

Face Value: Celebrity Press Photography

For MoMA's founding film curator, Iris Barry, building an archive of images that documented the history of motion pictures was second only to collecting films. Photographs from the study collection that she created were among the first works exhibited in MoMA's theater gallery. Barry's initiative eventually led to the acquisition of editorial archives from Photoplay (1911–80) and Dell (1921–76), leading fan magazine publishers supporting the Hollywood star system. The portrait photography featured in these publications was produced by film studios to promote the glamorous celebrities under contract to them. *Face Value* looks at these images and surveys how they were manipulated for public consumption in the decades before digital tools, AI technology, and social media revolutionized the process.

Over sixty photographers are represented in this installation, which intermingles images that survive untouched with those that show evidence of the hands-on practices that readied them for the press. The standard techniques used—silhouetting, in-painting, masking, sectioning, and collage—were applied not only to photographs of entertainers but to sports figures, socialites, and politicians as well. Organized in suites that highlight radical editing practices, stylized visual motifs, and the gender stereotypes inherent in the studio system, the exhibition offers a demystifying perspective on the glamour of celebrity.



Issues of *Fans' Star Library* magazine, featuring Elvis Presley (no. 13, 1959) and Harry Belafonte (no. 9, 1958)

Organized by Ron Magliozzi, Curator, with Katie Trainor, Senior Collections Manager, and Cara Shatzman, Collection Specialist, Department of Film.

CHANEL

Film at MoMA is made possible by CHANEL.

Additional support is provided by the Annual Film Fund. Leadership support for the Annual Film Fund is provided by Debra and Leon D. Black, with major funding from The Contemporary Arts Council of The Museum of Modern Art, The International Council of The Museum of Modern Art, Jo Carole and Ronald S. Lauder, the Association of Independent Commercial Producers (AICP), and The Young Patrons Council of The Museum of Modern Art.

For related content and programs, please visit mom.org/facevalue.