



**Mary Panzer Explores Street Vendor Portraits**  
**PHSNE meeting, Sunday, March 7<sup>th</sup>, 7:30 P.M., via Zoom**



Mary Panzer’s presentation focuses on a form of commercial portraiture practiced around the globe from the 1930s through the 1970s. “I learned about these street vendor portraits from Andrew Eskind, who discovered over one million negatives created by the Fox Movie Flash company in San Francisco which were do-

nated to the archives of Visual Studies Workshop (VSW) in Rochester, NY in the 1970s, but otherwise unexplored. With the magic of a digital scanner, Eskind brought about 100,000 of these negatives came back to life.”

Using a special camera, the street photographer shoots first, then offers a numbered card with a pitch, “See yourself in motion, as others see you!” For a small fee, the subject gets his/her print (identified by number) in a day or two.

Subjects always appear at full-length, in motion, roughly centered and clearly identified within the surrounding public



Czernowitz, Poland, 1930s

space. These conventions hold true regardless of the race, gender or class of the subject or the photographer or when the image was made. A couple caught by a street vendor photographer in pre-war Czernowitz, Poland looks a lot like one snapped in 1960s San Francisco or pre-apartheid South Africa.

Flea markets sell only the ones that were approved and purchased by the subjects, but rare archives, like VSW’s, include the out-takes. One at a time, these anonymous images show a subject and photographer in perfect balance. In quantity, they offer unmatched records of the public sphere where the images were made. The images for this talk come from San Francisco, Cape-town, South Africa, and Czernowitz, Poland; some are from private collections.



Cape Town, South Africa, ca 1960

For over thirty years, Mary Panzer has studied photography and American culture. From 1992-2000 she was Curator of Photographs at the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery. She divides her time between Rochester, NY and Manhattan. Panzer has written about Richard Avedon, Mathew Brady, Lewis Hine, Stanley Kubrick and *LIFE* Magazine and is co-author of *Things as They Are: Photojournalism in Context Since 1955*.

The link to the Zoom meeting will be sent a few days before the meeting.

## Adding to the Discussion and Correcting the Record: A Letter From a PHSNE Member

Dear Snap Shots Editor:

I enjoyed the article in the February *Snap Shots: View-Master Successful after Redesign*. However, as a long time View-Master fan and collector, I have to beg to differ with some of the information.

It begins by stating that a BULKY version of the View-Master was introduced at the 1939 World's Fair in New York City, and that it was mainly used by PHOTOGRAPHERS. Although originally only sold in camera stores, the View-Master was always intended for the GENERAL PUBLIC to be able to see the scenic wonders of the USA, and the world, in full color Kodachrome, which was relatively new in 1939. This was much more of a novelty, as the average snapshooters at the time were taking black and white prints.

The first model View-Master viewer (Model A) that was introduced in 1939 was not bulky at all! It was no bigger, and not heavier than the model designed by



Model C View-Master Viewer 1947-1955

Charles Harrison referred to in the article. However, this first model opened up like a clamshell, the View-Master reel had to be placed on the half with a spindle in the center, and then closed for viewing. The material it was made from was prone to warp. This was improved with the Model B viewer introduced in 1944. It was more robust, but still had the clamshell design.

The third model View-Master viewer (Model C) was the first model to have a slot to simply slip the View-Master reel into. It was designed by William B. Gruber, the original designer of the View-Master Reels and Viewers. It was made from 1947-1955. It is robustly built from Bakelite which seems to hold up well, even after over 50 years. It has glass lenses which are easy to clean on the inside surfaces by popping off the retaining clips that hold the diffusers in place and using a long cotton swab.

According to the book *View-Master Memories* by Mary Ann and Wolfgang Sell, the Harrison designed viewer “moved the company into injection molding with plastic products rather than compression molding using bakelite. By changing the viewer's composition, it became easier to produce more viewers for less money. Thus production swelled during this period (<http://www.3dstereo.com/viewmaster/bkn-vmm.html>),

The big change for View-Master came around 1955 when they bought out the Tru-View company. Along with that purchase came the rights to use Disney characters for their reels. By moving beyond the scenic market (although they had children's reels from very early on) they also changed their marketing to also sell the product in toy stores.

As far as I know, the View-Master viewer and reels were ALWAYS a successful product, up until recent years when the company was bought out and became a tiny part of a much larger company which tried to switch over to a digital based viewer. That being said, the original style reels continue to be made, but with a significantly smaller number of available titles.

For a great web site to see all of the models of View-Master viewers see <https://www.viewmaster.co.uk>.

Sincerely,  
David Starkman

### PHSNE Membership

*New members are invited to join for half the rates for the first year.* Regular PHSNE membership (U.S. and Canada) is \$20 for students, \$40 for individuals and institutions, and \$45 for a family; foreign membership is \$50. Join or renew online at <https://phsne.org/join> or <https://phsne.org/renew>, or send a check in U.S. dollars, drawn on a U.S. bank or dollar denominated international money order. Please check the expiration date on the *snap shots* mailing label before sending in dues.

Send payments, changes of address, and other contact information, to Joe Walters Jr, PHSNE Membership Chair, 47 Calvary St., Waltham MA 02453. (Call: 617-826-9294; email: [membership-chair@phsne.org](mailto:membership-chair@phsne.org); or use the Web form at <https://phsne.org/application>).

