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First Pitch, Mr. President

U.S. presidents have thrown out the ceremonial first pitch for opening day since the portly William Howard Taft did so from the stands in 1910. At a Washington Senators game in 1912, Taft looked presidential wearing a tie, vest, and well-tailored suit replete with a handkerchief. Photographs of presidential first pitches since then reveal changes in styles, personalities, and fans' relationship to the game. Woodrow Wilson, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Harry Truman wore fashionable hats. Truman threw left-handed and wore a summer suit. A hatless and relaxed John F. Kennedy threw with the confident pose of possibly America's best presidential athlete.

In the 1970s, presidents, like fans, became part of the game, wearing parts of the baseball uniform. Richard Nixon wore a glove as he threw out a first pitch. William Jefferson Clinton, in 1993, abandoned the formal presidential suit and tie for a Baltimore Orioles jacket and baseball cap. Clinton also left the stands to pitch from the mound. As the senator from Illinois, Barack Obama took attire one step further, wearing the jersey of his beloved Chicago White Sox to throw out the first pitch in 2005. Throwing the first pitch five years later as president in Washington, D.C., he played politics by wearing a Chicago White Sox hat with a Washington Nationals pullover.

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Frances Benjamin Johnston

American, 1864–1952

**Untitled (Female students playing basketball,
Western High School, Washington, D.C.),**

from Western High School album, c. 1899

Cyanotype

Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Life magazine declared Frances Benjamin Johnston “the closest thing to an official court photographer the United States has ever had” (April 25, 1949). But Johnston, a rarity as a practicing and famous female photographer, also distinguished herself as the photographer of those who remained largely unrepresented and invisible, notably African Americans and women. Nude women are plentiful in all genres and styles of art, and in the late 19th century they appeared often under the guise of “artistic” photography. Johnston’s photographs, however, show women as active participants in daily life. This picture from her Western High School album shows girls outfitted in athletic bloomers learning the rules of basketball, only eight years after James Naismith invented the game.

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Alexander Rodchenko

Russian, 1891–1956

Pole Vault, 1936

Gelatin silver print

The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles

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Alexander Rodchenko

Russian, 1891–1956

Untitled (Horse race), 1935

Gelatin silver print

The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles

In the 1920s, avant-garde artists used the newly invented handheld Leica camera with high-speed film to take photographs from steeply angled, even vertiginous, perspectives. These images gave viewers the sense of seeing through the roving eye of a machine rather than the human eye. Soviet artists such as Alexander Rodchenko linked this visual experience to the political spirit of the Russian Revolution, which emphasized the collective over the individual. Sports photographers since then have continued to employ this technique, minus the politics, to place viewers “in the game,” as if they are players participating in the action.

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Nazi Propaganda and Sports Photography

These photographs are still images from two films by Leni Riefenstahl, *Triumph of the Will* (1935) and *Olympia* (1938). Riefenstahl was one of the most innovative sports filmmakers of the 20th century. However, her filmmaking achievements were clouded by her role directing the propaganda classic film *Triumph of the Will* for Adolf Hitler and by her lies in later years about her involvement with the Third Reich. *Olympia*, for example, premiered with a screening in honor of Hitler's birthday.

Using many of the same visual techniques employed in her propaganda films—slow motion, tight close-ups, and dramatic angles—Riefenstahl altered the way we see and experience sports through the camera-eye. She introduced a number of new filmmaking techniques in *Olympia*, a film commissioned by the International Olympic Committee to document the 1936 Olympics in Berlin (but lavishly funded behind the scenes by Germany's Nazi government). To film the competitions, she used multiple cameras variously positioned to capture the athletes' movements. She had holes dug under the pole vault pits so as to get an upward angle on the action; she filmed divers and swimmers underwater for the first time; and from cameras placed high above the events, she produced a bird's-eye view of the grand spectacle of sports.

