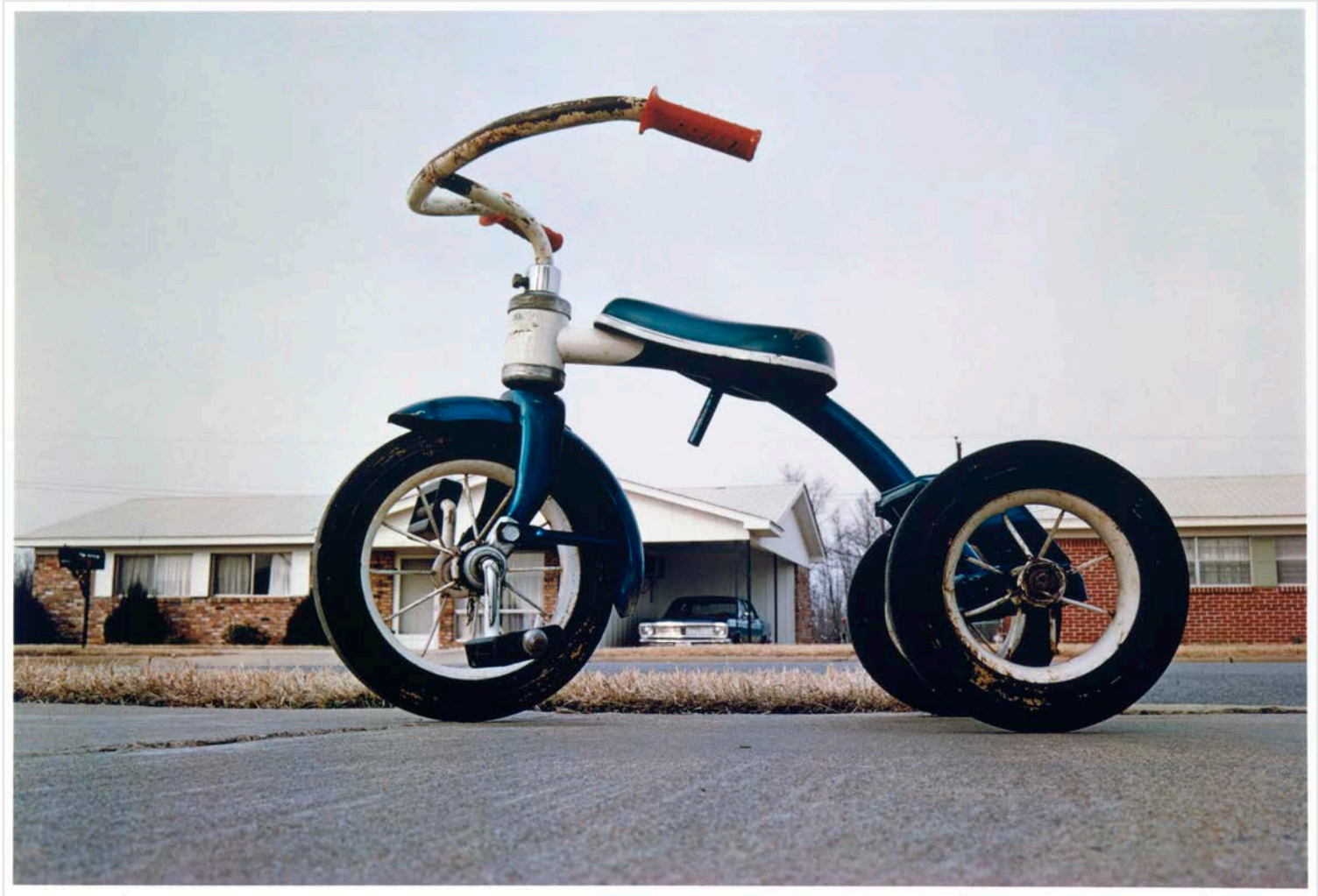


Point of View

PoV

PoV

One of the first things that comes to mind when we think about photographic PoV (point of view) is a *low vs. high angle of view*. While this is not our only consideration, it is at the heart of the concept. Extremely low or high points of view can create unexpected formal compositions or serve conceptual purposes. In his 1969 image of a tricycle, William Eggleston uses the simple gesture of getting onto the ground, at a point of view even lower than the eye-level of the tricycle's owner, to make a relatively small object seem like the most important thing in the world. Because of the low angle and the varying distances of these objects (tricycle, car, house) to the camera, the child's bike dwarfs the car visible between its wheels, speaking about the ways in which children and family life dominated suburbia in mid-20th century America.



