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## ED VAN DER ELSKEN Face to Face

21 May – 25 July 2026

Annet Gelink Gallery is pleased to present *Face to Face*, an exhibition featuring works by Ed van der Elsken, bringing together photographs from Paris, Amsterdam, and Japan.



Ed van der Elsken is known for his direct and confrontational approach to photography. Without distance or embellishment, he captured what he encountered around him. In his photographs, the viewer often feels almost physically present — as if standing in the photographer's place, being looked at directly by the people Ed met.

From the very beginning, Van der Elsken worked from his own life and experiences. His photography was intuitive, personal, and deeply connected to the world in which he moved. His first book, *Love on the Left Bank* (1956), was unique for its time: a photographic novel about the harsh post-war life in Paris, where Ed lived between 1949 and 1955.

After returning to Amsterdam, Van der Elsken spent much of his time wandering the streets around the Oude Hoogstraat and Nieuwmarkt, the neighbourhood where he lived. There he photographed everyday life and the transformations taking place in the city: the fairgrounds, the demolition of the old Jewish quarter, student protests, squatters' riots, and the worlds of addicts and nightlife. Ideally, he once said, he would have liked to have had a camera inside his head so he could photograph day and night. In 1979, he brought together his Amsterdam photographs in the book *Amsterdam! Oude Foto's 1947-1970*.

Travel played a central role in his practice. Commissioned by magazines such as *Nieuwe Revu* and *Avenue*, he travelled extensively around the world, later reusing the material for his own books, films, and slide shows.

From the 1950s onwards, Van der Elsken also visited Japan regularly, eventually spending more than two years there and referring to it as his "second homeland." He felt at home among gangsters, sumo wrestlers, transvestites, rockers, and businessmen. These journeys resulted in the 1988 publication *The Discovery of Japan*, in which he presents not so much a documentary image of the country, but rather Japan as he personally experienced it — from close range, immersed among the people and worlds through which he moved.

*Face to Face* presents photographs Van der Elsken made in Paris, Amsterdam, and Japan — places where he felt at home and where he lived and worked closely among people. Across all of his work, encounter and proximity remain central — face to face.

On 19 June, the exhibition *Ed van der Elsken – Up Close* opens at the Rijksmuseum, presenting a major survey of Van der Elsken's work, featuring not only iconic photographs but also previously unseen notes, contact sheets, book dummies, and experiments from his private archive.

The work of **Ed van der Elsken** (1925, Amsterdam – 1990, Edam, The Netherlands) continues to be widely exhibited in museums of contemporary art around the world. Recent solo and group exhibitions have taken place at the Stadsarchief, Amsterdam (2024), Eye Filmmuseum, Amsterdam (2023), Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (2020 & 2018), Nederlands Fotomuseum, Rotterdam (2019), Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (2017), Jeu de Paume, Paris (2017), Taka Ishii Gallery, Tokyo (2015), Museum Boerhaave, Leiden (2014), Stadsarchief Amsterdam (2014), Nederlands Fotomuseum, Rotterdam (2010), Foam, Amsterdam (2005), The Metropolitan Museum, Tokyo (2003), The Palazzina di Giardini, Modena (2002), among many others.

He is celebrated for his distinctive publications, among the most notable of which are *Love on the Left Bank* (1956), *Bagara* (1957), *Jazz* (1959), *Sweet Life* (1966), *Eye Love You* (1977), *Amsterdam!* (1979), and *Once Upon a Time* (1991).