

VIVIAN MAIER / STEPHAN VANFLETEREN – Capturing Life - 8th May - 10th July 2021

'Exhibition Reviews' by Eleanor Sutherland in the June/July Issue of Aesthetica Magazine, p. 124

Exhibition Reviews

1 Capturing Life

VIVIAN MAIER & STEPHAN VANFLETEREN

The story of Vivian Maier is fascinating. She worked most of her adult life as a nanny, secretly roaming the streets of New York and Chicago with a camera on her days off. Between the 1950s and 1990s, she amassed a collection of over 100,000 negatives – primarily of people and cityscapes. These were hidden from the eyes of others, with the archive only coming to light in 2007 when it was discovered at a Chicago auction house. At the time, hardly anyone knew of her interest in photography. Even today, much of her life remains a mystery, and many of the gaps are left unfilled.

In 2014, the documentary *Finding Vivian Maier* was nominated for an Academy Award, bringing her body of work to a wider audience. She's now regarded as one of the 20th century's greatest photographers – admired for a pioneering use of colour and intriguing camera angles. Maier turned her

lens to often humorous subject matter, capturing snippets of daily life whilst out and about: piles of newspapers, pink and yellow balloons, reflections in shop windows. The shots have since been widely exhibited and published, becoming ever more popular in the age of social media and digital shows.

Antwerp's Gallery Fifty One presents Maier's images in an entirely new way – alongside striking black and white works by Belgium-born former press photographer Stephan Vanfleteren (b. 1969). His high contrast portraits are raw, human and, at times, confrontational. Grainy cityscapes and blurred buildings create a sense of movement. Despite working in different places and time periods, Vanfleteren and Maier used Rolleiflexes, cameras with waist level viewfinders, perfect for under-the-radar street photography. The results are compelling – with moments of humour and curiosity.

Words
Eleanor Sutherland

Gallery Fifty One, Antwerp
11 May - 10 July

gallery51.com

