

VIVIAN MAIER/STEPHAN VANFLETEREN: Capturing life - 10th May - 10th July 2021  
May 13th 2021 in L'oeil de la photographie

## L'ŒIL DE LA PHOTOGRAPHIE

### Fifty One : Vivian Maier : Capturing life

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L'Œil de la Photographie

May 13, 2021



**Gallery FIFTY ONE** will surprise its visitors with an unusual pairing of two master photographers: **Vivian Maier** (USA, 1926-2009) and **Stephan Vanfleteren** (Belgium, 1969). For this exhibition, Vanfleteren will select some images from his diverse oeuvre as a reflection on the work of Vivian Maier. The result: a surprising confrontation between two photographers of a very different place and time, that have one thing in common: a love for the street and all its unpredictability.

The extraordinary story of Vivian Maier is well known to many: working most of her adult life as a nanny, she secretly roamed the streets of New York and Chicago with her camera around her neck in her time off. From the early 1950s until the mid-1990s she made approximately 100.000 photographs, and countless homemade documentary films and audio recordings. Hardly anyone knew of her photographic activities, up until 2007, when Chicagoan historian John Maloof discovered her work by accident upon purchasing

a box of her negatives at an auction. Impressed by what he saw, Maloof started to successfully reconstruct and promote Maier's oeuvre. However even today, the details of her life remain largely unknown and an extensive part of her work remains undeveloped.

Not having received any formal training, Maier's photographs nevertheless possess an impeccable sense of composition, timing and framing. Being a compulsive collector, she zoomed in on almost everything she encountered during her daily walks; from piles of newspapers, architectural details and the play of shadow and light on the street, to letters in shop windows and countless portraits of people she met on the sidewalk. The square format Rolleiflex she used – with which the photographer doesn't look directly to his or her subject but look down on the viewfinder at waist level – allowed more interaction with her subjects but was at the same time the perfect disguise camera. Although the portrayed often tend to tower over her, they seem perfectly at ease in her presence. Maier would also turn the camera towards herself, creating captivating self portraits in which you often only see her shadow or reflection in shop windows or mirrors.

Maier's street photographs – that show us a cross-section of urban life in prosperous mid-century America, with a peculiar interest in children and people living in the margins of society (such as the black community, the disabled and the poor) – have a surprising affinity with Stephan Vanfleteren's street photography. His penetrating black and white portraits of people from all walks of life made this former press photographer one of the most well known Belgian photographers of all times. Whether it concerns his journalistic, documentary or artistic photographic projects; Vanfleteren always remains true to his characteristic style and aesthetic. A palet of black and whites, sharp contrasts and well-defined details are the trademark that he developed throughout the years. His purified and raw images, stand out because of their simplicity, intensity and drama.

### **Vivian Maier : Capturing life**

May 11th – July 10th 2021

#### **Gallery Fifty One**

Zirkstraat 20

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