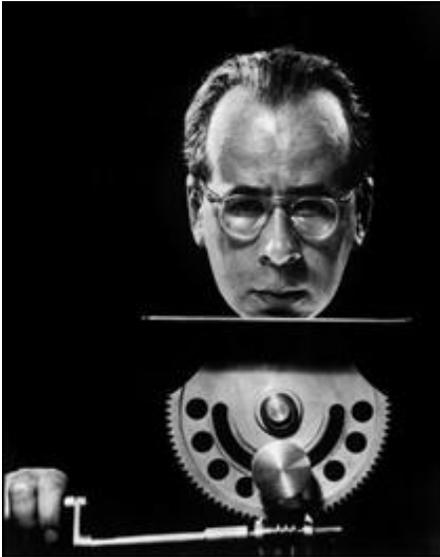


#40 May 2018 Cameraderie
Philippe Halsman (1906-1979)



Philippe Halsman was an extraordinarily inventive photographer. In the 1930s, he designed, and had custom-built for him, an innovative twin-lens reflex camera, so that his portrait subjects would look at him behind the camera, not at him standing aside of a view camera. He even had a theory of photographic inventiveness that governed his highly original and experimental shots.

Here is the Wikipedia article on Halsman: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philippe_Halsman.

I showed a second portrait of Halsman above, turning a summersault, because his most famous book is probably his *Jump Book*, filled with portraits of famous people, whom Halsman asked to pose in the middle of jumping in the air.

Here is the official Halsman website: <http://philippehalsman.com/>. It is filled with portraits of famous people that you may have seen before. Please go there and browse through the faces and figures of the 20th Century. You will love it. Here is the last paragraph from the official Halsman website, in the Autobiography section:

My great interest in life has been people. A human being changes continuously throughout life. His thoughts and moods change, his expressions and even his features change. And here we come to the crucial problem of portraiture. If the likeness of a human being consists of an infinite number of different images, which one of these images should we try to capture? For me, the answer has always been, the image which reveals most completely both the exterior and the interior of the subject. Such a picture is called a portrait. A true portrait should, today and a hundred years from today, be the testimony of how this person looked and what kind of human being he was.

From the Wikipedia article, here is a discussion of Halsman's rules for creating unusual and creative photographs:

His 1961 book *Halsman on the Creation of Photographic Ideas*, discussed ways for photographers to produce unusual pieces of work by following six rules:

- the rule of the direct approach
- the rule of the unusual technique
- the rule of the added unusual feature
- the rule of the missing feature
- the rule of compounded features
- the rule of the literal or ideographic method

In his first rule, Halsman explains that being straightforward and plain creates a strong photograph.

To make an ordinary and uninteresting subject interesting and unusual, his second rule lists a variety of photographic techniques, including unusual lighting, unusual angle, unusual composition, etc.

The rule of the added unusual feature is an effort by the photographer to capture the audience's attention by drawing their eye to something unexpected by introducing an unusual feature or prop into the photograph. For example, the photograph of a little boy holding a hand grenade by [Diane Arbus](#) contains what Halsman would call an added unusual feature.

Halsman's fourth rule of "the missing feature" stimulates the viewer by going against his or her expectations.

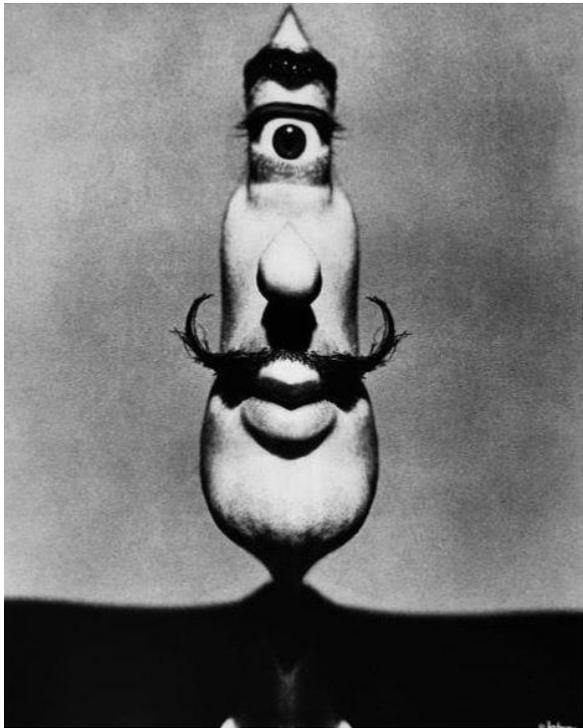
The fifth rule enlists the photographer to combine the other rules to add originality to his or her photo.

