

Lesson 2: Before There Was Photoshop

It's tempting to think that photo manipulation was born with the invention of Adobe Photoshop. While it is indeed true that image editing software and technology have made it faster and easier than ever to “doctor” photos, photo manipulation dates back as far as the invention of the camera. In this lesson students take a look at some famous photo manipulations used to alter perception and shape history. They will also consider how new technologies have made this practice even more commonplace.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will...

- Understand how photo manipulation can change our perceptions, and even alter history.
- Learn that photo manipulation was in practice even before online tools made it easier and more commonplace.
- Start to recognize photo manipulations in modern media.

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

Ask students if they have ever altered or enhanced a photo they have taken and posted. Then ask them *how* they manipulated these photos. Ask: *Did you use Photoshop? Did you use the photo-enhancing tools available within a social media site? If so, which ones?* After students have shared their examples, point out that most people today have probably use photo-manipulation tools at one time or another.

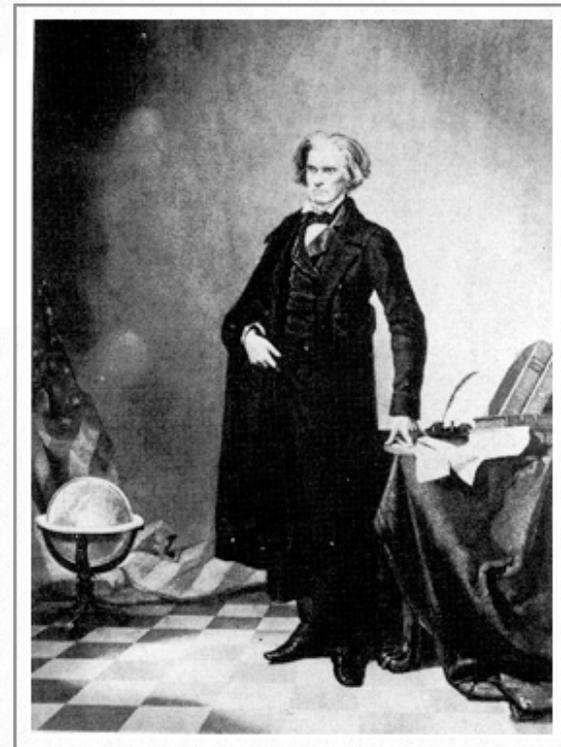
THE LESSON

1. Tell students that while it is tempting to think of photo manipulation as a modern-day phenomenon, actually it is as old as photography itself. For example, project this famous image of Abraham Lincoln (also included in the following pages) and ask students if they think it has been altered, and if so, how?



THE LESSON, continued...

- Tell students that the previous photo is actually a composite of Lincoln's head and Southern politician John Calhoun's body (seen right).
- Another famous historical manipulation is that of General Ulysses S. Grant on a horse in front of troops, circa 1864 (also on the following pages). Explain to students that often these manipulations were done to tell a different story, or to enhance the appeal or stature (in the Lincoln example) of the subject.
- Show:** Go through each of the images that follow with your students (from *TIME Magazine's Top 10 Digital Doctored Photos*), projecting them one at a time to show the "before" photo, reading the description, and discussing it before moving on to the "after" picture and its explanation. Ask your students:



- *Does the photo manipulation change the meaning of the photo for you?*
- *How does its meaning change?*
- *Does the change include bias (prejudice in favor of or against something), if so what is it?*
- *Is the change significant? Explain.*

HOMEWORK

Ask students to keep an eye out for photo manipulations they see and to either screen shot and email them to you (easiest), print them out (or cut them out if they are in print) and bring them to your next class meeting.

