he became the on-site photographer for the remainder of the decade. The influential and the famous passed in front of Zerbe’s camera: Cary Grant, Gloria Swanson, Clark Gable, Marlene Dietrich, Clifton Webb, Salvador Dali, Carole Lombard, Mona Williams, Brenda Frazier—Rockefellers, Astors, Whitneys—along with a few princes and princesses. The photographs he made were distributed free to magazines and newspapers, showing aspirational visions of the good life and serving as free publicity for one of the most popular nightclubs in the world.

Zerbe produced tens of thousands of pictures over several decades. During World War II he served in the Department of the Navy in the Pacific Theater and later held the title of Photo Editor for Town & Country magazine in the 1940s and 1950s. His work continued into the 1960s and 1970s as he created images for print advertisements and documented houses, parties, and celebrity gatherings. The publication in 1973 of his retrospective book, Happy Times, with text by Brendan Gill, brought his work to a younger and wider audience.

Jerome Zerbe was like many people in early 20th century United States who found the camera a fitting match for a creative impulse and a curious eye. In addition to an overview of Jerome Zerbe’s life and work, this exhibition shows his photographs in parallel with the work of other documentary photographers represented in Beinecke’s collections. The exhibition cases on the mezzanine level explore how other photographers pictured social strata and forms of celebrity and displayed variant ways of engaging with their subjects; they offer glimpses into communities that Zerbe never documented. On view are photographs by Carl Van Vechten, Eve Arnold, Inge Morath, and Harry Adams—which serve as counterparts to Zerbe’s view of America in the 20th century.

The Jerome Zerbe Papers and Photographs, donated by Frederick R. Koch, (Yale School of Drama, 1961 MFAD), includes over 50,000 images, in the form of negatives and as prints mounted in chronologically arranged albums.

Life of the Party: Jerome Zerbe and The Social Photograph and Michael Childers: Author! Author! are on view at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library from May 16th through August 12th, 2019.