

It would be impossible to introduce our Spring Summer 2008 catalogue without mention of a new edition of Robert Frank's *The Americans* published to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the first publication of *Les Américains* in 1958. We have dedicated a great deal of space to this project in the following pages and consider our involvement with this seminal book a defining moment in the history of our publishing house.

One part of this introduction is a photo-story by Gerhard documenting The Re-Making of *The Americans*. The process of making books with our artists and collaborators is the most enjoyable part of what we do. That process is a determinedly idiosyncratic one, adapted to the vagaries of each project and our own way of working. We have recently produced a booklet with the tongue-in-cheek title, *How to Make a Book with Steidl*. Setting out in detail how everything works, from how to find Göttingen to delivery of digital files and royalty payments, we hope this will answer most of the questions about working with us.

You may have noticed that every season we announce more bookshops in cities across the globe that carry a wide selection of Steidl books. Having begun in London with a shop dedicated to Steidl books thanks to the commitment and enthusiasm of Danny and Laura Pope, you can now see our extensive backlist and new books in shops in Beijing, Brussels, Florence, Moscow, New York, Paris, Rome and Shanghai. In Florence, close to the Arno River and Ponte Vecchio, a beautiful space dedicated exclusively to Steidl books has been opened by Isabella Brancolini and Camilla Grimaldi. In New York, Pascal Dangin has opened Box Books on West 14th Street, a wonderful book emporium which began with nearly 200 Steidl titles. These spaces offer the chance to browse and buy the majority of our books in print and are a direct response to the rise of internet sales. We believe that to really understand what is special and distinct about each of our books, you have to see them, weigh the cover boards against the book block, feel the linen binding and trace the foil embossing, touch the paper grain, consider the lift of the varnish and print quality, and smell the inks.

Buying books on the internet is already ingrained in modern life and although our books will never be replaced by what the internet has to offer, specialist bookshops are threatened and deserve the support of us all.

Michael Mack
On behalf of everyone at
Steidville Göttingen, London and Paris

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please refer to page 220

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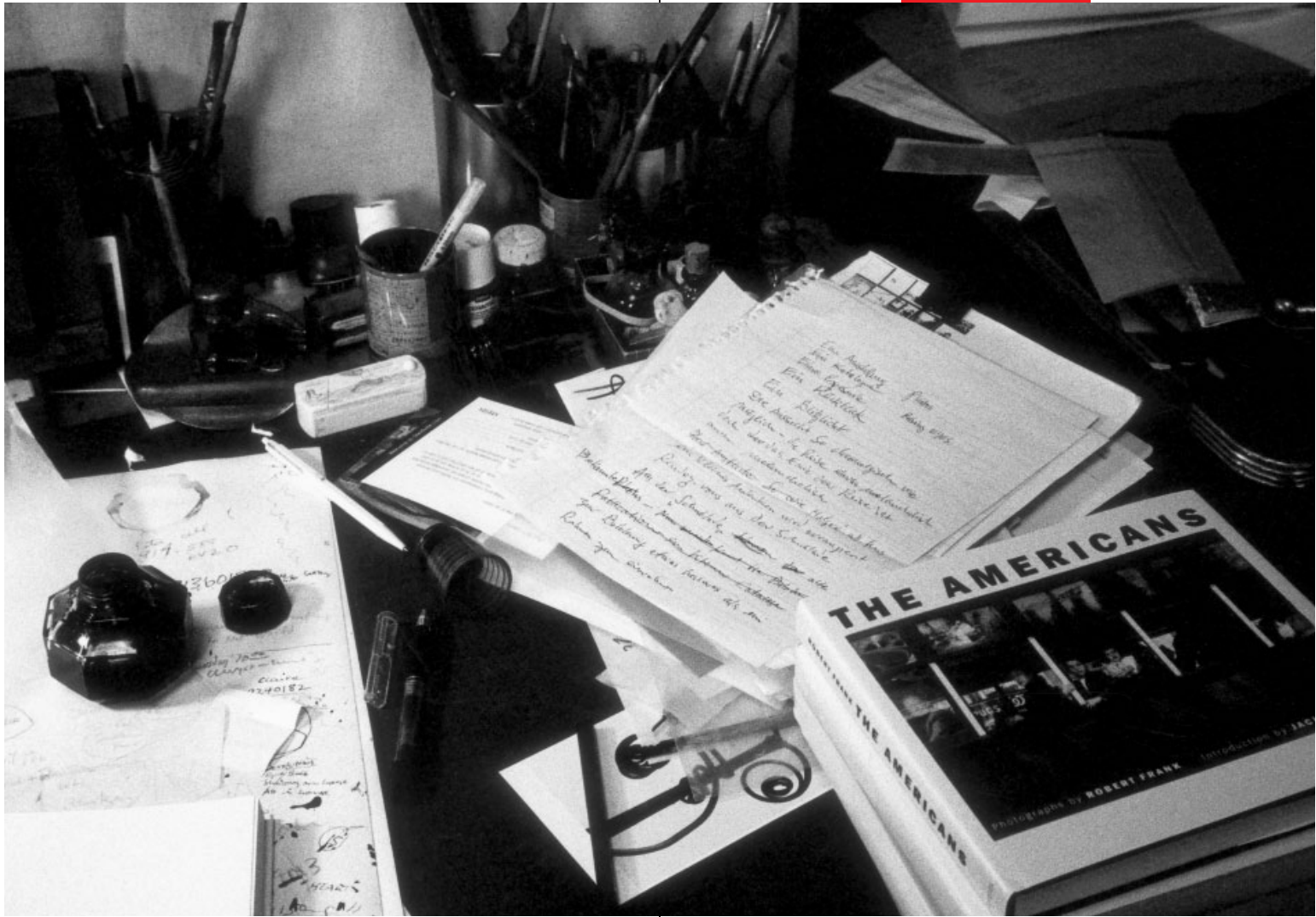
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Robert Frank in Göttingen