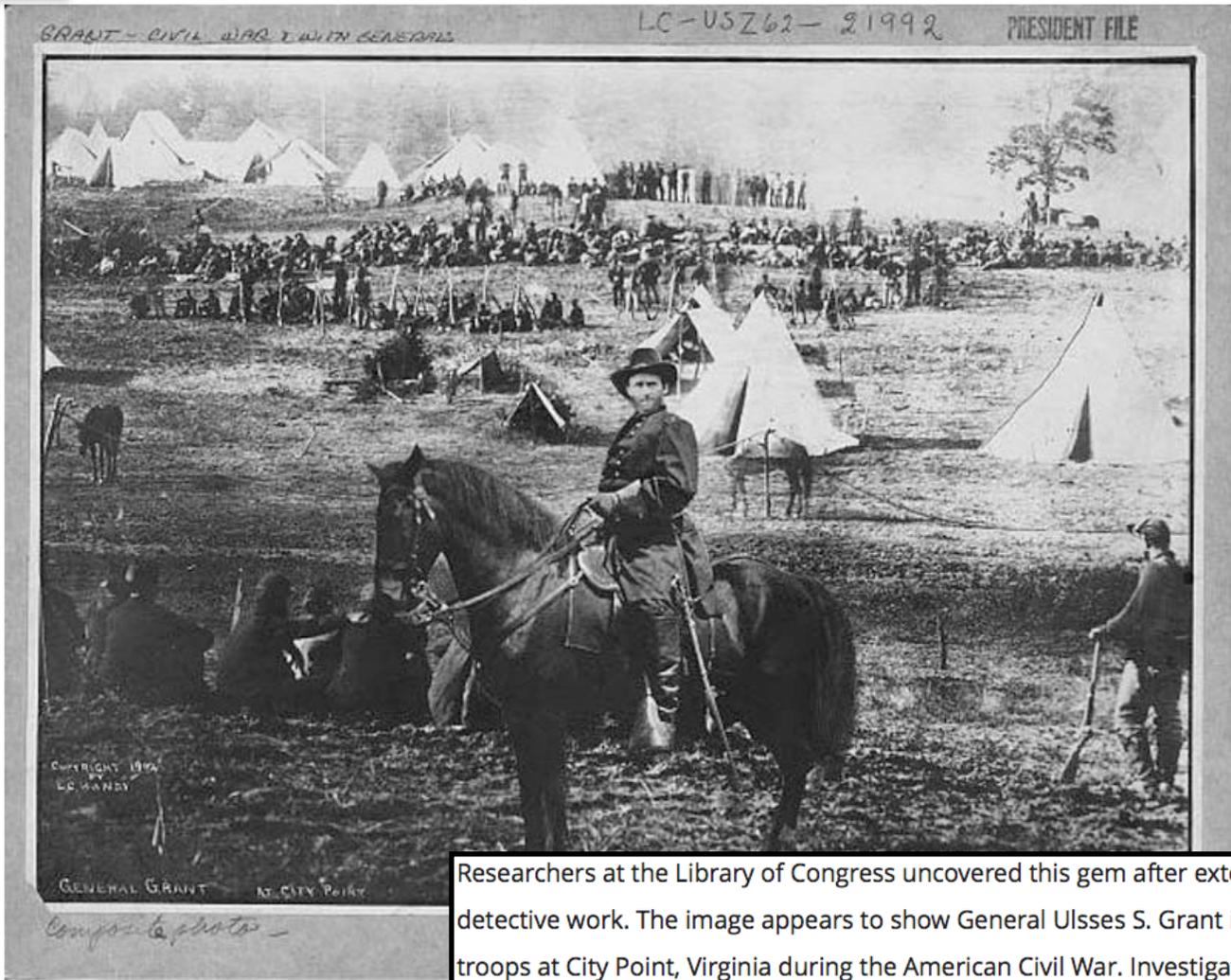
GOAL

To help students recognize and detect photo manipulations and to consider whether the manipulation may have altered the "story" of the photo.