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Leni Riefenstahl

German, 1902–2003

Jesse Owens, 1936

Gelatin silver print (printed later)

Courtesy of Camera Work AG

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Leni Riefenstahl

German, 1902–2003

The Dive, 1936

Gelatin silver print (printed later)

Courtesy of Camera Work AG

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Leni Riefenstahl

German, 1902–2003

The Discus Thrower, 1936

Gelatin silver print (printed later)

Courtesy of Camera Work AG

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Jacques Henri Lartigue

French, 1894–1986

Wheeled Bobsleigh Designed by Jacques Henri Lartigue, 1911

Gelatin silver print

Minneapolis Institute of Arts, The Kate and Hall J. Peterson Fund, 72.118.7

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Jacques Henri Lartigue

French, 1894–1986

Grand Prix of the Automobile Club of France, 1912

Gelatin silver print (printed 1972)

Minneapolis Institute of Arts, The Kate and Hall J. Peterson Fund, 72.118.8

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Jacques Henri Lartigue

French, 1894–1986

Zissou in His Tire Boat, Château de Rouzat, 1911

Gelatin silver print (printed 1972)

Minneapolis Institute of Arts, The Kate and Hall J. Peterson Fund, 72.118.6

The subjects of Jacques Henri Lartigue's pictures communicate a carefree sensibility, as if to say, "I don't care what I look like, I am having an adventure." Lartigue's photographs, which include some of the 20th century's most humorous images, often feature the photographer's brothers—peeling out in racecars, flying precarious-looking airplanes, and swimming in dress suits and silly hats. Sport becomes a metaphor for the energy and anarchy of modern life, with its adult-sized toys.

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Tim Davis

American (born Malawi), born 1961

The Upstate New York Olympics, 2010–11

Video: 3 screens, 50 mch HD

Edition 1 of 3, 3 DVDs

Courtesy of Greenberg Van Doren Gallery, New York

Tim Davis's three-screen video presents an alternative version of the Olympic Games. The artist himself is the sole competitor in fifty-four absurd events, including Abandoned Building Bowling, Drive-in Movie Tennis, Lawn Jockey Leapfrog, Compost Freestyle, and Flag Pole Grapple. This "Olympics" features barns, abandoned factories, middle-class suburban homes, flooded golf courses—in short, the everyday life of upstate New York. With deadpan humor, Davis gives us an everyman's Olympics for the antihero.

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***Look* Magazine, 1937–71**

Beginning in the 1930s, the biweekly magazine *Look* published photographic stories about American life. Its circulation peaked in 1969, at more than seven million. *Look* glorified and humanized the day's sports stars through carefully edited photographs presented as picture stories. These reflect an intimate access to the featured athletes that is rare today, when images are heavily stage-managed by athletes, sports agencies, and professional teams.

Look's talented staff of photographers included Frank Bauman, Howard Bingham, Marvin E. Newman, Garry Winogrand, Stanley Kubrick, and many others. Stanley Kubrick joined *Look* at the age of seventeen and stayed for five years before going on to direct films such as *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *A Clockwork Orange*, and *The Shining*. Kubrick's "Day in the Life" photo story on Rocky Graziano shows Graziano not only in the locker room preparing for a fight, but also mingling with friends, being examined by doctors, showering, and sleeping in bed. It humanizes the powerful boxer as an everyman.

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Vik Muniz

Brazilian, born 1961

**Verso (The Winner in Broad Jump,
Jesse Owens), 2008**

Mixed media

Courtesy of the artist and Sikkema Jenkins & Co.

Verso is a photograph of a collage re-creation of the back of *1936 Olympic Games in Berlin*, showing the contexts and captions for the original 1936 photograph.

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Unknown photographer
United Press International Press Photograph,
New York Times Press Archive

**A Guerrilla (Black September guerrillas kidnap
Israeli athletes, Munich, September 1972)**

Gelatin silver print

Private collection

The photographs are gray and grainy, unremarkable and abstract. Yet the event they mark is unforgettable and historic. In the top image, a man wearing a black mask stands on an apartment balcony, framed by the horizontal and vertical lines of the concrete brutalist architecture. He is one of eight members of the Palestinian terrorist group Black September that took Israeli athletes and coaches hostage in the athletes' housing villages on September 5, 1972, at the Munich Olympics. The lower image shows a masked man in a white hat speaking to an Olympic official. These are sports photographs and historical documents. They recall for us the tragic events that would follow: the deaths of eleven Israelis, five Palestinians, and a German policeman.