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## Yashica Mat-124 G, a Rolleiflex “Wannabe”

Manufactured from 1970—1986 in Japan, the Yashica Mat-124 G was “the last twin lens reflex ever produced by Yashica, and the most advanced. Designed as a Rolleiflex copy, the Mat-124 G features a four-element, 80mm f/3.5 lens set of the better “Yashinon” variety, [Copal SV] shutter speeds from 1-second to 1/500th [plus B], an aperture range of f/3.5 - f/32, a bright ground-glass viewing screen, a crank arm film advance, and ergonomic aperture/shutter controls” (<https://tinyurl.com/ycogdak5>).

The Mat-124 G was successful at a time when similar cameras were becoming outdated. It replaced the Yashica Mat 124 (produced until 1970).



According to camera-wiki, “Since the camera is basically a Rolleiflex copy, the controls take a similar configuration. Build quality is very good .... The 4 element 80mm f/3.5 Yashinon (taking) lens cannot be considered of equal quality compared to the Rollei’s, however it produces very good results, especially when stopped down to f/8-16” ([http://](http://camera-wiki.org/wiki/Yashica_6%C3%976_TLR_(crank_advance))

[camera-wiki.org/wiki/Yashica\\_6%C3%976\\_TLR\\_\(crank\\_advance\)](http://camera-wiki.org/wiki/Yashica_6%C3%976_TLR_(crank_advance))).

Some features of the Rollei were not copied: “Unlike some Rolliflex models in sportfinder mode there is no additional mirror to reflect a portion of the screen to check focus in this set-up.”

Both the Mat-124 and the Mat-124 G are compatible with Bay I (bayonet type) lens accessories used by Rolleiflex. “The focusing screen is used with the camera at



at waist-level. The sports-finder, incorporated in the focusing hood, is operational by pushing the front cover backwards. According to the instruction booklet, it comes in handy for snapshots or when shooting fast-

moving objects at eye-level.”

A 3x diopter loupe allows for critical focusing, and a Copal SV shutter permits speeds up to 1/500 sec., plus B. Features include a film emulsion reminder dial (settings include Day Reversal, Day Negative, Tungsten Reversal, B&W, and Empty), a self-timer, flash sync with electronic x and bulb m modes, and a coupled match-needle exposure meter. The exposure meter uses discontinued mercury cells, but adapters for modern batteries are widely available. The cameras use either 120 or 220 film.

There are few differences between the 124 and 124 G, and most are cosmetic. One feature difference is that the 124 G has a pressure plate that slides to adjust to 12 or 24 exposure settings; on the 124 the plate pulls out and rotates.

The Yashica Mat-124 B is a variation of the 124 G but without an exposure meter. The base of the camera has a locking knob .

The Brooklyn Film Camera site notes that, “While this camera was manufactured with a built-in light meter, age has rendered them quite inaccurate or non-functional. We recommend using an external meter for optimal results (many smartphone apps are quite wonderful for this by the way).”

## BPL Shares Digital Collection

Add the Boston Public Library (BPL) to the growing number of institutions and organizations that are digitizing and sharing important historical photographs. The headline in the January 16<sup>th</sup> *Boston Globe* announced that “BPL puts thousands of images online’ Daguerreotypes, other rarities now available for free” (<https://tinyurl.com/y3xh2ep7>).



*Boston Red Sox Players in automobile tour of Los Angeles, 1911*

Over 8,000 photographs will be made available to the public on Wikimedia Commons. Boston officials commented that, The BPL images “are part of a broader effort by the Digital Public Library of America to provide greater access to historical materials from libraries and museums across the country.” The Digital Public Library has been working with Wikimedia Commons, which offers free online images, since 2019.

According to Eben English, manager of digital repository services for the BPL, the first photographs to be included in this project were selected because there were no copyright issues: either the photos were already in the public domain, or the library owned the rights. Historical significance was also a factor. “There’s no reason why we wouldn’t share them... I think they belong to everybody, so we want to make them accessible to everybody as well.”

Included in this treasure trove of images are early photos of the Boston Red Sox, daguerreotypes, portraits of indigenous peoples of the American West, and local (Boston) photos of special interest. Many of the images have come from donated collections

### PHSNE Meetings

Meetings are usually held on the first Sunday of each month, September to June. Meetings are being held online during the COVID restrictions; details are on the website..

#### Upcoming meetings:

**April 4**—TBD

**May 2**—Nicole Hudgins, *The Gender of Photography*

**June 6**—Edith Cuerrier, Cromer Collection

#### Connect to PHSNE Online and by email:

PHSNE’s Web site is online at <https://phsne.org>. See <https://www.facebook.com/PHSNE/> for items of PHSNE interest. Comments are welcome, so join the discussion of photo history. Visit <https://snapshots.phsne.org> for *snap shots* issues since 2005.

Stay connected to PHSNE via our emails: a *snap shots* e-copy, and *Photographa* show announcements. Sign up at <https://phsne.org/emails>.

and reflect the work of amateur as well as professional photographers.

The BPL plans to send additional photos to Wiki-



*Three members of the Sioux tribe posed in Indian Village*

media. “We’re actively working on identifying other public domain collections,” English said. “Maps, manuscripts, and additional photograph collections that we’ll be uploading in the year to come.”

The partnership with Wikimedia reflects a very deliberate intent to make these historic images available to the widest possible audience.