“Don’t shoot what it looks like, shoot what it feels like.” —David Alan Harvey

An exploration of photography’s power to transform our perception, shape our identity, and preserve our collective memory.

The Inner Lens: Photography as a Practice of Presence

- **Contemplative Photography:** A practice of seeing with "the eyes of our hearts" to notice the holy in the everyday.
- **Miksang (Tibetan: "good eye"):** A form of contemplative photography where the eye is synchronized with the introspective mind, leading to a purer perception of reality.
- **Modern Resonance:** This ancient practice finds new life on social media, as with a TikTok creator's post captioned, **"Finding my inner peace by the sea."**

> “My photographs are the song I offer the world. They are my Namaste, my way of saying to the subject, ‘I recognize and salute the Divine within you’.”

A Path to Mindfulness, One Frame at a Time

1. Slow Down

This is where mindfulness comes in. Look around and see all the possibilities. Don't be in a hurry.

2. Breathe

Learn to relax and not be on a mission. When your mind wanders, bring it back.

3. Become a Detective

Be curious. Open your peripheral vision. Notice connections, textures, and where you fit in.

4. Go Alone

Leave distractions behind. This time is for you alone.

5. Set a Purpose

To help focus, try themes like "today I will focus on things that are red" or "today I will look for reflections."

The Lens Turns Inward: Photography as Self-Reflection

Photography projects can be a journey of self-expression and introspection. Revisiting earlier work allows for an assessment of growth in composition, lighting, and storytelling. This retrospective analysis fosters a sense of accomplishment and motivates the artist to continually evolve their voice.

“My photography... offers me endless opportunities for self-expression and self-reflection...”

Who Are We? Photography and the Construction of Identity

The Jewish Identity Project: An exhibition featuring artists exploring the hybrid cultural identity of contemporary Americans through a Jewish lens.
Challenging Stereotypes: Photography documents conversion, adoption, intermarriage, and multi-racial families, questioning homoge.
Provocative Questions: Who is a Jew? What does it mean to be Jewish? Who gets to decide?

Example: Dawoud Bey's project features adolescents from diverse backgrounds (a son of a Belizean father and Jewish mother; Ethiopian adoptees) sharing their thoughts on race and religion.

The Claim of a ‘Jewish Eye’

Poses the question from scholar Alan Trachtenberg: Is there a “Jewish eye” in photography?
It highlights the historical predominance of Jews in the field, from inventors and critics to studio owners and photojournalists.
Introduces photographer William Klein’s influential dichotomy between “Jewish” and “goyish” photography.

“If you look at modern photography you find, on one hand, the Weegees, the Diane Arbuses, the Robert Franks – funky photographers. And then you have people who go out in the woods. Ansel Adams, Weston. It’s like black and white jazz.”

—William Klein

Two Ways of Seeing: The Street and The Woods

The “Funky” Eye

Captures the raw, energetic, and unpredictable human drama of the city. It is intimate, unstaged, and deeply connected to the social fabric.