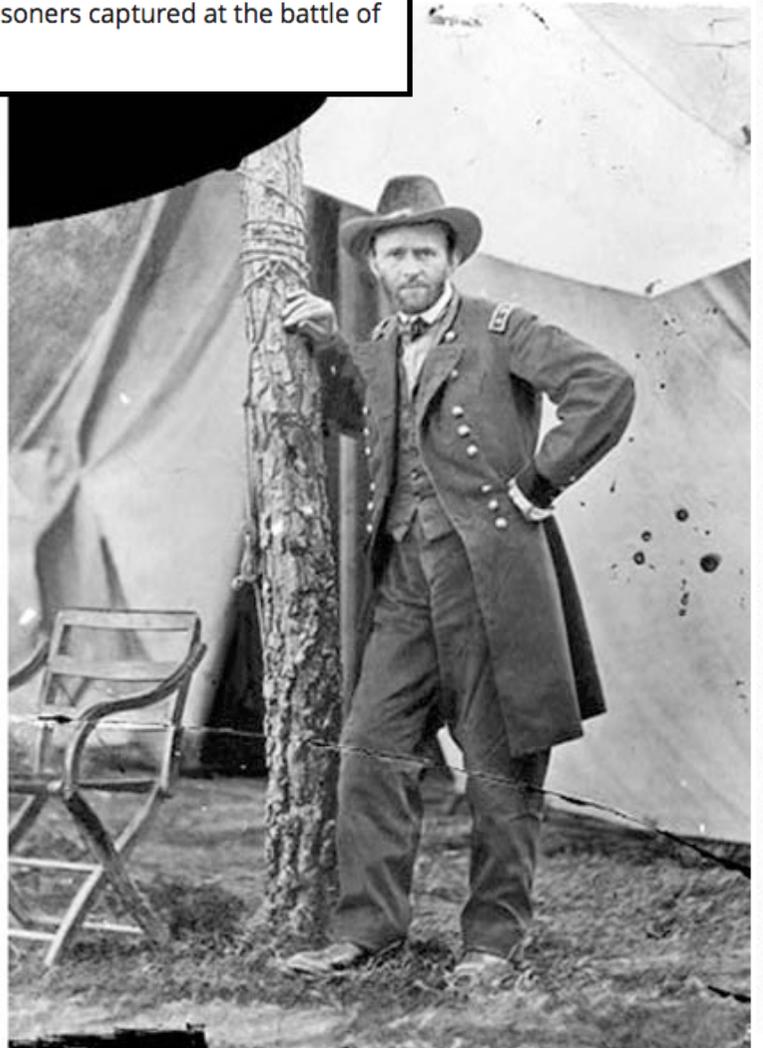
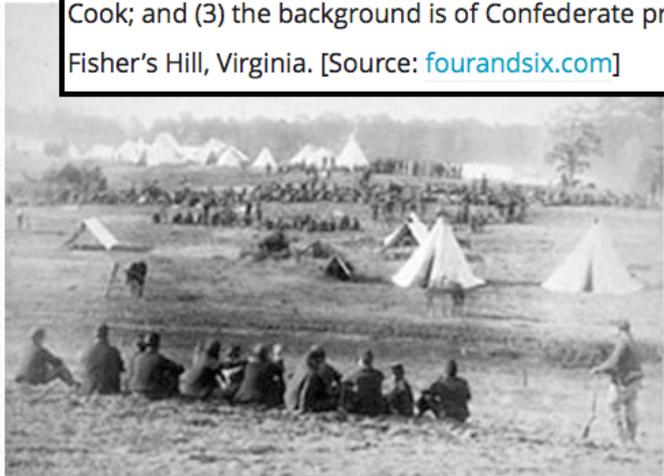
Reference:

[TIME Magazine's Top 10 Digitally Doctored Photos](#)





Researchers at the Library of Congress uncovered this gem after extensive detective work. The image appears to show General Ulysses S. Grant in front of his troops at City Point, Virginia during the American Civil War. Investigation now shows the image to be made of three separate prints: (1) the head is taken from a portrait of Grant; (2) the horse and body are those of Major General Alexander M. Cook; and (3) the background is of Confederate prisoners captured at the battle of Fisher's Hill, Virginia. [Source: fourandsix.com]





MATHEW BRADY / LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

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Civil War Generals, c. 1865

Generally regarded as the world's first commercially successful photojournalist, Mathew Brady was also one of the medium's most accomplished manipulators. In this group portrait of William Tecumseh Sherman and his top officers, he added one figure. For the record, the men are, standing, from left: Oliver Otis Howard, William Babcock Hazen, Jefferson Columbus Davis and Joseph Anthony Mower; seated, from left: John Alexander Logan, Sherman, Henry Warner Slocum and Francis P. Blair.



MATHEW BRADY / LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

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The Original Image

Brady added Blair at the far right. One of Sherman's corps commanders in the critical final offensive in Georgia, Blair led the XVII Corps, which protected the rear of Sherman's army during the Atlanta campaign. Like the other men in the photo, he played an important role in the March to the Sea, helping deliver one of the final blows to the Confederate cause.



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Lenin Addresses the Troops, 1920

One of the most widely reproduced scenes of the Russian Revolution, this photograph was taken by G.P. Goldshtein and was published in myriad forms during the Soviet era. The moment captures Lenin exhorting soldiers from the Red Army as they prepare to depart for the Polish front, where they would fight the troops of Josef Pilsudski.