William Eggleston
Memphis
c. 1969

PoV

Low Angle of View: Subject

Jacques-Henri Lartigue (1894-1986) was a French photographer and painter noted for the spontaneous, joyful photographs he took beginning in his boyhood and continuing throughout his life. Lartigue's boyhood photographs were almost always candid images taken of his family and friends.

Lartigue employed a low angle of view by necessity when he began making images as a child, and throughout his career he continued to exploit this PoV, creating a tension that went hand-in-hand with his use of photographic motion and fast shutter-speeds.

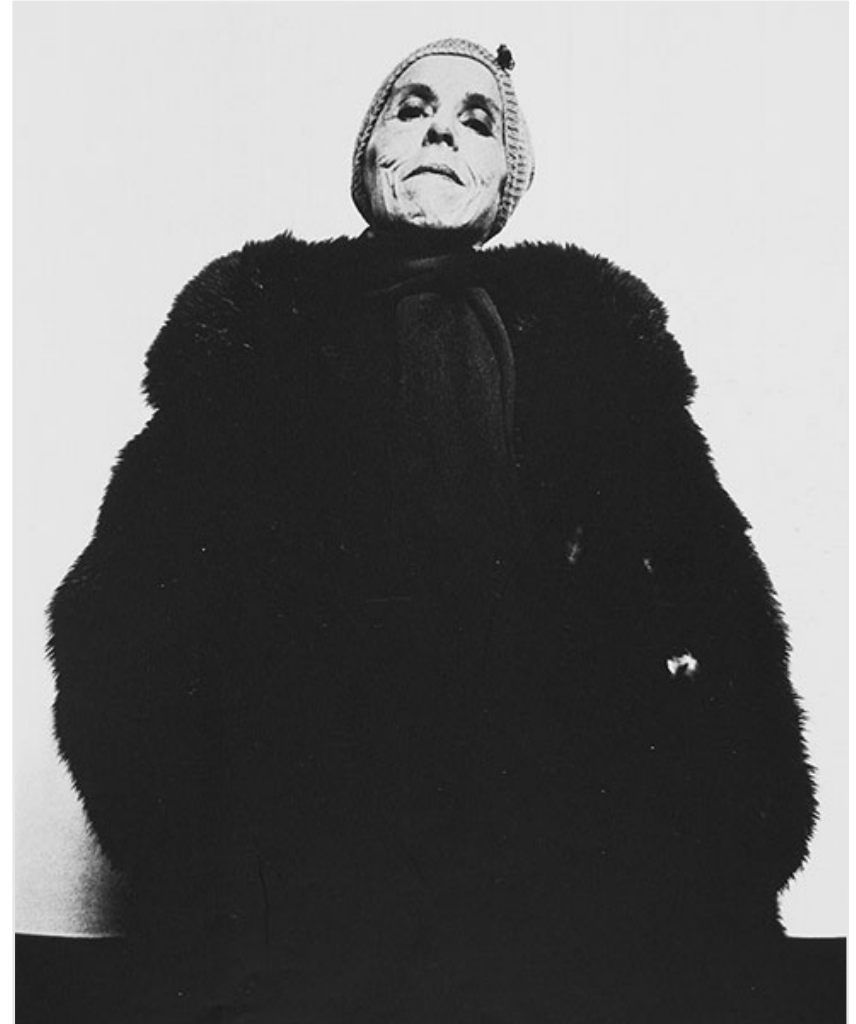
Lartigue, a sports lover and gifted tennis player, had a passion for capturing people and things in mid-air, and many of his most magical pictures immortalize the balletic gestures of amateurs and champions on the tennis courts.



