

Elliott Erwitt:

An Inventory of His Photography Collection at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Erwitt, Elliott, 1928-2023
Title:	Elliott Erwitt Photography Collection
Dates:	1946-2010
Extent:	870 boxes
Abstract:	The collection consists of more than 31,500 signed modern prints of 2,723 images, roughly 2,600 vintage and book production prints of 1,577 images, and some 14,500 5x7-inch proof prints taken by photographer Elliott Erwitt (American, born 1928 in Italy) between 1946 and 2010.
Call Number:	Photography Collection PH-02460
Language:	English
Access:	Due to the size of the collection, a viewing set of prints, consisting of at least one copy of each of the 4,037 images, was set aside for public access. The viewing set is open for research. Please use the database to request materials that you wish to view in person in the Reading and Viewing Room. Prints that were spot toned for the Ransom Center's exhibition <i>Elliott Erwitt: Home Around the World</i> (August 15, 2016–January 1, 2017) have been restricted from public access, but other copies of those images are available.

Administrative Information

Acquisition:	Gift of Caryl and Israel Englander, 2016 (15-12-029-G)
Processed by:	Savannah Gignac, 2013; Kait Dorsky, 2017
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Biographical Sketch

Born in Paris in 1928 to Russian émigré parents, Elliott Erwitt and his family immigrated to the United States, eventually settling in Los Angeles, where Erwitt attended high school and bought his first camera. Not long after, Erwitt moved to New York, which would serve as his home base and a photographic focal point throughout his career. Connections with major figures in the photographic world, such as Edward Steichen and Roy Stryker, provided him with both guidance and some of his earliest professional assignments. The latter included taking portraits of authors for Alfred A. Knopf, Incorporated, publications and illustrating stories for *Ladies' Home Journal*.

During service in the U.S. Army in the early 1950s, Erwitt visited the office of Magnum Photos Incorporated in Paris and met Robert Capa, who invited Erwitt to join the organization in 1953. Ten years later, Erwitt became president of the agency for three terms, and he has remained a member of the Magnum organization for more than 50 years. At the end of his military service in 1953, Erwitt returned with his young family to New York City, where he received larger and more frequent assignments from major publications like *Life*, *Holiday*, and *Look*, which form a significant portion of his work. While these jobs took him across the country and the world, he continued to photograph subjects and themes of personal interest during and between assignments. Street scenes, children, and dogs appear frequently, as do images which depict the humor and commonality of everyday life.

Erwitt's career included a number of solo exhibitions and associated books, including *Improbable Photographs* (1965), *Son of a Bitch* (1974), and *Personal Exposures* (1989). He returned to his lifelong interest in filmmaking in the 1970s and 1980s, with films including *Beauty Knows No Pain* (1971), *The Glassmakers of Herat* (1977), and *Good Nudes!* (1983). Erwitt was a member of Magnum Photos from 1953 and served three terms as president. He died at his home in New York on November 29, 2023, aged 95.

Sources:

McDonald, Jessica S. "Elliott Erwitt: Home Around the World." In *Elliott Erwitt: Home Around the World*, 11-47. New York: Aperture, 2016.

"Elliott Erwitt: Home Around the World." Harry Ransom Center. Accessed June 24, 2017. <http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/exhibitions/2016/erwitt/>.

Scope and Contents

The collection consists of more than 31,500 signed modern prints of 2,723 images, and roughly 2,600 vintage and book production prints of 1,577 images taken by photographer Elliott Erwitt (American, born 1928 in Italy) between 1946 and 2010. Also included are some 14,500 5x7-inch proof prints. Found within the collection are examples of Erwitt's work for magazine and advertising clients, much of it done while a member of the prestigious photographic cooperative Magnum Photos Incorporated, as well as photographs inspired by his personal interests and travel. While many of the photographs capture famous events and people -- from the historic Khrushchev-Nixon "Kitchen Debates" to American film star Marilyn Monroe -- Erwitt's other works reveal everyday people and places, and the photographer's love of dogs. Given the size and scope of the collection, an viewing set consisting of one copy of each of the 4,033 images (and multiples of some Vintage prints) was set aside and a database was created to grant access to the collection. The database can be found at <http://norman.hrc.utexas.edu/erwittdc/>.

The database records Erwitt's captions, which consist only of a place name, country, and date. Item-level descriptions for each image have been added to the database, allowing searching by keyword and browsing by country and/or decade.

Please use the database to request materials that you wish to view in person in the Reading and Viewing Room.

