

Topic Page: [Frank, Robert, 1924-](#)

Summary Article: **Frank, Robert**

From *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

1924–, Swiss-American photographer and filmmaker, b. Zurich. He emigrated to the United States in 1947 and became a citizen in 1963. Frank is considered the pioneer of the “snapshot aesthetic,” in which the documentary image is rendered bluntly and without conscious artistry. His best-known work is *The Americans* (1959), a composite portrait of U.S. culture as seen by a relative newcomer. In its 83 black-and-white photographs he presents telling glimpses of clutter and trivia as well as informal pictures of all manner of Americans, often anxious or isolated, in everyday situations throughout the country. These powerfully composed photographs were considered gross, shocking, degrading, and even un-American when they were first published, but soon became an intrinsic part of American iconography, greatly influencing other artists in many media. Frank's films, also documentary in style, include *Pull My Daisy* (1959–60, with Alfred Leslie), *OK, End Here* (1963), and *Me and My Brother* (1965–68).

See books of his photographs, including *Lines of My Hand* (rev. ed. 1989);

biography by RJ Smith (2017);

Greenough, S. , ed., *Looking In: Robert Frank's “The Americans”* (museum catalog, 2009);

documentary dir. by L. Israel (2016).

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Frank, Robert. (2018). In P. Lagasse, & Columbia University, *The Columbia encyclopedia* (8th ed.). New York, NY: Columbia University Press. Retrieved from https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/robert_frank_1924



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