Robert Frank dies at 94
By Philip Gefter

Robert Frank, one of the most influential photographers of the 20th century, whose visually rich and personally expressive style was pivotal in changing the course of documentary photography, died on Monday in Greenwich, Conn. He was 94.

His death, at Jeremiah Horwich Memorial Hospital in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, was confirmed by Peter MacGill, whose Pace-MacGill Gallery in Manhattan has represented Mr. Frank’s work since 1963. Mr. Frank, a Manhattan resident who had lived in Europe from 1947 to 1954, on Cape Breton Island, and recently in Switzerland, moved to New York at the age of 80.

Many photographers look to him as a role model from what he considered to be the midcentury moment of his country. He was best known for his groundbreaking book, “The Americans,” a framework of black and white photo sequences drawn from his country’s cross-country road trips in the mid-1950s and published in 1958. “The Americans,” challenged the dominant formula for photography, defined by steel, window-clear images, pictures of the workaday, the American scene, or his more urbane, movie-star lifestyle. Mr. Frank’s photographs — of low-industrial, tower-cum-prison, group-dot grocers and flat-plain beer — were cinematic, intimate, immediate. The pictures were instantly recognizable by a generation who had grown up with the magazine, but his work was not widely known by the public.

Mr. Frank was born on Sept. 21, 1924, in New York City. His father, a New York City tailor, bought him his first camera when he was 13. Mr. Frank went on to study at the Art Students League of New York and at the New Bauhaus, in Chicago. He worked for shearers, but he never studied photography.

He moved to Europe in 1947, where he spent the next two decades. In the early 1950s, he was recognized as a master of the new cultural life — were cinematic, immediately recognizably American. He was one of the first American photographers to work in Europe, where his work was widely influential.

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