The remainder of the collection, which includes contact sheets and negatives, remains with the photographer until his death and are unavailable.

Prints that were spotted for the Ransom Center's exhibition *Elliott Erwitt: Home Around the World* (August 15, 2016–January 1, 2017) have been restricted from public access, but other copies of those images are available. Spotting is a means of correcting minor flaws in a photograph by retouching the print using a special ink.

The collection is divided into three series, reflecting the original arrangement of the prints as they arrived at the Ransom Center: I. Non-vintage prints, 1944-2010; II. Vintage prints, 1948-2009; and III. Proof Prints, 1950-2010. To facilitate retrieval, each series has been divided by decade which is reflected in the subseries titles. Within each subseries, prints are arranged first by year and then by Erwitt's and/or Magnum's unique negative numbering system.

The first series consists of more than 31,500 signed modern prints. These prints were stock from Erwitt's commercial studio and were meant to be sold. Aside from those used in the Ransom Center's exhibition *Elliott Erwitt: Home Around the World*, they are unspotted, as Erwitt's studio only performed this task immediately prior to a print's sale.

The second series consists of approximately 2,600 vintage prints. They are a mix of prints sent out for distribution by Magnum Photos Inc.; prints Erwitt used when creating books; and prints created when, or shortly after, the images were made. Many of the vintage prints lack any identifying information.

The third series consists of approximately 14,500 5x7 proof prints, including both fiber and RC prints.

Series Descriptions

Series I. Non-Vintage Prints, 1944-2010

Subseries A. 1940s

The subseries consists of approximately 55 images taken between 1944 and 1949 at the start of Erwitt's career. Many of the images were taken in New York City and include a variety of streetscapes and scenes of daily life. Also present are some of his earliest portraits, made while working for AAK, such as that of Jack Kerouac. Other images were made in Italy and France in 1949 during Erwitt's first trip back to Europe after immigrating to the United States ten years earlier. These include informal yet confrontational group portraits of children, still-lives, nudes, and scenes of daily life. The subseries also includes a few of Erwitt's first photographs taken while still a high school student in Los Angeles and during a trip to visit his father in New Orleans.

Subseries B. 1950s

Themes of daily life, local people (especially children), and dogs dominate Erwitt's work throughout his career, and make up much of the approximately 700 images in this subseries. Many images were taken in and around New York City, including events such as a Shriners parade and crowds at the Belmont Park Race Track, as well as cultural figures such as artist Robert Frank, journalist Edward R. Murrow, and playwright Arthur Miller. Erwitt took photographs on the sets of the films *On The Waterfront* and *The Desperate Hours*, as well as images of film star Marilyn Monroe during the filming of *The Seven Year Itch*. Erwitt photographed his own family throughout his career, and several images of his first wife and their children can be found in this and other subseries.

When not working in New York City, Erwitt traveled across the country for assignments from magazines such as *Holiday* and *Life*. Subjects of these images include Ivy League and Big Ten schools, the American south, and "People in Love."

Erwitt also traveled to Europe on several occasions, including to France and Germany during his Army service, as well as Italy and Spain. Other images from Erwitt's travels are of ancient sites in Egypt, Soviet military exercises, and Nikita Khrushchev and Richard Nixon during the 1959 "Kitchen Debate" at the American National Exhibition in Moscow, USSR.

Subseries C. 1960s

The subseries consists of approximately 550 images, 99 of which were taken in New York. Throughout the 1960s, Erwitt continued to travel across the United States, covering subjects ranging from movie sets to political events. In Reno, Nevada, he photographed the stars of the film *The Misfits*, the last movie in which Clark Gable appeared. He documented the 1960 Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles, California; Presidents Dwight D. Eisenhower and John F. Kennedy at the White House; Jacqueline Kennedy at the funeral of her husband in 1963; and the 1968 Republican National Convention in Miami Beach, Florida.

In his global travels, Erwitt documented a wide variety of locations and themes, including the marriage of Badouin I, King of Belgium; Fidel Castro and Che Guevara in Cuba; nudists in England and Germany; modern architecture in Brazil; Charles de Gaulle on a visit to Moscow, USSR; and daily and religious life in Poland and Hungary. Many of Erwitt's domestic and foreign images were taken for various magazine or advertising assignments.

Subseries D. 1970s

Approximately 420 images make up this subseries. Erwitt's photographs from this decade depict numerous European destinations, including the beaches of Saint Tropez, France; Vatican City in Rome during the Papal inauguration of Pope John Paul II; and the cities and coastal towns of England. Other subjects include beaches in Mexico; temples in Japan; and street scenes in Afghanistan.