by Joel Sternfeld

Robert Frank and I must have made an interesting sight that warm July afternoon on Düstere Strasse. We resemble each other but he is older than I so no matter what we were up to we could have made sense as father/son.

And in one important sense we were: when I was becoming a photographer in the late 1960s, his book, *The Americans* was already a landmark—that's much too weak a word but what other word for a body of work that changed the course of the river of Photography in a way that it could never take the old course again.

I would look at it before I went to sleep and in the morning I would reach for it like a smoker reaches for a cigarette. I needed to see it again. The country was so bleak in those sooty pages, each one an artifact ripped from the landscape and brought straight to the bindery. Frank had found a way to give form to the formless lives that went unmilled in America.

Two years before I encountered his book I had taken my first cross-country trip—three of us in an immense gold driveway car that needed to be delivered to its owner in Los Angeles. We sailed from the East Coast to the West in less than three days—one of us sleeping across the back seat, one up front trying to stay awake with the driver.

It was December. We angled into New Mexico as the sun was going down and pulled into an *A. and W. Root Beer* stand. The dirt parking lot seamlessly joined the desert and the desert night. A cold wind came up as the sky turned black—the same cold wind every traveller without a room feels as the sun goes down.

A wrapper from someone's fries blew into the desert in a moment of Americanized infinity. Frank's book reminded me of that moment. And now here he was on Düstere Strasse in Göttingen and here I was beside him. Inside at Steidl *The Americans* was being printed—the reproductions were to be as close a match as possible to the Delpire edition that had set Photography on its fat ear when it first came out in 1958.

A very tired, 83 year-old Robert had come to Germany from Switzerland to supervise the printing—presumably the final edition of the book. I thought about the apocryphal tale of the young Robert Frank kicking in the swinging doors of a cowboy bar in Nevada, hollering in "you mother fuckers," before taking the picture and then running like hell. No running now but the mischief was still in his smile.

He had come to Europe to receive a prize in Spain but the real agenda was to try out the Switzerland of his childhood as a place to come for his final days. Surprisingly, it had failed in that regard. Robert wanted to go home—to America.

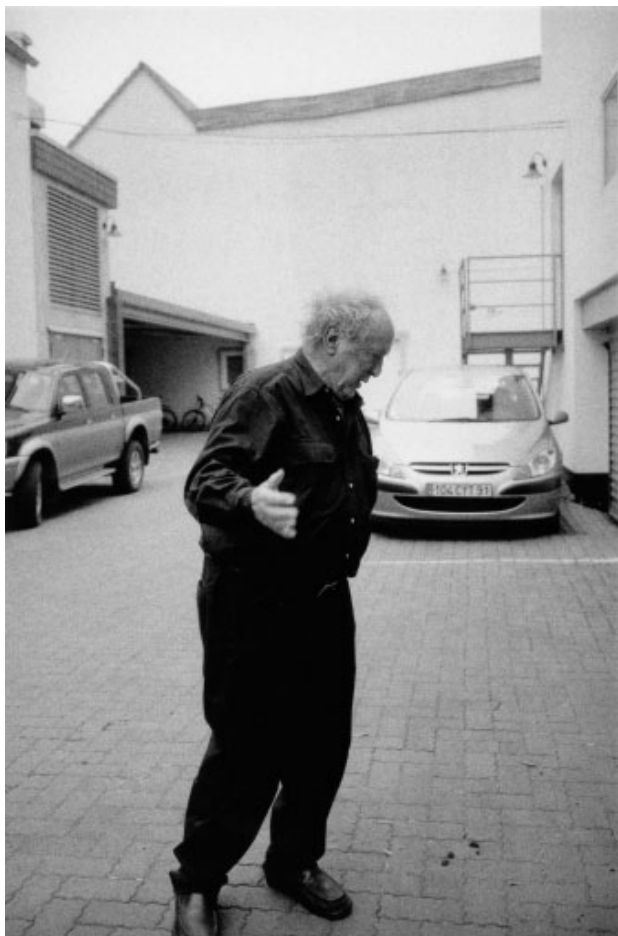
"You can't go home again. Home hasn't changed, you have." How many others in a borderless world would face this dilemma?

