

The Museum of Modern Art

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PUBLIC RELATIONS

THE EFFECT OF THE MEDIA ON EVENTS

PUBLIC RELATIONS, a group of photographs by Garry Winogrand, will be on view in the first-floor galleries of The Museum of Modern Art from October 18 through December 11. Guest Director for the exhibition is the photographer Tod Papageorge, who has also written the Introduction to the book that accompanies the exhibition.* After its New York showing, the exhibition will circulate nationally.

PUBLIC RELATIONS is the result of a photographic project undertaken by Garry Winogrand in 1969, when he was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship to photograph what he called "the effect of media on events." But, as Tod Papageorge notes, "Winogrand meant more than he said, and, after working for five years on this project, he had accomplished more than he had probably meant."

The subjects of these photographs are those many events that, taken together, offer a mosaic of the fevers and fervors of an extraordinary decade. Tod Papageorge observes: "With what could be described as passion, fury, and a crone's curiosity, Winogrand photographed marches, rallies, press conferences, games, strikes, demonstrations, moratoria, funerals, parades, award ceremonies, dinners, museum openings, victory celebrations, a birthday party, and one moon shot.

"For Winogrand these events all shared the fact that they were public occasions, and that they had been called to order as much for the benefit of the media that recorded them as for the direct pleasure or ritual relief of those participating in them. What Winogrand has captured in these pictures

*Public Relations. By Garry Winogrand. Introduction by Tod Papageorge. 112 pages. 74 photographs. Clothbound \$14.95; Paperbound \$9.95. Published by The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Distributed by New York Graphic Society, Boston.

is the collective hysteria that locked us into 'the Sixties,' until 1972, when the economy seemed to resign, or until 1974, when Richard Nixon actually did. Such a description, however, simplifies the drama Winogrand has extorted from what seems to be a long series of follies. For what he has given us in these photographs is a unilateral report of how we behaved under pressure during a time of costumes and causes, and of how extravagantly, outrageously, and continuously we displayed what we wanted."

Garry Winogrand began to photograph in 1948, at the age of twenty. Until 1969 he worked as a photojournalist and advertising photographer in New York City, and since that time has taught photography, most recently at the University of Texas in Austin. He has received several major awards for his photography, including a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts and two Guggenheim Fellowships. His work has appeared in many group exhibitions at The Museum of Modern Art, most notably in "Five Unrelated Photographers" (1963) and "New Documents" (1967). In 1969 a book of his photographs, The Animals, was published by the Museum in conjunction with a one-man exhibition of his work.

This exhibition has been made possible by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Arts and Research Foundation.

The Museum of Modern Art's exhibition program is made possible in part with public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts, a state agency whose funds are recommended by the Governor and appropriated by the State Legislature.

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WALL LABEL

In 1969, Garry Winogrand was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship to photograph what he called the "effect of the media on events," and, until 1973, he worked energetically on the project. With a few exceptions, the photographs in this exhibition were taken at that time, while Winogrand, armed with what could be described as passion, fury, and a crone's curiosity, photographed marches, rallies, press conferences, games, strikes, demonstrations, moratoria, funerals, parades, award ceremonies, dinners, museum openings, victory celebrations, a birthday party, and one moon shot.

For Winogrand these events all shared the fact that they were public occasions, and that they had been called to order as much for the benefit of the media that recorded them as for the direct pleasure or ritual relief of those participating in them. This, at least, is what interested him when he started the project. In fact, he seems to have thought of many of these events as scenes of portage to which machinery was carried, dropped into place, started, stopped, and picked up and carried away again after having filmed and taped a predictable sequence of speeches, cheers, and songs.

By the late 1960s many of us had learned the cues and techniques of public performance. Although Americans have always tended to improvise their social arrangements--at least those more complicated than the ones required to conduct business--at that particular time in our history even the unacknowledged systems of checks and balances that ordinarily help us distinguish our public from our private lives were willfully ignored. For if most of us were managing to lead what we thought of as "normal lives"--and as many of the photographs in this exhibition reveal, were taking a fierce pleasure in doing 'so--it was the most cruelly significant event of that time, the Vietnam War, that seemed to shape what we were.

Winogrand would say that his project had little to do with the war, and that what he was interested in was the extraordinary relationship that existed between the media and

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public occasions. Nevertheless, what he could not disagree with is the evidence his pictures present of the collective hysteria that locked us into "the Sixties," until 1972, when the economy seemed to resign, or until 1974, when Richard Nixon actually did. Such a description, however, simplifies the drama Winogrand has extorted from what seems to have been a long series of follies. For what he has given us in these photographs is a unilateral report of how we behaved under pressure during a time of costumes and causes, and of how extravagantly, outrageously, and continuously we displayed what we wanted.

Tod Papageorge

From the book, Public Relations,
The Museum of Modern Art, 1977

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Thomas Consilvio made the prints for the exhibition. The GAF Corporation donated the paper on which the prints were made.

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