Domestically, Erwitt photographed scenes of daily life from Florida to California, but the majority of his work remained focused in and around New York City, depicting dog show contestants and their owners, beach scenes from Coney Island and East Hampton, and several images of his wife and daughter.

Subseries E. 1980s

This subseries consists of roughly 200 images taken in a variety of domestic and global locations. Views of French streets, dogs, and fashion can be found in this subseries, as are images of China's Museum of Terracotta Warriors. In New York, Erwitt continued with themes of everyday life and family as well as major events, such as the 1980 Democratic National Convention and the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. Notable personalities depicted include, but are not limited to, artists Andy Warhol and Willem de Kooning, as well as photographer and curator John Szarkowski.

Erwitt created a number of films during this period, and images document the filming of *The Great Pleasure Hunt* (1982) in Japan, *The Great Pleasure Hunt II* (1983) in Amsterdam, and *Good Nudes!* (1984) in California, among others.

Subseries F. 1990s

This subseries is comprised of approximately 380 images. That include beach scenes from Brazil, a dog show in Birmingham, England, historical sites in Venice, Italy, and the art installation *Wrapped Reichstag* by Christo and Jeanne-Claude in Berlin. In New Orleans, Louisiana, Erwitt photographed Mardi Gras parade-goers and floats; in Washington, D.C., President Bill Clinton is shown at his desk in the White House; and in New York, Erwitt photographed children playing with toys and chemistry sets.

Subseries G. 2000s

A large number of the roughly 400 images in this subseries were taken in Italy, and include images of statuary and architecture, religious ceremonies and parades, and personalities such as Silvio Berlusconi and Pope Benedict XVI. Other locations featured include Australia, Argentina, New Zealand, France, and Brazil.

In New York, Erwitt took a number of snapshots and studio portraits of dogs, as well as a series of family portraits, among his other perennial themes.

Subseries H. Date Unknown

This subseries includes only two images: an image of people at a beach, and one of a boy wearing a hat made of a false apple and arrow. Date and location are unknown for both images.

Series II. Vintage Prints, 1948-2009

Subseries A. 1940s

The subseries consists of fifteen images that are representative of Erwitt's earliest commercial work as well as his interests in street photography and human drama. Included are portraits of authors Frederick Buechner and Conrad Richter, as well as artist John Clemmer, and candid group portraits of children in Venice, Italy.

Subseries B. 1950s

The approximately 600 images in this subseries were taken in multiple locations and of a wide variety of themes. A number of images depict scenes from Erwitt's Army training at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, which was followed by service in France and Italy. Other images document massage therapy training at the Japan Finger Pressure Institute, the Iowa State Fair, and speakers at the White Citizens Council Congress in Fort Worth, Texas. Many of the other places and themes are also included in the non-vintage subseries of the same date range.

Subseries C. 1960s

A large number of the approximately 1,125 images that make up this subseries were taken in Eastern Europe. Erwitt visited Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland, and his photographs from these trips depict factory workers, students, monuments and architecture, churches and religious ceremonies, as well as everyday street scenes and festivals. Additionally, he photographed beaches in France, the Cologne Carnival in Germany, parade-goers in Brazil, and schoolchildren in Italy. Also included are a number of images of architecture from across the United States.

Subseries D. 1970s

Roughly 240 images comprise this subseries, many of which were taken in and around New York City, including images from a Broadway play and a boxing match between Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier. Other locations include Mexico, Morocco, Japan, and France. Also included are studio images of Erwitt's wife, Susan, during her pregnancy and after with their baby.

Subseries E. 1980s

Nine images make up this subseries. Included are a stylized portrait of American curator and photography historian John Szarkowski, beach scenes in Florida and Hawaii, and a worm's-eye view of a jumping dog and his owner's feet.

Subseries F. 1990s

The twelve images in this subseries include portraits of dogs, a bride and groom standing on rocks overlooking the sea, and several images that may have been commercial assignments.

Subseries G. 2000s

Three images make up this subseries, two are of tombstones and the other is of a dog.

Subseries H. Date Unknown

The subseries consists of roughly twenty-five images of which the dates are unknown for all and the locations unknown for most. Identified locations include Los Angeles, California, Paris, France, and Brazil. Images consist primarily of candid shots and portraits of children and adults, streets and towns, and a stuffed gorilla in a glass case.