The printing had been going on for two days and it was going well. Steidl was utterly himself—unshaved and getting things done. Robert was being especially sweet to everyone despite his exhaustion. I noted the care he took when he autographed books for Steidl staffers who timidly came up the stairs to the library. He took sincere interest in the work of other artists who waited in the library like it was a pitcher's bull pen—we were ready for the nod that would allow us to go downstairs to press. He especially remarked a postcard that was being printed for Tacita Dean. It was of an olive tree in Spain that she had designated to be the one beneath which García Lorca and Salvador Dalí had conducted their suspected tryst. Robert pronounced it beautiful and asked her to sign one for him—for his postcard collection. Earlier in the afternoon I had gone downstairs to watch as Robert corrected his sheets. I was taken aback by the precision of his memory of the Delpire edition. From the comments Robert was making I could see it wasn't just the first edition he was remembering—it was the moments out there, in 1950s America and how they had looked. The realization gave me a chill.

Here we were in the garden outside the press—I don't know if it was for the flat light, or for the pleasure of a summer day but Gerhard had placed an easel out the doors. Robert was trying to "open up" a person you can barely see behind the passengers in the windows of the streetcar in New Orleans. A bird came up and pulled my eye on as I tried to think about the provenance of the moment.

Every few minutes he would speak of his exhaustion and of his desire to go back to his hotel room but when a sheet came out his comments were acute—a lion always sleeps with one eye open. Later in the afternoon I went down to the carless street—none of the streets in Göttingen permit automobile traffic—and saw Robert wandering in the middle of the bricked roadway. He was ambling. I went up and asked him where he was





going. He said he was going to hail a taxi and go to his hotel. One of us made a joke about escaping—Gerhard likes to picture himself as sheriff.

I told Robert I didn't think there were any taxis to be hailed but if he would just come back inside and finish the last form a taxi could be called. Robert made no direct response but he seemed glad of my company and he suggested that we go into the antique store across the street so he could look for postcards. (For a guy thinking about the end of things he was certainly keen about keeping his postcard collection up. Perhaps this was in the daytime: in the middle of the night there are no postcards to be collected.)

I went into *Kitsch & Kunst* with him—now I was AWOL too. There weren't really any postcards but there were some albums of family trips—journeys long ago cornered into sheets and now for sale.

As Robert leafed through them I went back to Gerhard to appraise him of the situation. He asked me to bring Robert back to press: the men were waiting, the press was idle.

What followed next is difficult to describe. Robert came out into the street and for the next hour he did a sort of performance. It was a dance of remembrance and reluctance with commentary by the performer interspersed.

In the grey July afternoon he appeared to be weightless—a trained bear doing slow-motion pirouettes. He butoh'd toward the door to Steidl but the closer he got to it, the more interesting everything outside it became. He would turn in the street, float up to a rain gutter and tap it. "I just wanted to see if it's made out of lead," he explained as his eyes followed it up to the roof. He went back into the street, pirouetted again and came back to the wall as his arms floated up a ledge which was at shoulder height. Did he know that he looked like Christ

on the cross as he spoke of his desire to return to America? Of what a good country it was—it had given him his chance.

I thought about "home" and its power; and about an idea I have that many of the great practitioners photograph their "home" landscapes. I had excluded Frank from my thesis because America was not his home—but now it was. A phrase, "I did not choose this place but now I am of it" came to mind.