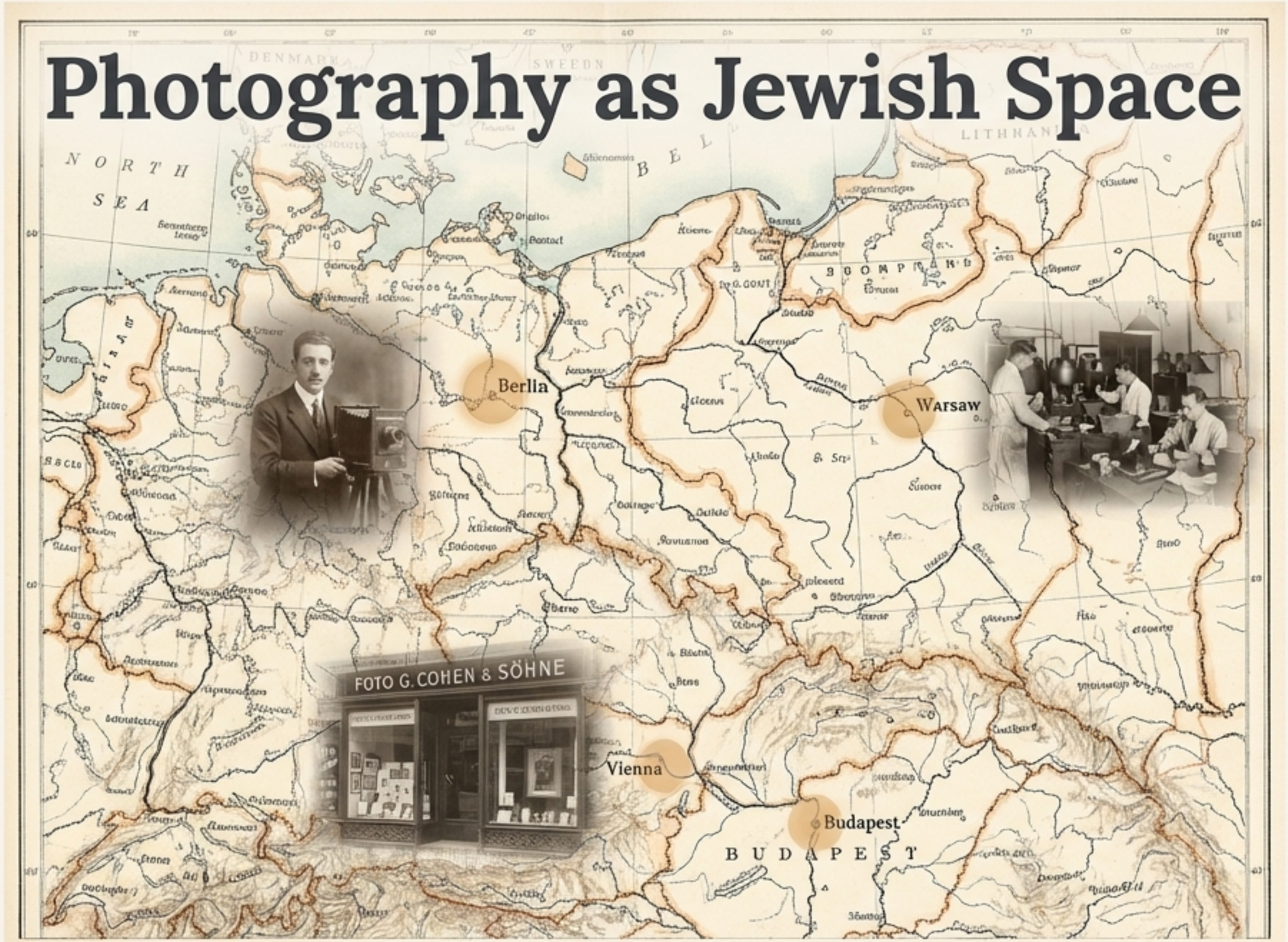
The “Proprietary” Eye

A sublime, technically perfect, and carefully composed landscape. It radiates a sense of order, quiet majesty, and a connection to nature that is more formal and detached from human chaos.

The Photo League: A Collective Lens on a More Just Society

- **Who**: A cooperative of socially conscious photographers active in New York from 1936-1951.
- **Identity**: Predominantly composed of left-wing, working-class, second-generation Jewish immigrants. Members included Sol Libsohn, Sid Grossman, and Helen Levitt.
- **Mission:** To use photography as a “social and political tool” to document the lives of the working class and advocate for social change.
- **Approach:** Focused on people, not skylines. Believed in reciprocity, often giving prints to the people they photographed.

Photography as Jewish Space



* Before the Nazi onslaught, photography in Central Europe was, in large measure, a Jewish space.
* Jews participated in photography at a higher rate than nearly any other non-religious profession.
* This “Jewish space" was expansive, encompassing:
  * Practitioners (photographers, retouchers)
  * Commerce (studio and store owners)
  * Media (editors and agents)
* This predominance profoundly shaped photographic trends in Europe and, through emigration, in Britain and the United States.

A Flourishing World, Before the Vanishing

- **Pioneering Photojournalists**: **Erich Salomon** and Leo Rosenthal reached vast international audiences.
- **Masters of Advertising**: Jewish women like **Yva** and **Ilse Bing** were among the most prolific advertising photographers.
- **A Female-Led Industry**: The “Shooting Girls” exhibition in Vienna identified over forty quality photo studios owned and run by Jewish women.
- **Chronicler of the Shtetl**: **Roman Vishniac** began his monumental project in the mid-1930s, an “assignment from God” to document the lives of Jews in Eastern Europe.

The Weaponized Lens: Photography as a Tool of Propaganda and Control

BEFORE

AFTER

Manipulation for Deception: The Nazis used photo manipulation for propaganda, paralleled by Stalin's removal of Trotsky from official photos.

Fabricating History: Heinrich Hoffmann manipulated a photo to insert Hitler into a crowd celebrating the outbreak of WWI.

The Power of Retouching: The Nazis needed expert retouchers to alter photos of their own elite who often did not fit the "Aryan" stereotype.

A Tool of Bureaucracy: Jewish photo businesses were often forced to serve Jews needing passport photos for emigration, turning the camera into an instrument of state control.

A Record of Annihilation

The Plunder of a Livelihood: The story of Harvey Fireside's father, whose Viennese photo store was plundered by Hitler Youth during Reichskristallnacht, jamming cameras and equipment into motorcycle sidecars.

125 **...at least 125 Jewish photographers and photo workers were recorded among the 95,000 who died at the Mauthausen concentration camp. This is likely an undercount.**

The Death of a Pioneer: Yva, a great fashion photographer, worked as an X-ray technician in Berlin's Jewish hospital until she was deported to her death at Sobibor in 1942.

