

ERWITT

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Paris, France. 1989

**[...] For all of Elliott's devotion to chance, he meets each snap at least halfway. So the looking is not unfiltered. Elliott snaps what he sees, and that is a combination of intent and opportunity [...]**

Elliott Erwitt Snaps, Phaidon, 2001. Text by Charles Flowers

## Biography

Born in Paris in 1928 to Russian parents, Elliott 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.

## Photography

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. To this day, he is for hire and continues to work for a variety of journalistic and commercial outfits.

In the late 1960s, Erwitt served as Magnum's president for three years. He then turned to film: in the 1970s, he produced several notable documentaries and in the 1980s eighteen comedy films for HBO.

Erwitt has served three terms as the president of Magnum and remains a member to this day. He has published over twenty-five books.

Erwitt is known for benevolent irony, and for a humanistic sensibility traditional to the spirit of Magnum. He lives and works in New York.

In 2015 he was awarded the **Outstanding Contribution to Photography Award by the World Photography Organization**.

## Exhibitions & Awards

### Main Solo Exhibitions

- Barbican, London,
- Reina Sofia Museum, Madrid,
- Smithsonian Institute, Washington DC
- the Museum of Modern Art, New York
- Palais de Tokyo, Paris
- Chicago Institute of Art.

### Collections (a selection)

- The Art Institute of Chicago
- The National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.
- The Cleveland Museum of Art
- Tate, London, U.K.
- Harry Ransom Center, Austin, TX
- International Center of Photography, NY, NY
- The Met Museum, NY, NY
- MoMA, NY, NY
- Centre Pompidou, Paris, France
- The Victoria and Albert Museum, London
- Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain
- SFMoMA, San Francisco, CA

**[...] For Elliott a favourite subject is the dog. He is frequently quoted to the effect that he regards this species as humans. [...]**

Elliott Erwitt Snaps, Phaidon, 2001. Text by Charles Flowers



New York, 1946



New York, 1974



California, 1955





Provence, France, 1955

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