Series III. Proof Prints, 1950-2010

Approximately 14,500 5x7-inch proof prints comprise this series which is divided into two subseries, A. Fiber Prints and B. RC Prints, which reflects how the prints arrived at the Center. Center staff then arranged each subseries first chronologically and then by EE number if the date was unknown. While a number of these images are duplicates of images found in Series I and II, there are many images found only in this series.

Related Material

The Photography Collection holds two photographs by Erwitt that were acquired separately. Print information for those items follows.

964:3431:0001 -- *Family Scene*, 1953. Gelatin silver print, 16 x 24.9 cm (image and sheet). Gernsheim Collection;

2016:0003:0001 -- *Train Window*, 1947. Gelatin silver print, 12.3 x 8.4 cm (image); 12.5 x 17.7 cm (sheet). Purchase with funds provided by the David Douglas Duncan Endowment for Photojournalism.

Additional photographs by Erwitt can be found in the Ransom Center's Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. Literary File Photography Collection, as well as two portfolios by Erwitt, *Elliott Erwitt* (f TR 654 E784 HRC-P, 982:0061:0001-0015), and *Photographs: Elliott Erwitt* (f TR 654 E785 HRC-P, 982:0061:0001-0015).

Index Terms

People

Erwitt, Elliott, 1928- .

Guevara, Che, 1928-1967.

Kennedy, Jacqueline Bouvier, 1929-1994.

Kennedy, John F. (John Fitzgerald), 1917-1963.

Khrushchev, Nikita Sergeevich, 1894-1971.

Monroe, Marilyn, 1926-1962.

Nixon, Richard M. (Richard Milhous), 1913-1994.

Subjects

Authors--Pictorial works.

Architecture--Pictorial works.

Artists--Pictorial works.

Beaches--Pictorial works.

Children--Pictorial works.

Couples--Pictorial works.

Documentary photography.

Dogs--Pictorial works.

Family--Pictorial works.

Galleries & museums.

Magnum Photos.

Nudists.

Nudity.

Religious services.

Sculpture--Pictorial works.

United States. Army--Pictorial works.

Wit and humor in art.

Places

Brazil--Pictorial works.

Czechoslovakia--Pictorial works.

Egypt--Pictorial works.

England--Pictorial works.

Fort Monmouth (N.J.)--Pictorial works.

France--Pictorial works.

Germany--Pictorial works.

Hungary--Pictorial works.

Italy--Pictorial works.

New York (N.Y.)--Pictorial works.

New York (State)--Pictorial works.

Poland--Pictorial works.

Russia--Pictorial works.

Document Types

Gelatin silver prints.

Genre (visual works).

Portrait photographs.

Streetscapes.

Series I. Non-Vintage Prints, 1944-2010

Subseries A. 1940s

Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:0001-0017, 0019-0031, 0033-0054, 0056-0074	Location 1
Accession Number: 2016:0017:2442	Location 24
Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:0018, 0055	Location 60

Subseries B. 1950s

Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:0075-0110	Location 1
Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:0111-0220	Location 2
Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:0221-0328	Location 3
Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:0329-0437, 2606-2607	Location 4
Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:0438-0456, 0458-0540, 2608-2609	Location 5
Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:0541-0649	Location 6
Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:0650-0705, 2610	Location 7
Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:0032, 2443-2453, 2633	Location 24
Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:0457, 2454-2464, 2634-2635	Location 25
Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:2465-2472, 2636-2643	Location 26
Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:2473, 2644-2645	Location 27
Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:2587, 2702-2703	Location 40
Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:2705-2707	Location Special Permission Required

Subseries C. 1960s

Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:0706-0757	Location 7
Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:0758-0856	Location 8

Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:0866-0954, 0956-0974 **Location 9**

Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:0975-1077, 1079-1082, 2611 **Location 10**

Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:1083-1190 **Location 11**

Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:1191-1206 **Location 12**

Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:2474-2483, 2646 **Location 27**

Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:2484-2494, 2647-2649 **Location 28**

Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:2495-2506, 2650 **Location 29**

Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:2507-2513 **Location 30**

Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:2588-2592 **Location 40**

Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:2708-2709 **Location Special permission required**

Subseries D. 1970s

Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:1207-1226, 1228-1299 **Location 12**

Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:1300-1407, 2612 **Location 13**

Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:1408-1517 **Location 14**

Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:1518-1597 **Location 15**

Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:2514-2520 **Location 30**

Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:2521-2532, 2651-2652 **Location 31**

Accession Number: 2016:0017:2533 **Location 32**

Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:2593, 2704 **Location 40**

Accession Number: 2016:0017:1227 **Location 62**

Subseries E. 1980s

Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:1598-1626 **Location 15**

Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:1627-1731 **Location 16**

Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:1732-1779	Location 17
Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:2534-2544, 2653-2654	Location 32
Accession Number: 2016:0017:2545	Location 33
Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:2594-2595	Location 40
Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:2710-2711	Location Special permission required