The moment was broken by a man with a sort of flame thrower. It was a blow torch with a three-foot extension tube off the nozzle so that a small flame could be used to burn weeds coming up through cracks in the sidewalk. Robert feigned fascination and he began questioning the operator of the device—soon others joined the conversation and there was a general discussion of the topic of weed killing with Robert a full discussant. Eventually, after various other petite excursions Robert went in and finished the form. The next day he was in the library in a dark blue shirt and a baseball cap—shaved and with his hair combed he looked 25 years younger. His body had solidity—he was flying home from Frankfurt that afternoon.

Seeing him so transformed helped me to understand what I had witnessed the day before. Of course he was avoiding—why would he want to come in and say goodbye to the work of his youth? Didn't he tell us he was "sick of goodbyes"? Of course it was exhausting—putting a closure on the work that had defined a life must be. Which one of us would willingly approve a "final edition"?

I remembered these words, "there is no strange behavior it's just that some behavior requires more understanding than other behavior."

Faced with no good choices Robert Frank did a dance.

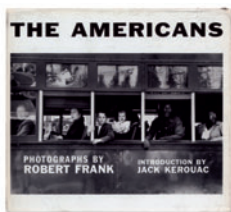
Photographs by Joel Sternfeld



DELPÏRE, 1958



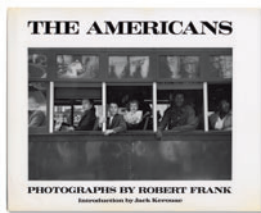
IL SAGGIATORE, 1959



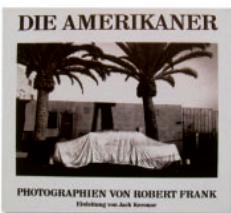
GROVE PRESS, 1959



DELPÏRE, 1963



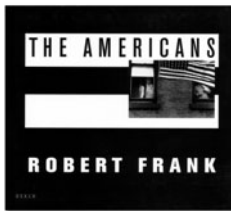
APERTURE, 1969



CHRISTIAN, 1969



SCALO, 1993



SCALO, 2000

A Short Publishing History of *The Americans*

by Monte Packham

Robert Frank's *The Americans* was first published on May 15, 1958 by Robert Delpire in Paris. It featured 83 of Frank's photographs taken in America in 1955 and 1956, accompanied by writings in French about American political and social history selected by Alain Bosquet. Delpire's *Les Américains* formed part of the *Encyclopédie essentielle* series, which presented foreign countries to a French audience. Each of Frank's photographs in this edition is placed on a right-hand page, with the texts on the left-hand pages.

The first English edition of *The Americans* was published in 1959 by Grove Press in New York. It presented the same photographs as the Delpire edition, however a text by Jack Kerouac replaced the French writings. The book begins with Kerouac's introduction, followed by Frank's photographs in the same sequence as the Delpire edition. On the left-hand pages are short captions from Frank, which describe the location.

Since 1959 *The Americans* has been reprinted by different publishers, in multiple languages and formats. Frank has had varying influence on these editions; some were printed without his input, approval or knowledge.

In July 2007 the Steidl edition of *The Americans* was printed. Frank was involved in every step of its design and production. The 83 photographs were scanned in tritone at Steidl's digital darkroom from vintage prints in Frank's collection, which revealed that many images in past editions were actually crops of the originals. For the Steidl book Frank studied and revised these crops and in many cases included the full photographs; in only a few cases the Delpire and Grove Press compositions remain.

The Steidl edition also reproduces two photographs printed from negatives different to those used for all previous editions. These photographs depict the same two subjects as in other editions (*Metropolitan Life Insurance Building—New York City* and *Assembly Line—Detroit*), but from a slightly different perspective.

Kerouac's text and Frank's captions remain unaltered from the Grove Press edition, the typography however was redesigned. As well as revising the book's design, Frank also chose the paper, endpaper and book linen. He opted for a thread-stitched book, and conceived a new dust jacket made from the same paper as in the book (Xantur 170 g from Scheufelen, Germany), sealing it with a simple varnish. Frank personally oversaw printing on July 18, 2007, inspecting and approving each sheet at Steidl's press in Göttingen.



Pages from a handmade maquette, showing the full size of the scanned vintage prints. The red rectangles show the crops in the Delpire and Grove Press editions, which except in one instance, Frank altered for the Steidl edition.

