



Compiled by JANINE DEVILLIERS  
Publications and Promotions

At the end of the year newspapers and other publications often publish overviews of highlights, tragedies, disasters and other newsworthy events that held the interest of the public over the past year and illustrate it with relevant images. Often just one glance at one of those images will evoke that event and moment in time, such as the images of the burning Twin Towers, Nelson Mandela waving to the crowd as he leaves Victor Verster Prison grounds or the beaches of Thailand strewn with bodies after the devastating tsunami.

Photojournalism allows an image to speak for itself and can at times convey a more powerful message than the most eloquent and creative journalist. Since photographers in the 1800s developed a technique to preserve images captured with a camera, this medium has become a crucial aid to chronicle the different facets of man and the history of mankind.

The Film and Video Central Collection boasts a variety of documentaries on the work and lives of dedicated photojournalists in a variety of fields that would fascinate library patrons. A selection of titles are featured here.

### Prominent photojournalists

**Eugene Atget, photographer** / producer and director; Peter Wyeth.

Eugene Atget (1857-1927) was a French photographer whose pictures of Paris made him one of the most influential photographers

of the 20th century. Though he started as an actor, at the age of 42 he decided on a change of career and spent the remainder of his life recording everything he considered picturesque or artistic in and around Paris. Most of his photographs are devoid of people, as though he regarded the city as a stage, with the transforming process of history as the play. His main clients were museums and historical societies, which bought his photographs of historic buildings and monuments, as well as the occasional individual artist. Though today he is highly regarded, he had financial problems throughout his life. This is a dramatised documentary about his life and work, narrated by a fictitious curator at the Musee l'Homme and an actress playing Berenice Abbott, the American photographer who did much to rescue his work, much of which is now housed at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

**Shadows from light: the photography of Bill Brandt** / producer and director; Stephen Dwoskin.

Described as 'a cinematographic journey through the photographic atmospheres of Bill Brandt', Stephen Dwoskin's film is an intensely personal appreciation of the work of one of the pre-eminent photographers of the 20th century. Brandt (1904-1983) served his apprenticeship with Man Ray and the Surrealists. In the 1930s he documented life in England, particularly in the industrial North, and during World War II he recorded London's ordeal, memorably in the series *London by moonlight*. In addition he produced many landscapes and portraits of British personalities, but became internationally famous through his studies of

the female nude. These nudes also feature prominently in Dwoskin's journey, an exploration occasionally likened to **Alice's adventures in Wonderland**, a book loved by both photographer and filmmaker. The accompanying music was composed by Ben Mason.

**Ernest Cole 1940-1990, photojournalist** / producers and directors, Jurgen and Claudia Schadeberg.

Ernest Cole was one of the first photojournalists to expose the realities of life under apartheid and though his work is said not to be overtly political, he nevertheless intended it to alert the world to the injustices created by a specific political system. This programme, made by one of his early mentors, pays tribute to his memory and depicts a wide selection of his photographs under various headings, from aspects of city and township life to the famous pictures taken on the mines by means of a hidden camera. Most of the time the eloquent photographs speak for themselves, but there is a commentary to explain the social background and it includes many extracts from interviews with people who knew him, from his mother and sister; to journalists like Doc Bikitsha and Arthur Mamaine, and photographers like Struan Robertson, John Brett Cohen and director Jurgen Schadeberg himself, all of whom talk about his commitment and dedication. There is also an excerpt from a documentary made in 1967, shortly after Cole had left South Africa on an exit permit. He died in exile in 1990 under straitened circumstances.

**Conversations with Goldblatt** / producer; Leonie Marinovich; director; Greg Marinovich.

David Goldblatt is the doyen of South African documentary photographers. Now in his early seventies, he has built up an enviable reputation both locally and abroad and, as one colleague says, he has made a great contribution to the understanding of our country beyond the comfortable. A longtime outspoken opponent of apartheid, he has always followed his own convictions, reacting to the injustices he saw around him. This film, made by fellow photographer Greg Marinovich, presents a portrait of David Goldblatt, depicting him at home with Lilly, his wife of 50 years, as well as at work, which includes revisiting subjects he photographed in 1972. He sees the photographer's role as a critical observer of society, but confesses to an interest in recording the ordinariness of things. The film follows him around and his comments are complemented by observations from two distinguished colleagues, Santu Mofokeng and Paul Weinberg. It ends with a visit to a new exhibition at the Goodman Gallery.