Subseries F. 1990s

Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:1780-1841	Location 17
Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:1842-1951	Location 18
Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:1952-2061	Location 19
Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:2062-2087, 2089-2113	Location 20
Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:2655-2667	Location 33
Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:2546-2558, 2668	Location 34
Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:2559-2572	Location 35
Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:2573-2576	Location 36
Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:2596-2602	Location 41
Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:1227, 2088	Location 62

Subseries G. 2000s

Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:2114-2172	Location 20
Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:2173-2279	Location 21
Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:2280-2388	Location 22
Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:2389-2441, 2613-2632	Location 23
Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:2577-2583, 2669-2671	Location 36
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Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:2684-2694	Location 38

Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:2586, 2695-2699

Location 39

Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:2603-2605

Location 41

Subseries H. Date Unknown

Accession Numbers: 2016:0017:2700-2701

Location 39

Series II. Vintage Prints, 1948-2009

Subseries A. 1940s

Accession Numbers: 2016:0018:0001-0002	Location 42
Accession Numbers: 2016:0018:0147-0162	Location 44
Accession Number: 2016:0018:1898	Location 60
Accession Number: 2016:0018:1973	Location 63

Subseries B. 1950s

Accession Numbers: 2016:0018:0003-0047	Location 42
Accession Numbers: 2016:0018:0163-0269	Location 44
Accession Numbers: 2016:0018:0270-0396	Location 45
Accession Numbers: 2016:0018:0397-0516	Location 46
Accession Numbers: 2016:0018:0517-0638	Location 47
Accession Numbers: 2016:0018:0639-0683	Location 48
Accession Numbers: 2016:0018:1899-1917	Location 60
Accession Numbers: 2016:0018:1974-1983	Location 63
Accession Number: 2016:0018:2029	Location 67

Subseries C. 1960s

Accession Numbers: 2016:0018:0048-0080	Location 42
Accession Numbers: 2016:0018:0081-0107	Location 43
Accession Numbers: 2016:0018:0684-0757	Location 48
Accession Numbers: 2016:0018:0758-0875	Location 49
Accession Numbers: 2016:0018:0876-0990	Location 50
Accession Numbers: 2016:0018:0991-1102	Location 51
Accession Numbers: 2016:0018:1103-1213	Location 52

Accession Numbers: 2016:0018:1214-1326	Location 53
Accession Numbers: 2016:0018:1327-1438	Location 54
Accession Numbers: 2016:0018:1439-1545	Location 55
Accession Numbers: 2016:0018:1546-1653	Location 56
Accession Numbers: 2016:0018:1654-1672	Location 57
Accession Numbers: 2016:0018:1918-1921	Location 60
Accession Numbers: 2016:0018:1922-1946	Location 61
Accession Numbers: 2016:0018:1947-1970	Location 62
Accession Number: 2016:0018:1984	Location 63
Accession Numbers: 2016:0018:1985-1996	Location 64
Accession Numbers: 2016:0018:1997-2008	Location 65
Accession Number: 2016:0018:2009	Location 66

Subseries D. 1970s

Accession Numbers: 2016:0018:0108-0143	Location 43
Accession Numbers: 2016:0018:1673-1747	Location 57
Accession Numbers: 2016:0018:1748-1823	Location 58
Accession Numbers: 2016:0018:1824-1857	Location 59
Accession Number: 2016:0018:1971	Location 62
Accession Numbers: 2016:0018:2010-2024	Location 66

Subseries E. 1980s

Accession Numbers: 2016:0018:1858-1862	Location 59
Accession Number: 2016:0018:1972	Location 62
Accession Numbers: 2016:0018:2027-2028	Location 67

Subseries F. 1990s

Accession Numbers: 2016:0018:1863-1872	Location 59
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Accession Numbers: 2016:0018:2025-2026

Location 67

Subseries G. 2000s

Accession Numbers: 2016:0018:1873-1875

Location 59

Subseries H. Date Unknown

Accession Numbers: 2016:0018:0144-0146

Location 43

Accession Numbers: 2016:0018:1876-1879

Location 59

Series III. Proof Prints, 1950-2010

Subseries A. Fiber Prints

Prints arranged chronologically **Location** 75-78

Prints arranged by Erwitt Number **Location** 70-71

Subseries B. RC Prints

Prints arranged chronologically **Location** 79-97

Prints arranged by Erwitt Number **Location** 72-74