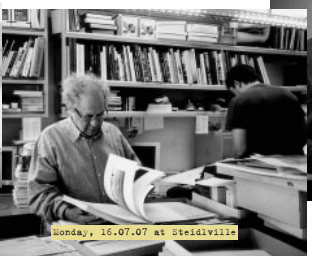


Final approval of a handmade maquette

Friday, Saturday 14.07.07:
Hotel Heinhaus



Monday, 16.07.07 at Steidville



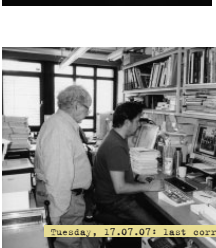
Finalizing crops on each of the photographs



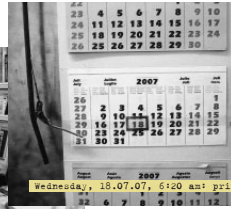
Dust jacket design



Discussing dust jacket variations



Tuesday, 17.07.07: last corrections



Wednesday, 18.07.07, 6:20 am: printing commences on the brand-new Roland 706 press



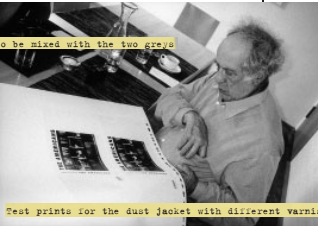
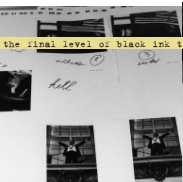
Past editions of "The Americans" including the original 1958 Delpire book, and vintage prints were on hand at press



Checking the Xantur paper from Scheidele



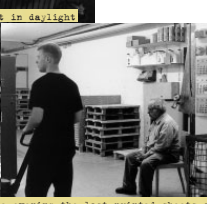
Utrone printing: inspecting density, variations to fix the final level of black ink to be mixed with the two greys



Test prints for the dust jacket with different varnishes



Checking the dust jacket in daylight



In the evening the last printed sheets are moved to dry



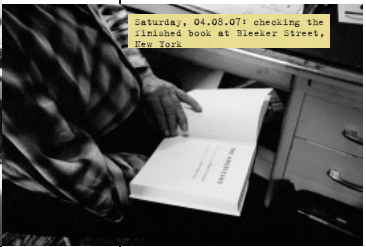
Lucia Jean showing her limited edition postcard "Lorca's Olive", printed at Steidl on the same day



Farewell to Joel Sternfeld



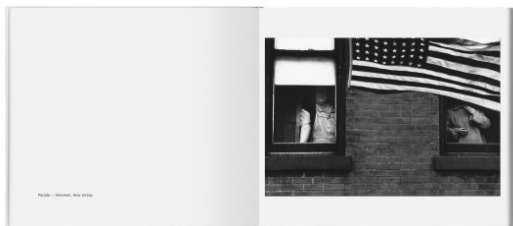
Departing from Steidville to Frankfurt airport



Saturday, 04.08.07: checking the finished book at Bleeker Street, New York



Robert Frank signs the first book of the first printrun of the Steidl edition



First Edition published on May 15, 1958

New Edition published by Steidl on May 15, 2008

Book launch with Robert Frank at the Walter Read Theater,
Lincoln Center, New York City on Thursday, May 15, 2008

Robert Frank The Americans

The publication of a new edition of Robert Frank's masterpiece and the most important photo-book of all time is the artbook publishing event of the season.

The worldwide release of the book on May 15, 2008, will be accompanied by extensive media coverage, launch events, exhibitions, in-store co-ops and both trade and consumer advertising.

There has been no new edition of the *The Americans* available since October 2005 and this new Steidl edition of the book, which was made under the guidance of Robert Frank, will be an essential purchase for any serious photography fan. Steidl will publish the original Kerouac text and translations in French, German and Mandarin.

Robert Frank was born in Zurich, Switzerland in 1924 and went to the United States in 1947. He is best known for his seminal book *The Americans*, first published in 1958, which gave rise to a distinct new art form in the photo-book, and his experimental film *Pull My Daisy*, made in 1959. His other important projects include the book *Black White and Things*, 1954, the book *The Lines of My Hand*, 1959, and the film *Cocksucker Blues* for the Rolling Stones, 1972. He divides his time between New York City and Nova Scotia, Canada.



Robert Frank
The Americans

Introduction by Jack Kerouac
Book design by Robert Frank, Gerhard Steidl and Claas Möller
180 pages with 83 tritone plates
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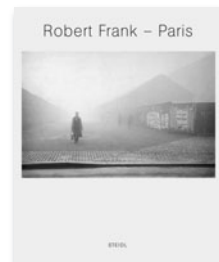


Robert Frank Paris

Paris is the first time that the significant body of photographs which Robert Frank made in Paris in the early 1950s has been brought together in a single book. His visit to Paris in 1951 was his second return to Europe after he had settled in New York City in 1947 and some of the images he made during that visit have become iconic in the history of the medium. The 80 photographs selected by Robert Frank and Ute Eskildsen suggest that Frank's experience of the "new world" had sharpened his eye for European urbanism. He saw the city's streets as a stage for human activity and focused particularly on the flower sellers. His work clearly references Eugène Atget and invokes the tradition of the flâneur.

