s/sparber_howard.htm) [accessed May 29, 2013].) The comic strip started in 1947 and was distributed by the Chicago Tribune—New York News Syndicate from 1949 to 1959.
51. Richard Lauterbach, "Homesteaders 1950," *Ladies Home Journal*, Oct. 1950, 207–12ff. A successful left-leaning journalist who had worked for *Time* magazine in Europe during World War II, Lauterbach died from polio in Sept. 1950: this was likely one of his last assignments.
52. Basil N. Bass to Howard Cullman, May 8, 1952, Engel Archive. Cullman, known as a savvy investor in Broadway plays along with his wife, Marguerite W. Cullman, declined to invest (Cullman to Bass, May 19, 1952, Engel Archive). However, Viola Bernard, a psychiatrist and wealthy widow, contributed \$2,000 in late June, a week before shooting commenced (Viola W. Bernard to Abrashkin, June 27, 1952, Engel Archive).
53. Richie's parents received fifty dollars on July 3 (receipt for fifty dollars from Morris Engel by Mr. and Mrs. S[alvatore] Andrusco, July 3, 1952, Engel Archive). Engel has indicated that they filmed from early July through Labor Day 1952.
54. Consent for Employment, Use or Exhibition of Child, for Richard Andrusco, July 21, 1952; permit dated July 23, 1952, Engel Archive.
55. William A. Nicholson, letter of introduction, July 8, 1952, Engel Archive.
56. A 35mm Moviola and other editing equipment were purchased on July 22 for \$438.90, indicating the moment this transition was likely instituted (Camera Mart, receipt for Morris Engel, July 22, 1952, Engel Archive).
57. No wonder Orkin and Morris got married on Nov. 10, 1954: his cinematography and her editing suggested that this was a match made in heaven!
58. Agreement between Magno Sound, Inc., and Morris Engel Productions, Feb. 2, 1953; receipt for Eddy Manson for background music, Mar. 30, 1953, Engel Archive.
59. Samuel Tannenbaum to Harrington Harlow, Apr. 7, 1953, Engel Archive, indicates that the new and final title for the film had been agreed upon.
60. *Morris Engel: The Independent* (2008), produced and directed by Mary Engel.
61. Engel had been a naval combat photographer during World War II.