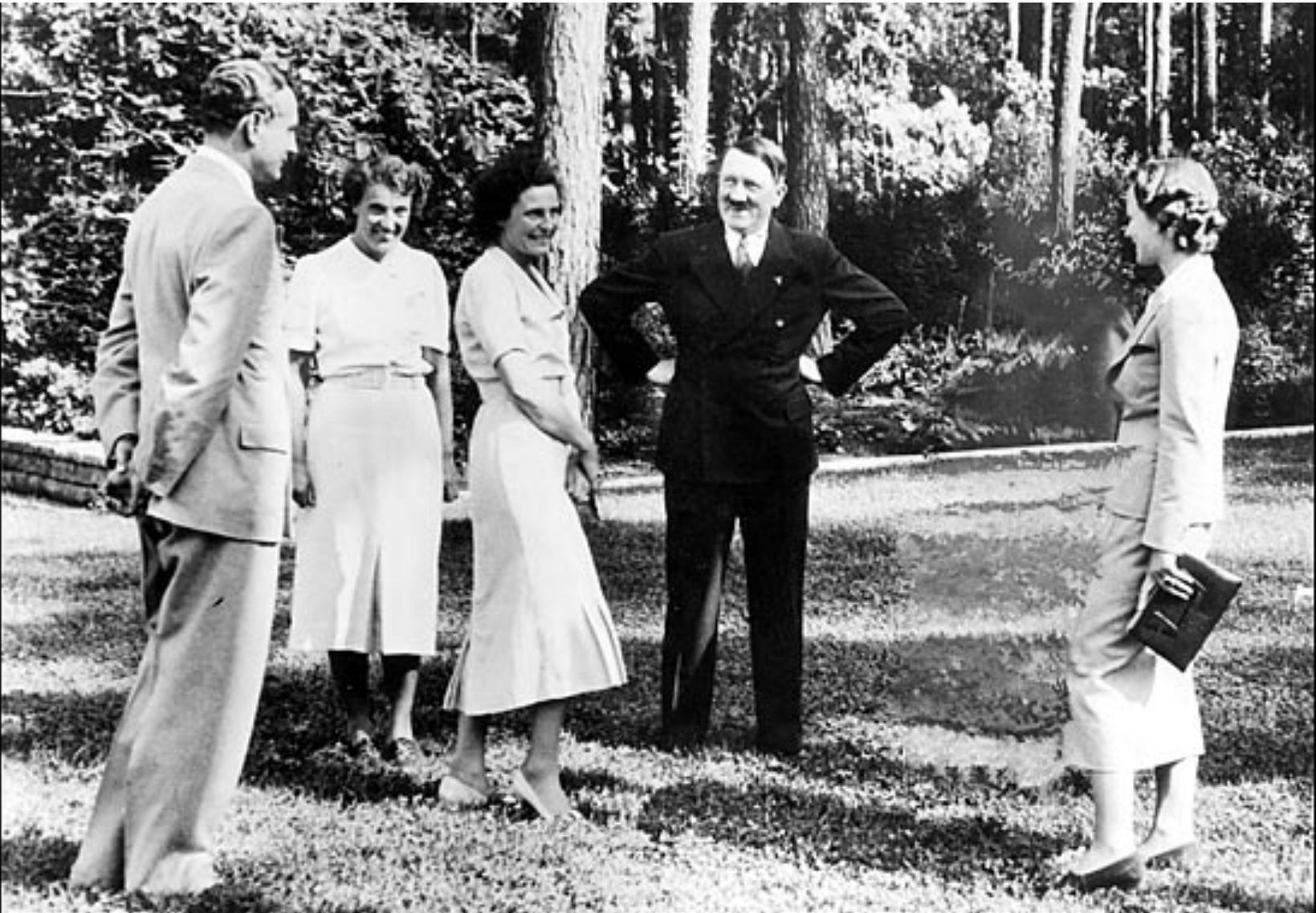
MANSELL / TIME LIFE PICTURES / GETTY

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The Original Scene

Taken within seconds of the preceding photo, this frame reveals that Lenin was joined that day by fellow Central Committee members Leon Trotsky, who stands in hat and mustache on the stairs to the right of the podium, and Lev Kamenev, who stands behind him. Perceived by Stalin as rivals to his power, both men were ultimately purged and their contributions to the revolution largely eliminated from the historical record. Though the photograph was widely published with the two men present during the 1920s, it was reproduced with stairs in their place for most of the Soviet era, even during the Gorbachev period.



SÜDDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG PHOTO

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Hitler Meets with Leni Riefenstahl, 1937

The Nazi filmmaker, center, is visited by the Führer in Berlin. They are joined by, at far left, her brother Heinz, and at far right, his wife Ilse. Note the ghostly outline next to Ilse in the middle right of the frame.



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The Original Image

The missing figure turns out to be none other than Joseph Goebbels, the Third Reich's top propagandist and one of the architects of the Holocaust. It remains a mystery why Hitler had his loyal colleague erased from this photo; shortly after it was taken, history notes, Goebbels' standing with the Führer suffered a critical blow as Hitler became aware of his lieutenant's affair with an actress.



JOHN FILO / AP

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Kent State, 1970

Fourteen-year-old Mary Ann Vecchio kneels over the body of Jeffrey Miller, a student at the university who was killed by National Guardsmen during a protest against the war in Vietnam. This Pulitzer Prize–winning photograph, taken by photojournalism student John Filo, became an icon of the tumultuous period.



JOHN FILO / AP

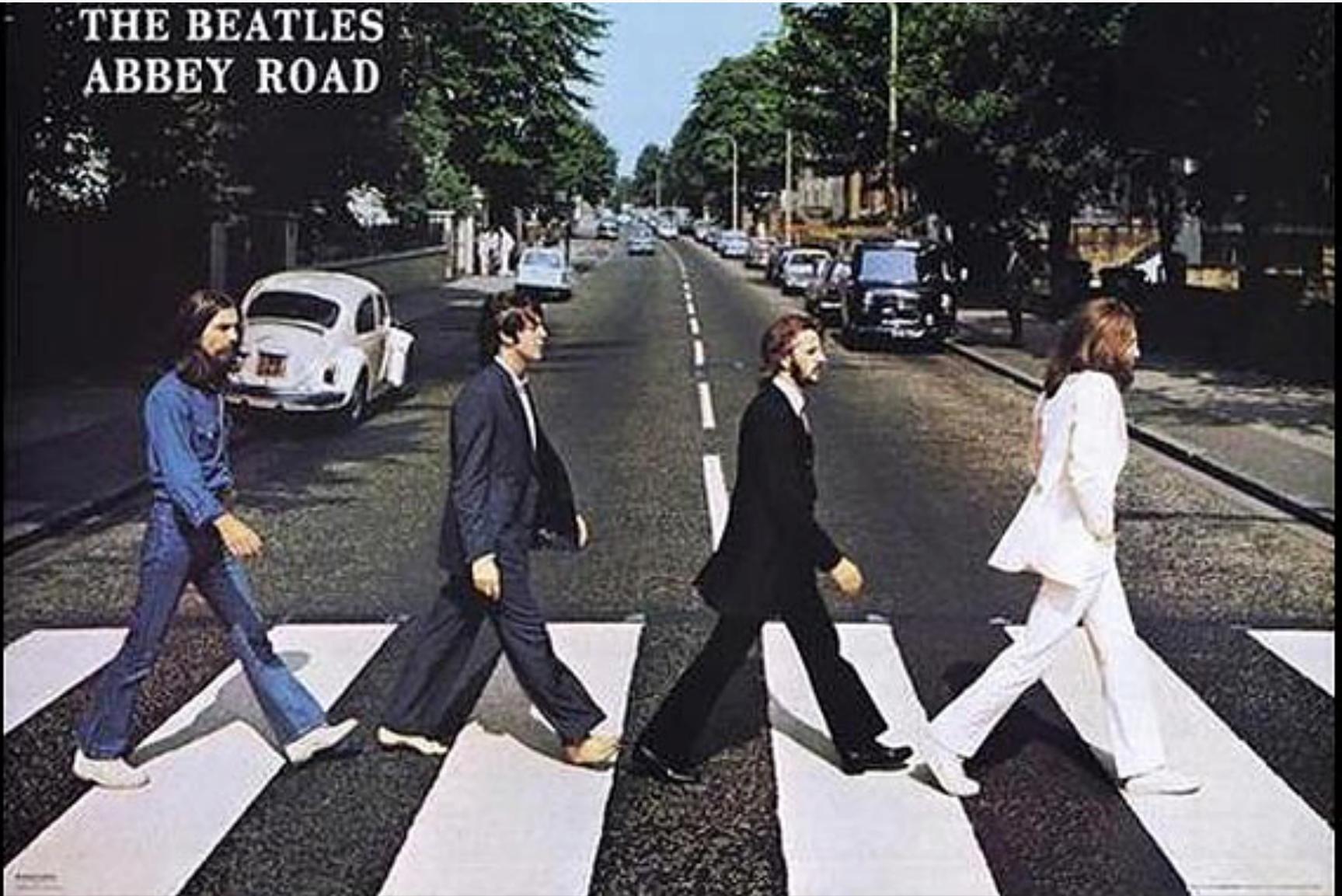
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The Original Image