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Robert Mapplethorpe

American, 1946–89

Arnold Schwarzenegger, 1976

Gelatin silver print

Curtis Galleries, Minneapolis

Robert Mapplethorpe's portrait accentuates the muscular body of Arnold Schwarzenegger, Mr. Olympia seven times during his bodybuilding career. Framed within a carefully staged composition of simple structural elements—plain wooden floor, stark white background, and flowing curtain—Schwarzenegger looks out self-consciously at the camera, arms behind his back and legs in a semi-squat to accent his muscles. An aspiring actor, the much photographed Schwarzenegger later became an international movie star, the thirty-eighth governor of California, and part of the celebrated Kennedy family.

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Hank Willis Thomas

American, born 1976

Smokin' Joe Ain't J'mama, 1978/2006

Lightjet print

Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

Captions connect the dots. In newspapers, they are meant to be descriptive and objective. In advertising, they are brief and catchy. With photographs, they can tell stories. Hank Willis Thomas's work, however, suggests that captions also hide stories. In the series *Unbranded: Reflections in Black by Corporate America, 1968–2008*, Thomas digitally removed advertising captions, leaving us to contemplate how an advertising image speaks on its own. In viewing this photograph of the boxer Joe Frazier, the first thought that comes to mind is, Muhammad Ali would never have been in a picture like this. Outfitted in a blue bonnet, Frazier sits at a table with a stack of pancakes and tub of margarine in front of him. Willis's title, *Smokin' Joe Ain't J'mama*, alludes to the Aunt Jemima trademark for pancake mix, a female image with roots in black minstrel shows. Frazier is shown as an updated version of a black stereotype.



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Andreas Gursky

German, born 1955

Klitschko, 1999

Chromogenic print

Collection of Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, gift of Charles J. Betlach II, 2009

Andreas Gursky's *Klitschko* captures the spectacle of sports. Taken from a bird's-eye perspective, the photograph shows boxing fans simultaneously viewing a live match and a scoreboard televising the event. The artist created this experience with his own media intervention, digitally inserting the screens and their images.

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Paul Pfeiffer

American, born 1966

The Saints, 2007

17-channel sound installation

Private collection

In 1966, England and West Germany played a historic World Cup soccer final at London's Wembley Stadium in front of 93,000 people; another 400 million watched on television. This was much more than a soccer game: two formerly warring nations were competing on a new battlefield. Wembley Stadium was an ideal site for this symbolic war—a relic of the British Empire Exhibition of 1924, located in a city that had endured Germany's nighttime bombing of civilians in World War II. England's victory over Germany, 4-2 in overtime, was the country's first World Cup victory (and to date its only one). It remains part of the nation's identity and consciousness today, much as the "Miracle on Ice" win over Russia in the 1980 Olympics does in the United States.

Pfeiffer's *The Saints* explores the dynamic relationship of crowds, power, and politics in sports. The installation is based on video footage of the game and audio from a single microphone that recorded the 1966 match. But the mono recording did not capture the rabid spirit of the event, so Pfeiffer re-staged the sound with updated audio technology and a group of Filipinos hired to read and reenact the boisterous taunts and chanting of the German and British crowd. The result is part history and part performance. One of the songs from the British fans, "When the Saints Go Marching In," inspired the work's title.

Pfeiffer presents television footage of the 1966 World cup final and video of the crowd hired to re-stage the original audio.

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Douglas Gordon

Scottish, born 1966

Philippe Parreno

Algerian, born 1964

Zidane: A 21st Century Portrait, 2007

Video

Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin

Gordon and Parreno offer viewers the sensation of being a star soccer player with thousands of fans cheering live and millions watching on television. This is a moving, updated portrait of the athlete as icon in the media world. The artists used seventeen cameras to record the French soccer star Zidane during an entire 90-minute match between Real Madrid and Villarreal on April 23, 2005, at Madrid's Santiago Bernabéu stadium.