Robert Frank was born in Zurich, Switzerland in 1924 and went to the United States in 1947. He is best known for his seminal book *The Americans*, first published in 1958, which gave rise to a distinct new art form in the photo-book, and his experimental film *Pull My Daisy*, made in 1959. His other important projects include the book *Black White and Things*, 1954, the book *The Lines of My Hand*, 1959, and the film *Cocksucker Blues* for the Rolling Stones, 1972. He divides his time between New York City and Nova Scotia, Canada.

Touring exhibition: Museum Folkwang, Essen, April to July 2008; Museo Fotografia Contemporanea, Cinisello Balsamo-Milano, November to December 2008; Jeu de Paume, Paris, January to March 2009; Netherlands Fotomuseum, Rotterdam, April to May 2009.



Robert Frank
Paris

Edited by Robert Frank and Ute Eskildsen
Book design by Robert Frank and Gerhard Steidl
160 pages with 80 tritone plates
7.8 x 9.6 in./20 x 24.5 cm
Hardcover with dust jacket
US\$39.95/£20.00/€30.00
ISBN 978-3-85521-524-6





Robert Frank Zero Mostel Reads a Book

When Robert Frank had completed his first two films, he accepted a commission for a photo-book from the *New York Times*, which became *Zero Mostel Reads a Book*. In it Frank takes the comic actor Zero Mostel (1915–1977) for his subject, and depicts him in cartoonish dimensions—bemused, baffled and apoplectic, as he makes his way through an unidentified hardback volume, seated at a table or on a sofa in a large lounge area.

Originally published “for the fun of it” in 1963 and dedicated to the American bookseller, the book was intended as a present for customers yet it never reached the book market. It has been a collector’s item since. *Zero Mostel Reads a Book* references a series of theatrical and playful vignettes in which Mostel’s most famous roles—Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof*, Pseudolus in *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, and Max Bialystock in *The Producers*—are clearly signaled. It is a delightful moment of slapstick in Frank’s oeuvre, and directly reflects his emphasis on the moving image at the time.

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Robert Frank
Zero Mostel Reads a Book

Uncredited text
Facsimile reprint with new typography
40 pages with 36 tritone plates
5.6 x 8.4 in./14.4 x 21.5 cm

Hardcover
US\$25.00/£12.50/€17.50
ISBN 978-3-86521-886-4



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Robert Frank The Complete Film Works

Robert Frank's significant contribution to photography in the mid-twentieth century is unquestionable. His book, *The Americans*, is arguably the most influential American photography publication of the post-World War II period, and his photography has spawned numerous disciples, as well as a rich critical literature. However, at the very moment Frank achieved the status of a "star" at the end of the 1950s, he turned away from traditional still photography to become a filmmaker. He eventually returned to photography in the 1970s, but Frank, as a filmmaker, has remained a well-kept secret for almost four decades. *Robert Frank The Complete Film Works* fills a long overdue gap by presenting every one of Frank's more than 25 films and videos, some of them classics of the New American Cinema of the 1950s and 1960s.

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Filming of *Pull My Daisy*, from left to right: Alfred Leslie, Robert Frank, Gert Berliner.
Photograph by John Cohen

Robert Frank
The Complete Film Works

Vol. 1: Pull my Daisy
The Sin of Jesus
Me and My Brother
Three DVDs in a film-roll box, slipcased
Pull My Daisy - 28 minutes - 1959
The Sin of Jesus - 40 minutes - 1961
Me and My Brother - 85 minutes - 1968
US\$140.00/£70.00/€95.00
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Vol. 2: OK End Here
Conversations in Vermont
Liferatt Earth
Three DVDs in a film-roll box, slipcased
OK End Here - 32 minutes - 1963
Conversations in Vermont - 26 minutes - 1969
Liferatt Earth - 37 minutes - 1969
US\$140.00/£70.00/€95.00
ISBN 978-3-86521-525-3



9 783865 213653

Vol. 3: Keep Busy, About Me: A Musical
S-8 Stones Footage from Exile on Main St.
Three DVDs in a film-roll box, slipcased
Keep Busy - 38 minutes - 1975
About Me: A Musical - 35 minutes - 1971
S-8 Stones Footage from Exile on Main St. - 5 minutes - 1972
US\$140.00/£70.00/€95.00
ISBN 978-3-86521-591-8



