

ELLIOTT ERWITT

American, born Paris 1928, died 2024.

Born in Paris in 1928 to Russian parents, Erwitt spent his childhood in Milan, then emigrated to the US, via France, with his family in 1939. As a teenager living in Hollywood, he developed an interest in photography and worked in a commercial darkroom before experimenting with photography at Los Angeles City College. In 1948 he moved to New York and exchanged janitorial work for film classes at the New School for Social Research.

Erwitt traveled in France and Italy in 1949 with his trusty Rolleiflex camera. In 1951 he was drafted for military service and undertook various photographic duties while serving in a unit of the Army Signal Corps in Germany and France.

While in New York, Erwitt met Edward Steichen, Robert Capa and Roy Stryker, the former head of the Farm Security Administration. Stryker initially hired Erwitt to work for the Standard Oil Company, where he was building up a photographic library for the company, and subsequently commissioned him to undertake a project documenting the city of Pittsburgh.

In 1953 Erwitt joined Magnum Photos and worked as a freelance photographer for Collier's, Look, Life, Holiday and other luminaries in that golden period for illustrated magazines.

In the late 1960s Erwitt served as Magnum's president for three years. He then turned to film: in the 1970s he produced several noted documentaries and in the 1980s eighteen comedy films for Home Box Office. Erwitt became known for benevolent irony, and for a humanistic sensibility traditional to the spirit of Magnum.

EDUCATION

1948/50 Film, New School for Social Research, New York, USA

1942/44 Photography, Los Angeles City College, Los Angeles, USA

EXHIBITIONS

Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA
Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., USA
Art Institute of Chicago, USA
Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, France
Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA
New South Wales Museum of Art, Australia
The Barbican, London, UK
Camera Work, Berlin, Germany
NRW-Forum Düsseldorf, Germany
Kunsthhaus, Zurich, Switzerland
Photokina, Cologne, Germany
Harry Ransom Center, Austin, Texas, USA

BOOKS

2008 Elliott Erwitt's Dogs, teNeues, Germany
2008 Elliott Erwitt's New York, teNeues, Germany
2006 Personal Best, teNeues, Germany
2005 Woof, Chronicle Books LLC, USA
2003 Elliott Erwitt's Handbook, The Quantuck Lane Press/W.W. Norton & Company, USA
2002 Snaps, Phaidon Press Ltd., USA
1999 DogsDogs, Phaidon Press Ltd., USA
1999 Museum Watching, Phaidon Press Ltd., USA
1994 Between the Sexes, W.W. Norton & Company, USA
1991 On the Beach, W.W. Norton & Company, USA
1992 To the Dogs, DAP/Scalo, Zurich
1988 Personal Exposures, W.W. Norton & Company, USA
1974 Son of Bitch, Viking, USA
1972 Photographs and Anti-Photographs, New York Graphic Society, USA