Jacques Henri Lartigue
Tennis Training in Nice
1915

Low angles can heroize subjects. The "hero pose," including a low angle of view (and a wistful yet powerful, up-and-away gaze off into the distance), has been used throughout the history of painting and photography, for both art and propaganda purposes--to depict leaders, celebrities, and royalty.

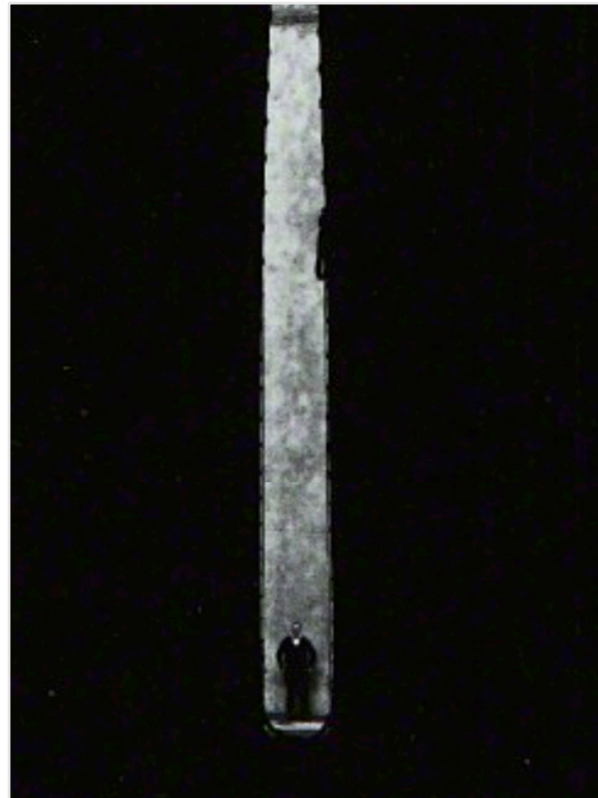
When Richard Avedon photographed 73 year-old Danish author Isak Dineson (née Baroness Karen Christenze von Blixen-Finecke) in 1953, he was struck by her diminutive stature and frailty, and the way in which these were at odds with her formidable strength, talent, and personality. He adopted a low angle of view and direct eye contact between subject and lens for this portrait to counter this impression. This, at the time, was a rarity in portraits of women.



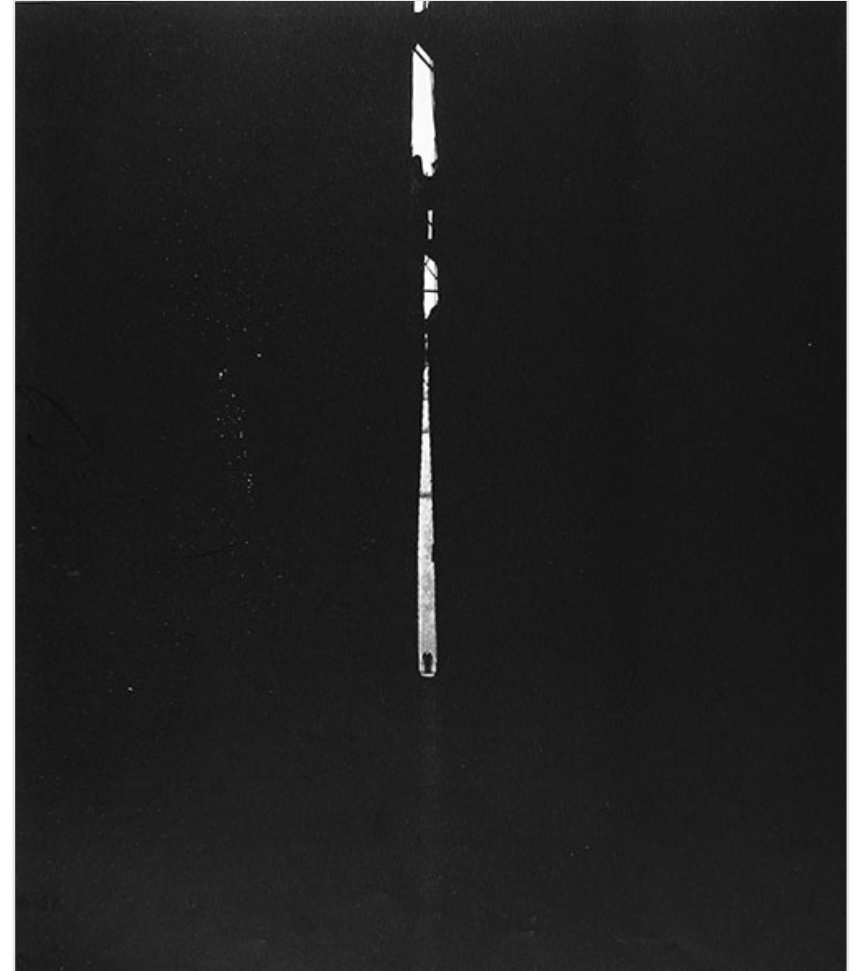
Richard Avedon
Isak Dineson (from *Minneapolis Portfolio*)
1953