**Annie Leibovitz** / producer, Belinda Allen; director, Rebecca Frayne.

'The American photographer Annie Leibovitz (b.1949) first attracted attention while still a student in the late 1960s. Her early photojournalism came to define the style of the cult youth and protest magazine **Rolling Stone**, and her documentation of such signal events as the Woodstock festival, the Vietnam peace rallies, the Watergate scandal and the Rolling Stones' 1977 concert tour provided the classic images of a decade. Her famous cover photo of a naked, foetally-curved John Lennon with Yoko Ono, taken shortly before Lennon's murder in 1980, marked the end both of an era and of the first phase of Leibovitz's career. This film, made on the occasion of a major exhibition at the International Centre of Photography in New York, combines an in-depth interview with a survey of Leibovitz's work up to the 1990s. It draws on material ranging from home movies to sequences of her most compelling images, with commentary from Mick Jagger, **Rolling Stone** magazine editor Jann Wenner and others. In the 1980s Leibovitz moved to **Vanity Fair** magazine, where her work has documented American celebrity culture through a bold series of portrait features, culminating in the notoriety of the 1993 cover photo showing a nude and pregnant Demi Moore. Leibovitz is shown at work on a subsequent assignment, in which Demi Moore poses nude in painted clothes.'

**War photographer** / producer and director, Christian Frei.

Many people regard James Nachtwey as one of the greatest war photographers in the world. A quiet, reflective man, he is passionately committed to his work and strongly believes that the right photograph at the right time can make a difference. He is constantly aware of his subjects' sensibilities and, through his work, seeks to evoke a sense of their humanity. This award-winning documentary presents a portrait of Nachtwey and, through him, illuminates the role of the war photographer. It follows him on location in Kosovo, Djakarta and Ramallah as he captures scenes of the aftermath of war, poverty and street violence. Also included are examples of his work in Ruanda, Nicaragua and South Africa. In addition to his own comments, there are contributions from some of his colleagues and associates, amongst them CNN's Christiane Amanpour. This documentary received an Academy Award Nomination in 2001 for Best Documentary Feature; Audience Award at Encounters 2002 and the

Peabody Award in 2004.

**W Eugene Smith: photography made difficult** / producer, Kirk Morris; director, Gene Lasko.

'The American photographer Eugene Smith (1918-1978) is celebrated for his uniquely eloquent style of "inside story" photojournalism, combining dramatic immediacy with compassionate engagement. This profile views Smith's "heroic" achievements in relation to his complex personality. In the 1940s, Smith was assigned by **Life** magazine to cover the war in the Pacific and his images from the US assault on Japanese resistance in the Saipan Mountains rank with the greatest war photographs. His realisation of "the enemy as victim" and the message of universal human compassion shaped all Smith's subsequent projects and his vision is seen here as essentially religious, focusing on revelatory moments of pain, exhaustion, ordinary labour, anxiety and kindness, and drawing on images from Rembrandt and Goya in its search for correspondingly powerful expression. The film traces Smith's pursuit of an epic approach to photography, from the story of a Colorado rural doctor; to documentation of famine in Franco's Spain, his disastrously over-ambitious attempt in Pittsburgh to chronicle an entire industrial American city, and, after a period of breakdown, his coverage in 1971 of the Minamata mercury pollution incident in Japan. Central to the film is the paradox that, while constantly "making waves" in his personal life, Smith created some of the most haunting images of human vulnerability in photographic history.'

## Other photographers

**The man who colors stars** / producers, Terence Murtagh and David Taylor; director, David Taylor.

David Malin is the world's foremost astronomical photographer. His ingenious camera and darkroom techniques have revealed aspects of the universe never seen before and have enabled astronomers to study details of distance, movement, structure and evolution previously unimagined. This biographical documentary takes a closer look at his work and considers what it has meant to the science of astronomy.

**Helmut Newton: frames from the edge** / producers, Adrian Maben and Martine Vigouroux; director, Adrian Maben.

The nudes photographed by Helmut Newton are widely admired for their inimitable expression of certain aspects of feminine self-projection and awareness. Rather than seeming conscious of a viewer, his subjects typically appear as though observed by chance, and the subtly-varied moods of eroticism finds a place both in international commercial art and in private portrait studies, making him one of the most sought-after contemporary photographers. This film highlights Newton's meticulous and deceptively understated approach as he completes a series of very different commissions.

## More titles

**Berenice Abbott: a view of the 20th century**

**The other observers: women photographers 1850 - present day**

**Images in struggle: South African photographers speak**

**By design. Volume 3, Elliott Erwitt**

**The edge: the story of the Bang Bang Club**

**Lichfield on photography**

**The photographers.**

Inspire your readers to record their own history on film by promoting these interesting photographers and the insightful images they have recorded.

(See also article in **CL** January / February 2006, *The versatility of photography* by Marianne Elliott, page 36.)

Note: Reviews by Freddy Ogterop, *Film/Video/DVD Selector*

