

Copyright Fieret

by Gerard Petrus Fieret



Opening: Saturday, May 5th 2018 from 2 to 6 pm

Show: May 8th - June 30th 2018

Gallery FIFTY ONE is excited to announce its first solo exhibition of the *enfant terrible* of Dutch photography, Gerard Petrus Fieret (The Hague, 1924-2009). Discovering the medium late in life, Fieret started photographing his surroundings (and above all, the women that crossed his path) in an obsessive way. He ostentatiously turned his back on photographic conventions, while still maniacally protecting his work against 'piracy' by his colleagues.

Poet and illustrator Gerard P. Fieret had a few favourite photographic subjects, one of which were women, in different states of undress. He took their picture whenever and wherever he could, inviting them to his old and shabby souterrain, littered with junk and pictures that he produced in his recognizably crude manner. Although the themes of his photography tended to repeat themselves, Fieret experimented constantly with composition, printing and developing, keeping *all* his negatives and prints, never throwing anything away.

Fieret's pictures are mostly snapshot-like close-ups – blurred, moved, unsharp. It looks as if the photographer was too busy leading life, only marginally spending time on the representation of that life. The unruly artist rarely printed a negative more than once. But when he did, every print became unique; an object in its own right, with plenty of signs of use: scratches, folds, torn edges... Almost every print bears several signatures (in heavy marker) and copyright stamps (sometimes five or more), on verso and on recto. These stamps figure not in the margin but prominently on the print, and not rarely on the subject itself, as if to reinforce the illusion of his grip on the fleeting world he photographed.

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Although pictures seemed objects with not much value to Fieret – he gave them away by the dozens, to friends and acquaintances, or to the Fotomuseum Den Haag –, the artist was possessed by a paranoid fear that other photographers would try to steal his work and put their own name on it. When he thought to have discovered his own style in the work of a colleague, accusations of plagiarism or even theft would follow quickly.

Fieret's eccentric behaviour could have been rooted in an unstable childhood. At the age of two, his father abandoned the family. He spent time in foster homes and was forced to work in Germany during World War II. Coming back to The Hague, Fieret studied at the Academy for Plastic Arts, mainly producing gouaches and charcoal portraits. Only much later, in 1965, Fieret started shooting pictures daily, ten years long – thus documenting the notorious era of 1968. In today's digital world, which approaches photography in an ever more same-same, clean and over-accurate way, the anarchistic, uncompromising spirit of Fieret's work is what makes it so enticing to our eyes.

G.P. Fieret's estate, held by the Gemeentemuseum Den Haag, now comprises 2500 objects, including two jerrycans filled with negatives. A big retrospective exhibition has been dedicated to him on his 80th birthday in 2004. International interest has been rising steadily ever since.