

“Elliott Erwitt – DogDogs”

Elliott Erwitt is known for his distinctive photographs which are a celebration of the human spirit and a testament to the sublime which he reveals in everyday moments and everyday situations. As a photographer, he possessed the unique capacity to capture the essence of humanity with both his heart and his wit. Moreover, he had a unique ability to infuse his work with a sense of humor.

Elliott Erwitt’s photographs are a masterclass in visual storytelling, marked by a keen sense of timing and wit, as well as a profound understanding of the human experience. His ability to distill complex narratives into single frames is a testament to his artistic vision and his command of the photographic medium. His compositions showcase an innate feeling for visual balance and harmony. His frames are meticulously composed, drawing the viewer’s eye to the focal point, while at the same time maintaining a sense of overall equilibrium.

Gifted with a sense for visual puns, Erwitt found humor in everyday life. He created images that transcend cultural boundaries and speak to our shared experience of finding joyfulness in some of life’s comical moments. His keen sense of observation, coupled with an impeccable sense of timing, allowed him to capture the inherent humor of these fleeting moments.

One cannot describe Elliott Erwitt without acknowledging his iconic dog photographs. These images not only showcase his mastery of timing and composition but also reveal a profound understanding of the relationship we humans have with our four-legged companions. Through these playful and often humorous scenes, Erwitt captured the enduring bond that exists between people and their pets.

“Essentially, my dog pictures are pictures of people. But if I really took photos of people doing some of those things, I’d get into trouble. A lot of trouble! Besides, it is a lot easier to photograph these funny little creatures than people, as long as you don’t get bitten. Dogs don’t mind being photographed in compromising situations. So, these pictures are a “kinder, gentler” way of taking photographs that would otherwise be considered unacceptable.”

Biography:

Elliott Erwitt 1928 - 2023

Elliott Erwitt was born in France of Russian emigrant parents in 1928. His earliest years were spent in Italy. At the age of 10 he moved with his family back to France from where, in 1939, they then immigrated to the United States. They settled in New York for two years before finally moving to Los Angeles.

While attending Hollywood High School, Erwitt worked in a commercial darkroom processing “signed” prints for fans of movie stars. In 1949 he returned to Europe travelling and photographing in Italy and France thus marking the start of his professional career. Drafted into the US Army in 1951 he continued, totally apart from his military duties while stationed in New Jersey, Germany and France, to take photographs for various publications.

By good fortune while looking for work on exploratory trips to New York City prior to his military service, he met Edward Steichen, Robert Capa and Roy Stryker who liked his photographs, took a personal guiding interest in him and his work, and became significant mentors.

In 1953 freshly decommissioned from military service, Elliott Erwitt was invited to join Magnum Photos as a member by one of its founders, Robert Capa. In 1968 he became President of the prestigious agency for 3 terms.

Erwitt’s books, journalistic essays, illustrations, and advertisements have been featured in publications around the world. While continuing his work as a still photographer Erwitt began making films in the 70’s. His documentaries include BEAUTY KNOWS NO PAIN (1971), RED WHITE AND BLUE GRASS (1973) sponsored with a grant from the American Film Institute and THE GLASS MAKERS OF HEART (1977).

In the 80’s Erwitt produced seventeen comedy and satire television programs for HOME BOX OFFICE. From the 90’s he continued to lead a remarkably varied professional life encompassing many disparate aspects of photography. While actively working for magazine, industrial and advertising clients, Erwitt devoted all his spare time toward creating books and exhibitions of his work destined for galleries and museums.

A listing of one man shows at significant public venues include the Museum of Modern Art in New York, The Chicago Art Institute, the Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C., the Museum of Modern Art in Paris (Palais de Tokyo), the Kunsthaus in Zurich, the Reina Sofia Museum in Madrid, the Barbican in London, the Royal Photographic Society in Bath, the Museum of Art of New South Wales in Sydney, the Spazio Oberdan in Milan, as well as various Asian venues in China and Japan.