For all its drama, the Kent State photo violated one of the cardinal rules of photographic composition: the fence post in the field behind Vecchio terminates at the top of her head, almost as if a giant nail has fallen into her skull. When the image was published in *Life* magazine that week, the editors opted to remove it.

THE BEATLES ABBEY ROAD



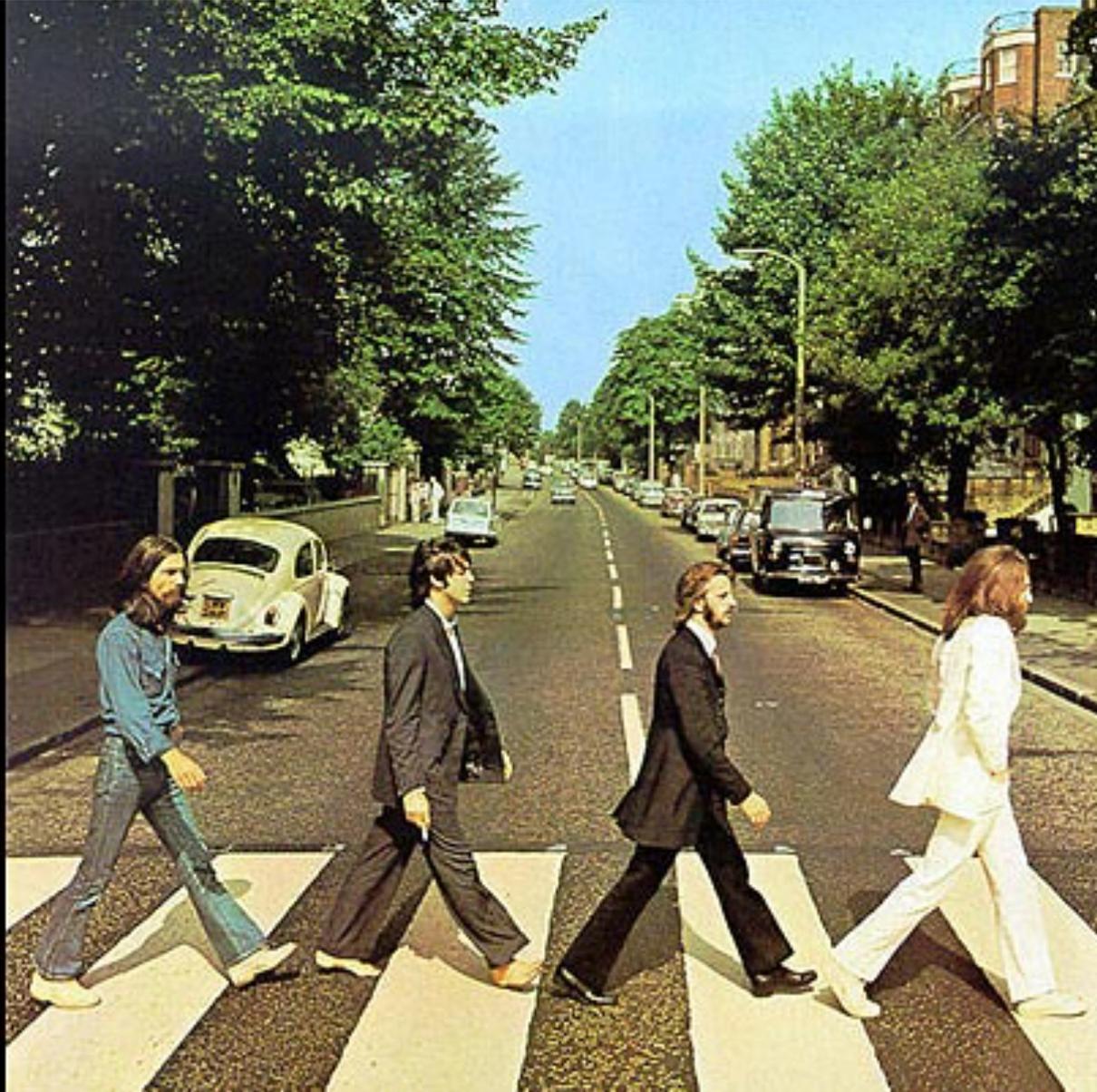
APPLE

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The Beatles' *Abbey Road* Poster

Though it is true that this rectangular poster celebrating the Beatles' second-to-last release is cropped differently than the original square LP cover, it features one additional, more significant alteration of the original (and it's not Paul McCartney's lack of footwear).



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The Original Artwork

Some American publishers decided to remove the cigarette from Paul's right hand without getting permission from him or Apple Records, which owns the right to the image. Said an Apple spokesman: "It seems these poster companies got a little carried away."



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TV Guide's Oprah Winfrey Cover, 1989

This cover story about the daytime talk-show host contains a pair of extreme manipulations. The first, of course, is the pile of money she sits on.



NEAL PETERS COLLECTION

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The Original Image

Remarkably, Oprah's head has been spliced onto the body of glam actress Ann-Margaret. The manipulation was immediately detected by Ann-Margaret's fashion designer Bob Mackie, who created the gown.



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Newsweek's Martha Stewart Cover, 2005

For a story about Martha Stewart's rosy career prospects upon her release from prison, the editors of *Newsweek* ran this digital composite, credited to Michael Elins, of Stewart's head on the body of a model.



RON GALELLA / WIREIMAGE / GETTY

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The Original Image

Taken at the Council of Fashion Designers of America Fashion Awards nine months before *Newsweek's* story was published, the original shot captures the queen of domesticity in a strangely unflattering white coat. To compound matters, the editors credited the head shot to Marc Bryan-Brown, when it was in fact taken by veteran paparazzo Ron Galella.



SEPAH NEWS / CORBIS

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Iranian Missile Test, 2008