PoV

This image of the architect Bob Fine by Harry Callahan makes use of both scale and dramatic silhouetting to create an unorthodox take on a portrait. Callahan placed his subject at the end of an urban alley and exposed for the narrow opening between the buildings, silhouetting the forms themselves and playing with our perception of positive and negative space. Note the way that the sliver of light becomes like a needle down the center of the frame, and Fine becomes the eye of that needle.



Bob Fine (Detail)



Harry Callahan
Bob Fine
Chicago, 1952

While his photograph of Bob Fine situates its subject at a distance that results in him taking up only a tiny fraction of the frame, one of Callahan's most famous portraits of his wife and muse Eleanor takes a vastly different approach, filling the frame with her flesh and creating a different kind of abstraction through fragmentation, an overhead PoV, and a reductive and high-key approach to tonality.



Harry Callahan
Eleanor, Chicago
1947

PoV

The point of view we choose for photographing a subject affects the viewer's perception of that subject but can also affect the viewer's perception of self, placing them in the proverbial shoes of another, using a first-person PoV.

Herbert Gehr made a variety of work for *Life* magazine in the 1940's and 50's, including these images which illustrated an article about stages of child development. Here, Gehr takes a decidedly cinematic approach. Note the way in which the wide angle lens used on the left further distorts our perception, expanding space in a way that might mimic a small child's sense of largeness in a small room.