9 783865 215918

Robert Frank The Complete Film Works Vol. 1

Pull My Daisy

Pull My Daisy is a 1959 short film that typifies the Beat Generation. Directed by Robert Frank and Alfred Leslie, *Daisy* was adapted by Jack Kerouac from the third act of a stage play he never finished entitled *Beat Generation*. Kerouac also provided improvised narration. It starred Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso, Larry Rivers, Peter Orlovsky, David Amram, Richard Bellamy, Alice Neel, Sally Gross and Pablo, Frank's then-infant son. Based on an incident in the life of Neal Cassady and his wife Carolyn, *Daisy* tells the story of a railway brakeman whose painter wife invites a respectable bishop over for dinner. However, the brakeman's bohemian friends crash the party, with comic results. *Pull My Daisy* was praised for years as an improvisational masterpiece, until Leslie revealed in 1968 that the film was actually carefully planned, rehearsed, and directed by him and Frank.

USA 1959, 16 mm, black and white, 28 min. Directed by Robert Frank, Alfred Leslie, script based on the third act of the play *Beat Generation* by Jack Kerouac. Cinematography: Robert Frank. Editing: Leon Prochnik, Robert Frank, Alfred Leslie. Music composed by David Amram. Musicians: David Amram, Sahib Shahab, a.o. "The Crazy Daisy", sung by Anita Ellis. Text by Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac. Production: G-String Enterprises, Walter Gutman. Cast: Mooney Peebles (Richard Bellamy), Allen Ginsberg, Peter Orlovsky, Gregory Corso, Larry Rivers, Delphine Seyrig, David Amram, Alice Neel, Sally Gross, Denise Parker, Pablo Frank.

The Sin of Jesus

The Sin of Jesus was based on the story of Isaac Babel, a woman on a chicken farm who spends her days working at an egg-sorting machine. "I'm the only woman here." She is pregnant, her husband spends his days lying in bed, and his friends encourage him to go out on the town with them. The woman talks to herself as she works, lost in the monotony of human existence. She counts the passing days in the same way she counts eggs. Even extraordinary events, such as the appearance of Jesus Christ in the barn, go under the stream of this melancholy solipsism.

USA 1961, 35 mm, black and white, 37 min. Directed by Robert Frank. Script: Howard Shulman, Mimi Arscher, based on the story by Isaac Babel. Cinematography: Gert Berliner. Editing: Robert Frank, Ken Collins. Music: Morton Feldman. Sound: Philip Sterling. Production: Off-Broadway Productions, Jerry Michaels, Walter Gutman. Cast: Julie Bovasso, John Coe, Roberts Blossom, St. George Brian, Telly Savalas, Mary Frank, Jonas Mekas.

Me and My Brother

Me and My Brother seems to be a rather artless-film-within-a-film being shown at a rundown movie theater. The story contains bizarre twists and turns: skillfully weaving together opposites, playing counterfeits against the authentic, acting against being, Beat cynicism against hippie romanticism, monochrome against color. This was Frank's first feature-length film work and it celebrates the return of the poetic essay as assemblage, the affirmation of the underground as a wild cinematic analysis in the form of collage. There is a method to this film's madness: It is so rich in text, quotes, music, and associations that keeping up with it through the underbrush of psyche, film, and urbanity is barely possible.

USA 1965-1968, 35 mm, colour & black and white, 91 min. (re-edited 85 min.). Directed by Robert Frank. Script: Robert Frank, Sam Shepard. Poetry: Allen Ginsberg, Peter Orlovsky. Cinematography: Robert Frank. Editing: Robert Frank, Helen Silverstein, Bob Easton, Lynn Ratener. Production: Two Faces Company, Helen Silverstein. Cast: Julius Orlovsky, Joseph Chaikin, John Coe, Allen Ginsberg, Peter Orlovsky, Virginia Kiser, Nancy Fisher, Cynthia McAdams, Roscoe Lee Browne, Christopher Walken, Seth Allen, Maria Tucci, Jack Greenbaum, Otis Young, Lou Waldon, a.o.

Robert Frank The Complete Film Works Vol. 2

OK End Here

OK End Here is Frank's 1963 short film about inertia in a modern relationship. The film alternates between semi-documentary scenes and shots composed with rigid formality, and appears to have been directly influenced by the French Nouvelle Vague and Michelangelo Antonioni's films. The characters are often only partially visible or physically separated by walls, doors, reflections, or furniture, and the camera relays the story with little rhyme or reason, a roaming gaze, which seems to lose itself in things of little importance, while at the same time capturing the dominant atmosphere of routine, alienation, and apathy.