Many major newspapers ran this image, released by Sepah News, a media outlet associated with Iran's Revolutionary Guard, that shows the test firing of a Shahab-3 missile. The high-speed ballistic missile was said to be capable of traveling 2,000 km, thereby putting Iran within striking range of Israel.



SEPAH NEWS / CORBIS

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The Original Image

In order to conceal that the second missile from the right had not fired, somewhere in the editorial process it was decided that it would be better to paste a successful launch in its place.



KCNA / AFP / GETTY

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Kim Jong Il and North Korean Troops, c. 2009

Western observers of the PRK have long suspected that the photographs released by KCNA, North Korea's official news agency, are routinely manipulated to portray leader Kim Jong Il in the best possible light. This group photo, released in the wake of rumors that Kim had suffered a stroke, was closely scrutinized for inconsistencies. It purports to show him in the company of an honored regiment.



KCNA / AFP / GETTY

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Close-Up of the Original

Analysts zeroed in on this area of the photograph, where portions of the reviewing stand can be seen in, while the quality of the wood or metal also seems to differ, suggesting that Kim was inserted into the photo after the fact.



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Benjamin Netanyahu and His Cabinet, 2009

The Israeli newspaper *Yated Neeman* published this version of a group photo of Netanyahu, the country's newly elected Prime Minister, front left, with President Shimon Peres, front right, and members of Netanyahu's new government.



MENAHEM KAHANA / AFP / GETTY

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The Original Image

An unaltered version of the photo reveals that the newspaper has replaced the two female Cabinet members, Limor Livnat and Sofa Landver, with men's faces. The faces belong to ministers Ariel Atias and Moshe Kachlon, who in the original photograph can be seen toward the periphery of the group (standing, second from left and second from right). In *Yated Neeman's* version of the image, they have been cropped out. Much of the newspaper's readership consists of ultra-Orthodox readers who do not think it proper for women to serve in the government.