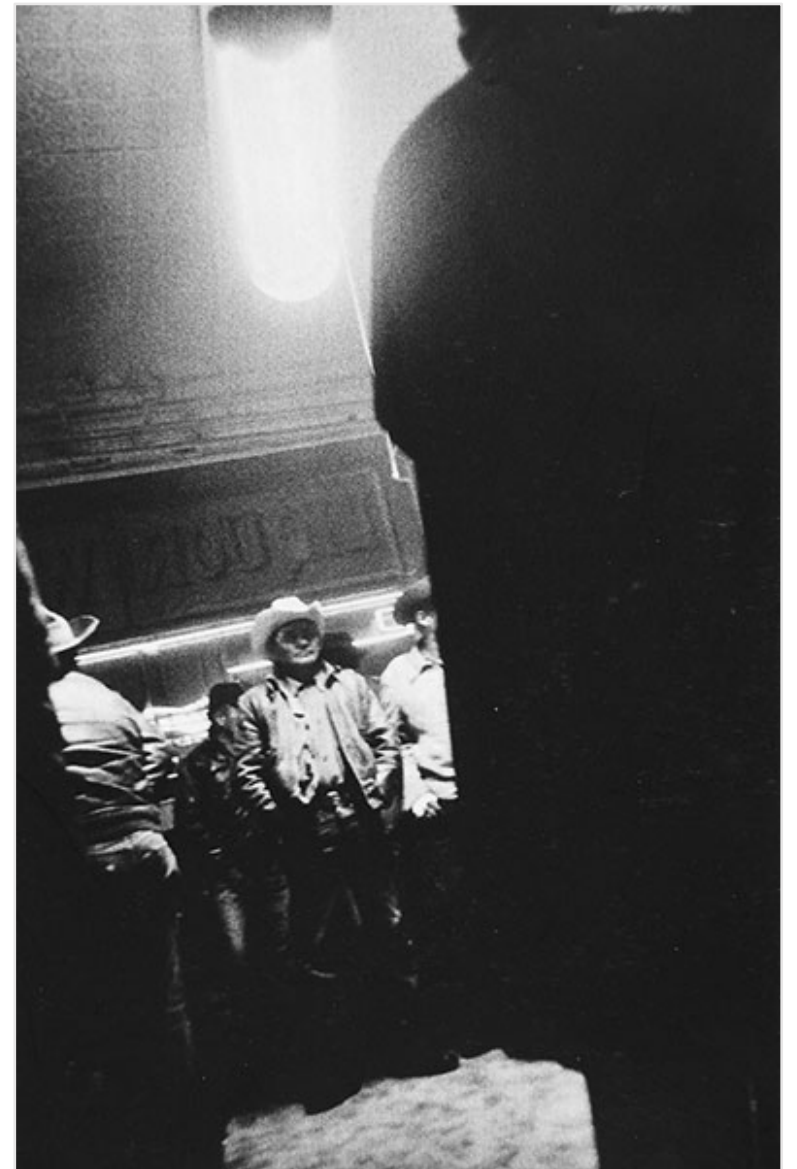
Herbert Gehr

Images for *Life* magazine piece on
child psychology and development
Late 1940's

PoV

In the 1950's Swiss artist Robert Frank photographed across the U.S. on a Guggenheim fellowship, and the project eventually became *The Americans*, a landmark book of photographs published in France in 1958 and the U.S. in 1959.

When he made this image in a New Mexico bar in 1955, he was tentative, as an outsider, about conspicuously putting his camera up to his eye. Instead, he shot discreetly "from the hip." The resulting low angle, tilted horizon, and fragmented composition reflects the photographer's sense of uncertainty and perhaps danger.



Robert Frank
Bar, Gallup, New Mexico, from The Americans
1955

Over the winter and spring of 1927–28, Bauhaus professor László Moholy-Nagy took a series of perhaps nine views looking down from the Berlin Radio Tower, one of the most exciting new constructions in the German capital. Moholy-Nagy had already photographed the Eiffel Tower in Paris from below, looking up through the tower's soaring girders. In Berlin, however, Moholy-Nagy turned his camera around and pointed it straight down at the ground. This plunging perspective showed off the spectacular narrowness of the Radio Tower, finished in 1926, which rose vertiginously to a height of 450 feet from a base seven times smaller than that of its Parisian predecessor (which opened in 1889).