The film reminds us that today's athletes play under the watchful gaze of multiple cameras, from the sophisticated commercial equipment of professionals to the portable cameras of fans which click and flash throughout games.

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American Sports, 1970: Or How We Spent the War in Vietnam

In 1970, shortly before the Kent State shootings, Tod Papageorge was awarded a Guggenheim Foundation grant for a project that would “document as clearly and as completely as possible the phenomenon of professional sport in America.” The country’s escalating war in Vietnam and debate about the war’s moral and strategic foundation were the context for the resulting series of photographs, *American Sports, 1970: Or How We Spent the War in Vietnam*.

The artist traveled for eight months to sporting events throughout the United States, including the World Series, the Cotton Bowl, the Preakness Stakes, and the Indianapolis 500. On view are nine photographs from the thousands that he took. Experimenting with a wide-angle lens, Papageorge investigated the interactions and expressions of sports crowds during this explosive time in American history.

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Tod Papageorge

American, born 1940

Cotton Bowl (Notre Dame vs. Texas), Cotton Bowl Stadium, Dallas, January 1, 1971

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy Pace/MacGill Gallery, New York

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Tod Papageorge

American, born 1940

**Iron Bowl (Auburn vs. Alabama), Legion Field,
Birmingham, Alabama, November 28, 1970**

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy Pace/MacGill Gallery, New York

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Tod Papageorge

American, born 1940

**Iron Bowl (Auburn vs. Alabama), Legion Field,
Birmingham, Alabama, November 28, 1970**

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy Pace/MacGill Gallery, New York

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Tod Papageorge

American, born 1940

**Opening Day (Boston vs. New York),
Yankee Stadium, New York, April 7, 1970**

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy Pace/MacGill Gallery, New York

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Tod Papageorge

American, born 1940

Shea Stadium, New York, 1970

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy Pace/MacGill Gallery, New York

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Tod Papageorge

American, born 1940

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Knockout

Sports are filled with exhilarating moments that photographs memorialize: baseball's home run, football's leaping catch for a touchdown, swimming's winning touch, track and horse racing's finishing line, and basketball's dunk. Most pictures, however, fail to capture the excitement and drama of live action. Boxing photographs are different. Few moments in sports are as spectacular, final, and horrific as the knockout punch. The camera reveals the equalizing effect of the knockout on even the most muscular bodies and resilient people. In many of the pictures displayed here, postures and gestures are repeated. When the body is in pain, it retreats into a few powerless poses. The conscious mind shuts down and limbs go limp as the body falls toward the mat for the ten-second count.

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Peter J. Cohen, an avid collector of snapshot photographs, scours photography fairs, flea markets, and eBay to find quirky images by unknown amateur photographers. These works from Cohen's large collection offer a glimpse into odd and exciting photographic "accidents" that reveal fresh viewpoints of daily life and past experiences.



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Cory Arcangel

American, born 1978

***Masters*, 2011**

Hacked Qmotions indoor golf simulator, PlayStation video game console, Tiger Woods '99 PGA Tour golf game disk, golf clubs, and artificial grass

Collection of Beth and Richard Marcus

This is an interactive work; the artist invites you to pick up a golf club and test your putting stroke.

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United Artists

***College*, 1927**

Joseph M. Schenck, producer

Starring Buster Keaton, Anne Cornwall, and Harold Goodwin

Excerpt from the original 66-minute film

College presents a familiar narrative that pits the academic against the jock. Buster Keaton's character, a high-school valedictorian and clumsy non-athlete, lectures his fellow students about the ills of sports in his graduation speech. In college, however, in an attempt to win the heart of a girl who is dating an athlete, he takes up baseball, track and field, and rowing. Made several decades before the expansion of sports via television, *College* underscores long-standing debates about the role of sports in culture and society.

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Firing Line with William F. Buckley, Jr.

Muhammad Ali and the Negro Movement, 1968

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1972 Olympics

ABC News

Reported by Jim McKay

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