Finally, Halsman's literal or ideographic method is to illustrate a message in a photograph by depicting the subject as clearly as possible.

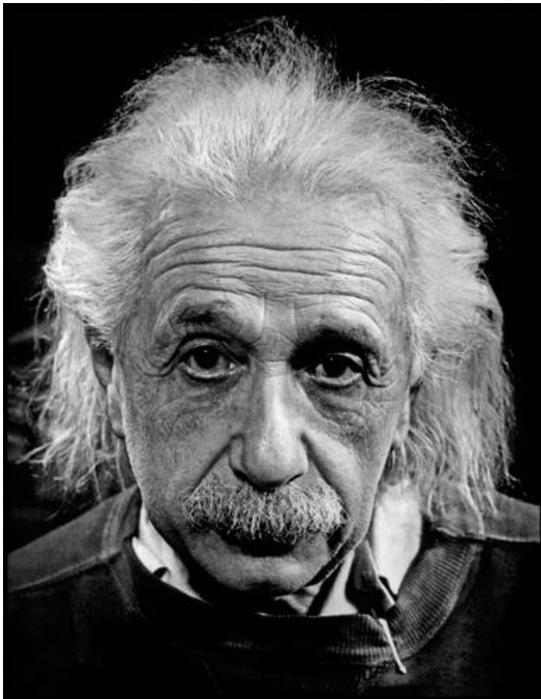
Halsman collaborated with Salvador Dali on various projects over a period of 37 years. See my earlier article on Dali, February 2018, #26, in which Dali designed and posed his famous "Dali Atomicus" image, with Halsman photographing it. Here is a reminder of the "Dali Atomicus" image.



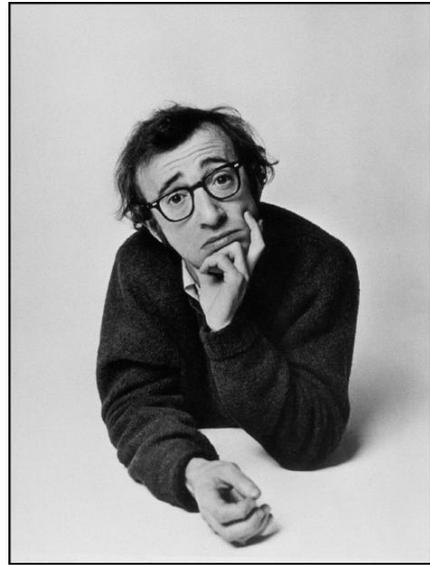
One of Halsman's other books, full of fun, was *Dali's Moustache*, celebrating the artist's moustache. Here are a couple of shot from that book.



Here are a couple of Halsman's typical portraits, of Albert Einstein and Georgia O'Keeffe.



In the course of browsing around several websites, I had the fortune to find both a studio setup shot (although of poor quality) and the finished portrait shot of Woody Allen.



From the *Jump Book*, Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis.



I am particularly fond of this shot of ballet dancer Edward Villella, not only because of the typical Halsman dramatic setting, but because I have seen Villella perform this, his trademark leap, in Balanchine's "The Prodigal Son."



Halsman did other collaborations with Dali, with Dali composing the image, and Halsman shooting it. Like "Dali Atomicus," these were often elaborately planned. Below is their famous "In Voluptas Mors," or "Voluptuous Death." Dali placed seven nude models into an assemblage that resembled a death's head. It took three hours to pose and shoot them. Here is an article about this famous image, and a copy of it below.

https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/12/03/dali-in-voluptas-mors_n_4373479.html



And here is a similar image from the two, with a painted background by Dali.



Philippe Halsman was one of the most inventive and creative photographers of the 20th century. I hope you agree with me on that, and when you see derivatives of his inventiveness in later photographers' works, you may recognize where some of those ideas sprang from.