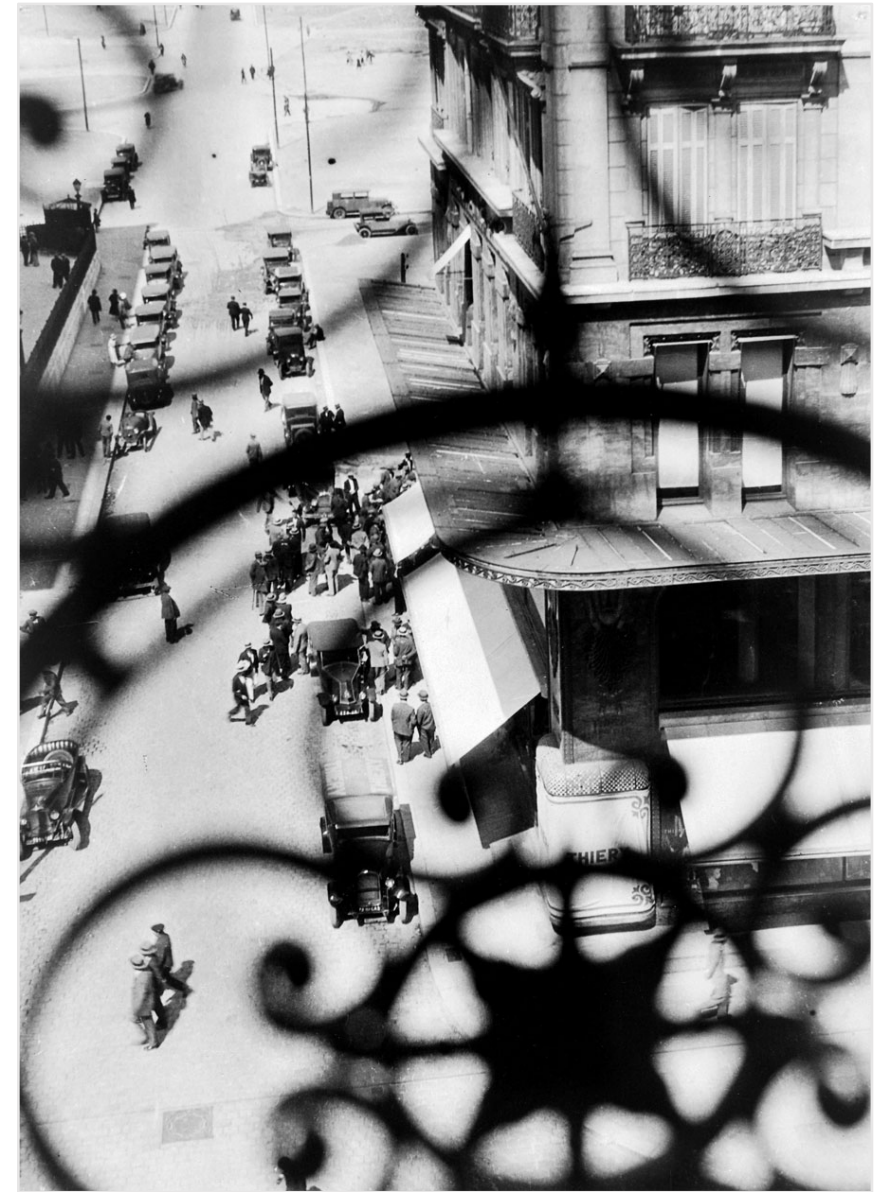
This image, and the way in which it reduces the objects around the Tower into abstracted shapes, reflects a growing interest in photographic abstraction among the European Modernist photographers of the early 20th century.



László Moholy-Nagy
Radio Tower Berlin
1928

PoV

Another way to explore PoV in your photographic images is to look through one object or space into another, as Moholy-Nagy does here.



László Moholy-Nagy
*La Canebière Street, Marseilles – View Through the
Balcony Grille*
1928

PoV

Scale, distance to camera, and positioning of objects relative to each other in the frame play major roles in how we can use PoV to create unique compositions and (often witty) relationships that are distinctively photographic in nature.



Reed Estabrook
Image from *The Art of Photography*
c. 1974

ASSIGNMENT: IMAGES DUE 10/29/20

- Shoot at least 30 images of a single object, each from a different point of view.
- Shoot at least 30 images of a single subject (person), each from a different point of view.
- Pay attention not only to angle of view, but scale and positioning of elements within the frame in terms of how they relate to each other
- Attempt to create a completely new interpretation of the person/thing you photograph with each different image, and consider employing some of the following: *low angles, high angles, abstracting or fragmenting the subject/object, making the subject/object take up a very large or very small part of the frame, positioning the subject/object in relation to others at different distances from the camera to create deliberate, unexpected, dramatic, or witty compositions.*
- Remember that these images will be converted into B&W when we process them in class. We always shoot in color, but consider tonal contrast and form here as you make your images, attempting to pre-visualize them in B&W.