USA 1963, 35 mm, black and white, 32 min. Director: Robert Frank. Script: Marion Magid. Cinematography: Gert Berliner. Editor: Aram Avakian. Production: September 20 Productions, Edwin Gregson. Cast: Martino La Salle, Sue Ungaro, Sudie Bond, Anita Ellis, Joseph Bird, a.o.

Conversations in Vermont

"This film is about the past... when Mary and I got married... the past and the present... Maybe this film is about growing older... some kind of a family album." Robert Frank in the Prologue.

Produced in 1969, this was Frank's first autobiographical film, telling the story of a father's relationship with his two teenaged children, and his fragile attempts to communicate with them by means of a shared story. The shared story is partly told through Frank's narration over filmed images of his photographs, family photographs and world famous images.

USA 1969, 18 mm, black and white, 26 min. Director: Robert Frank. Cinematography: Ralph Gibson. Editor: Robert Frank. Sound: Robert Frank. Production: Dilxi Foundation, Robert Frank. Cast: Robert, Pablo and Andrea Frank.

Liferaft Earth

Liferaft Earth begins with a newspaper report from Hayward, California: "Sandwiched between a restaurant and supermarket, 100 anti-population protesters spent their second starving day in a plastic enclosure... The so-called Hunger Show, a week-long starve-in is aimed at dramatizing man's future in an overpopulated, underfed world..." This film accompanies the people on this "life raft" from 11 to 18 October 1969, and was made by Robert Frank for Stewart Brand, the visionary founder of the international ecological movement and publisher of the bestselling *Whole Earth Catalog* (1968-1985).

USA 1969, 16 mm, color & black and white, 37 min. Director: Robert Frank. Cinematography: Robert Frank. Editor: Susan Obenhaus. Sound: Denny Lyon. Production: Portola Institute, Robert Frank. Cast: Robert Frank, Denny Lyon, Hugh Romney, Stewart Brand, participants in *The Hunger Show*.



Filmstills from *About Me: A Musical*

Robert Frank The Complete Film Works Vol. 3

Keep Busy

"I am filming the outside in order to look inside," Robert Frank once said about his aesthetics. In *Keep Busy* his chosen home of Nova Scotia serves for the first time as the "outside" in an examination of the "inside." The protagonists' astounding verbal gymnastics and often incomprehensible interactions tend to descend into nonsense, and with the syncopated rhythm of its action and dialogue, this film is reminiscent of the playful and parodying elements of the Beat fantasy *Pull My Daisy*. The interweaving of documentary and fiction with the syncopated rhythm of its action and dialogue presents an absurd buzz of activity reminiscent of Beckett's abstract comic grotesque.

CAN 1975, 16mm, black and white, 38 min. Directed by: Robert Frank, Rudy Wurlitzer. Script: Rudy Wurlitzer. Cinematography: Robert Frank. Editing: Robert Frank. Sound: Charles Dean. Production: Canada Council (support), Robert Frank. Cast: June Leaf, Joan Jonas, Richard Serra, Joanne Akalitis, Joe Dan MacPherson.

About Me: A Musical

"My project was to make a film about music in America.... Well, fuck the music. I just decided to make a film about myself." Robert Frank's self-portrait is a film about music that repeatedly poses questions concerning artistic expression and the function of memory. Frank himself introduces an actress as "the young lady that is playing me." She throws a stack of photographs onto the bed and says with disgust, "That's my past." Despite the apparently autobiographical nature of the film, Frank, the immigrant, regards his story as a collective one. The film teaches temple musicians in Benares, India, "hope freaks" in New Mexico and inmates at a Texas prison. "That's me," Frank says when an old-fashioned film projector shows him as a small child. An interview of passers-by completes the circle: "If you had a camera and some film, what would you shoot?" A street musician answers, "About myself," and starts playing a classic number. "Those were the days, my friend."

USA 1971, 16mm, black and white, 30min. Directed by: Robert Frank. Script: Robert Frank. Cinematography: Danny Seymour, Robert Frank. Editing: Robert Frank. Sound: Robert McNamara. Production: American Film Institute (support), Robert Frank. Cast: Lynn Reyner, Jaime de Carlo Lotts, Robert Schlee, Sheila Pavio, Bill Hart, Vera Cochran, Sid Kaplan, June Leaf, Allen Ginsberg, Danny Lyon, Peter Orlovsky.

S-8 Stones Footage from Exile on Main St.

Filmed during the making of the *Exile on Main St.*, Rolling Stones album cover.

USA 1971, S-8, black and white, 5 min. Directed by: Robert Frank. Cinematography: Robert Frank.