The Lens as an Act of Resistance and Humanity

Documenting Atrocities

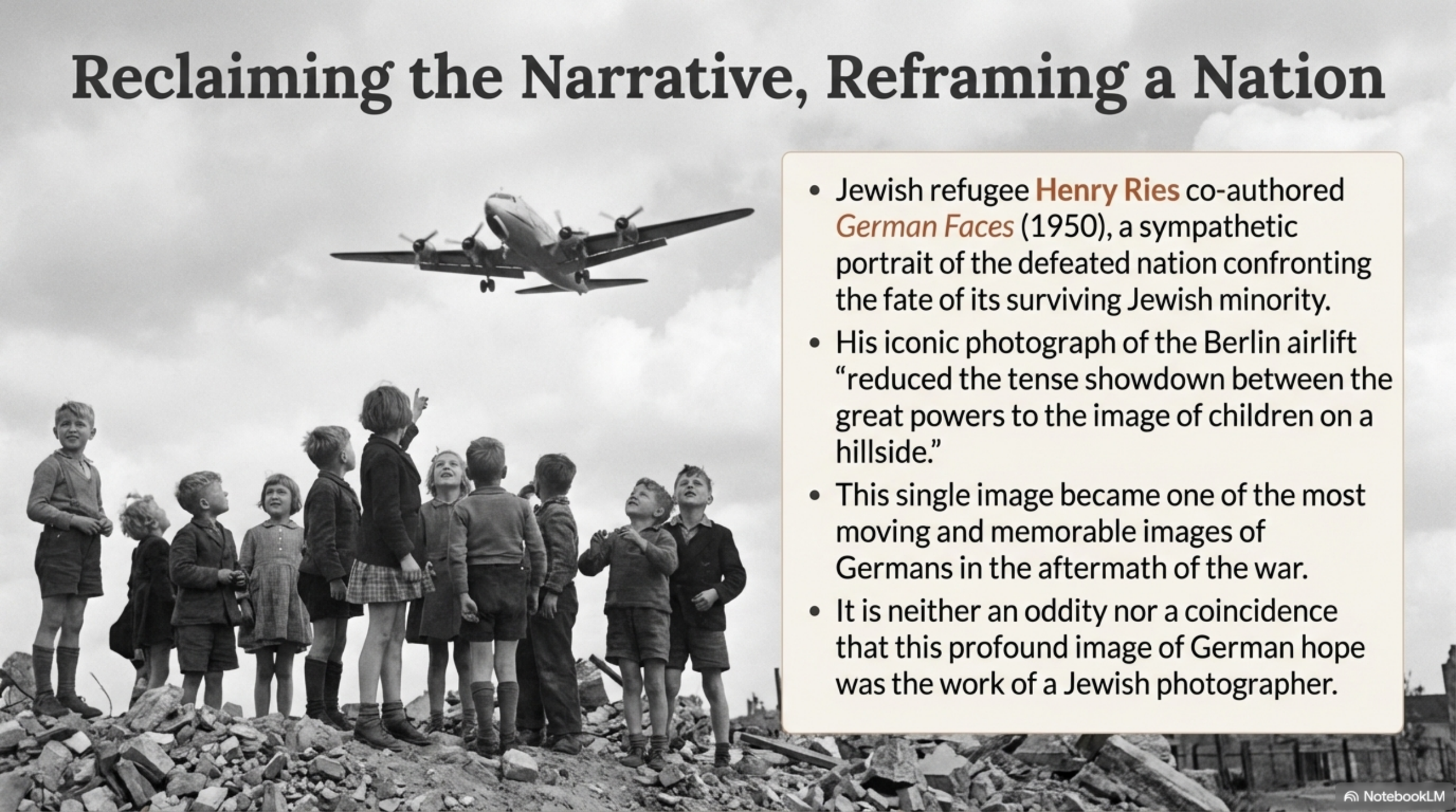
In the Radom ghetto, photographer Bernard Gotfryd undertook a dangerous assignment from the Polish underground: secretly duplicating negatives of photos that revealed Nazi atrocities, to be used as evidence.

An Unlikely Savior

Helmut Reiner, the Gestapo headquarters photographer, saved his Jewish negative retoucher, Orenstein. Reiner respected Orenstein's "superb craftsmanship" and needed his expertise to make the Nazi elite look more "Aryan" in official photos.

> This act highlights the deep-seated nature of the "Jewish space" in photography—that even the Nazis regarded it as normal to have Jews taking care of the medium.

Reclaiming the Narrative, Reframing a Nation



- Jewish refugee **Henry Ries** co-authored *German Faces* (1950), a sympathetic portrait of the defeated nation confronting the fate of its surviving Jewish minority.
- His iconic photograph of the Berlin airlift "reduced the tense showdown between the great powers to the image of children on a hillside."
- This single image became one of the most moving and memorable images of Germans in the aftermath of the war.
- It is neither an oddity nor a coincidence that this profound image of German hope was the work of a Jewish photographer.

The Power of the Image: From Inner Stillness to Collective Memory

Photography's transformative power operates on every scale. It begins as a **contemplative act**—a way to find peace, see the sacred in the mundane, and connect with our inner selves.

It expands to become a tool for exploring **identity**, building community, and defining a collective sensibility—a "Jewish eye" that saw the city's soul.

Ultimately, it becomes an indispensable **witness to history**—documenting a vanished world, resisting oppression, and creating the enduring images that shape our collective memory.

"No matter how slow the film, Spirit always stands still long enough for the photographer it has chosen." —Minor White