

GALLERY FIFTY ONE

Jacques Sonck

14/05/2026 - 11/07/2026

Opening :

Opening: Thursday, May 14, from 2 to 9 pm

In the presence of the artist

Gallery FIFTY ONE
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Jacques Sonck/ Vivian Maier

Opening: Thursday, May 14, from 2 to 9 pm

Exhibition: May 14 to July 11, 2026

Gallery FIFTY ONE is pleased to present a solo exhibition of **Jacques Sonck** from **May 14 to July 11, 2026**. On the same dates, FIFTY ONE TOO will host a solo exhibition dedicated to **Vivian Maier**. The opening on **May 14** coincides with the launch of **Antwerp Art Weekend**.

These two exhibitions bring together singular yet resonant perspectives. Each artist, in their own way, has made the real and the human condition the core of their practice. Jacques Sonck and Vivian Maier share a deep attentiveness to individuals, their silent presence, their gestures, and what subtly emerges beyond appearances.

Born in 1949 in Belgium, **Jacques Sonck** developed his photographic language from the 1970s onward, traveling extensively across his country. Working primarily with a small-format camera, he approaches strangers in the street and invites them into a direct, often frontal encounter. His portraits, marked by a striking clarity and absence of artifice, isolate the subject from context, giving full presence to faces, bodies, and expressions. One may think of August Sander, Diane Arbus, or Richard Avedon. But where others classified, provoked, or stylised, Sonck observes with patience and respect without judgment. They are a space in which the other person can simply exist. The background is often ordinary like a wall in a street or a stretch of sea. Yet this restraint is part of the power of the work. Nothing distracts the eye. What remains is the direct encounter between the person portrayed and the viewer. Some portraits make us smile, others surprise us, and others leave a feeling harder to name. Taken together, they become a social memory of Belgium, preserving lives and faces that might otherwise have vanished.

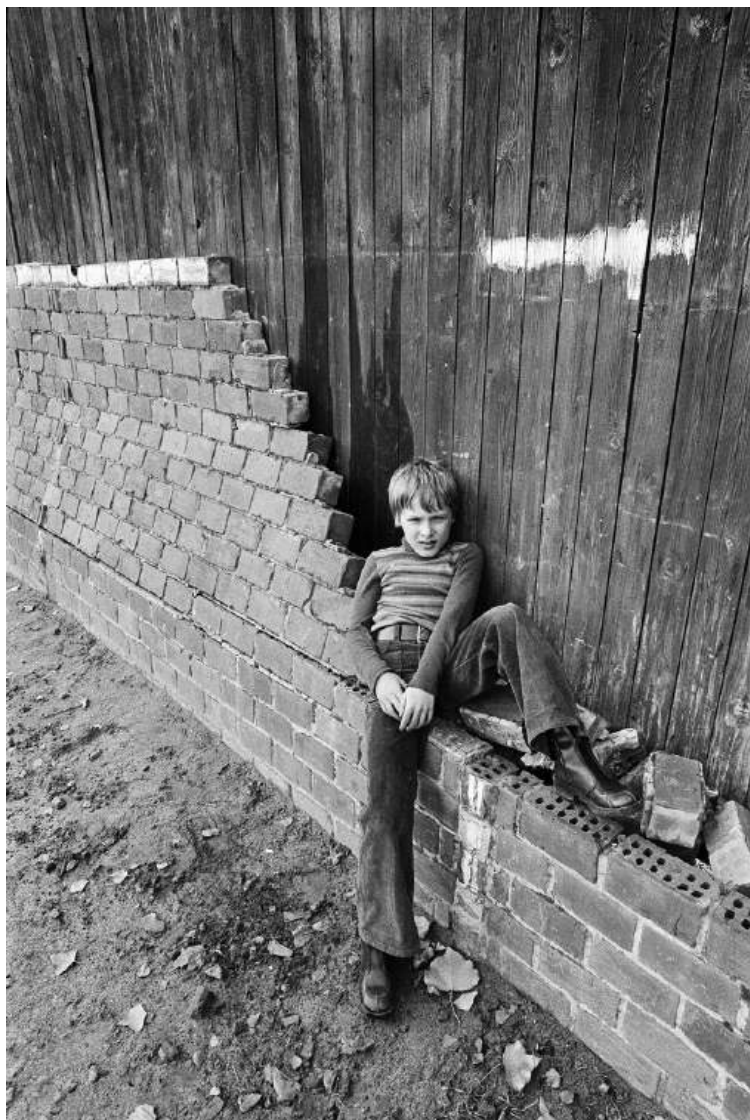
In contrast, but also in resonance, **Vivian Maier** (1926–2009) moved through the streets of New York and Chicago with instinctive freedom. A nanny by profession, she produced an extensive body of work that remained largely undiscovered during her lifetime. Using her Rolleiflex camera, she captured fleeting scenes of urban life throughout the 1950s and 1960s, composing images that balance spontaneity with a remarkable sense of framing. Her photographs reveal a fragmented, vibrant humanity where gestures, gazes, and chance encounters form a subtle, poetic observation of everyday life. Recently uncovered archives continue to shed new light on her practice, and this exhibition presents a selection of previously unseen works at the gallery.

While both artists emerge from a practice of wandering and observing people, their approaches to the image are strikingly different. Jacques Sonck's work centers on the encounter and the constructed portrait. He often makes close-up photographs of his subjects standing in front of a wall, which erases the context of the street. Most of the time, his images could be taken anywhere in Belgium, and across a broad timespan, so as viewers we do not know when they were made. Yet this uncertainty is not essential, the subject remains the person posing frontally for the camera, confronting it with a quiet intensity. Vivian Maier, on the other hand, embraces the fluidity of the street, privileging movement, layering, and the ephemeral nature of public space, which make her a vivid witness of her time.

Presented together, these exhibitions create a dialogue between two complementary photographic languages: one oriented toward the deliberate, almost sculptural portrait; the other toward the fleeting, narrative richness of the street scene. What unites them is a shared fascination with people-always at the center of their work- and with the infinite variety of faces, bodies, ages, and social identities. Both are committed to rendering visible the humanity embedded in everyday life.

Upcoming book: Jacques Sonck, *ENCOUNTERS TOO*

JACQUES SONCK



Untitled, De Pinte, 1975

Gelatin silver print
30 x 20 cm
Edition of 15
Signed and numbered on verso



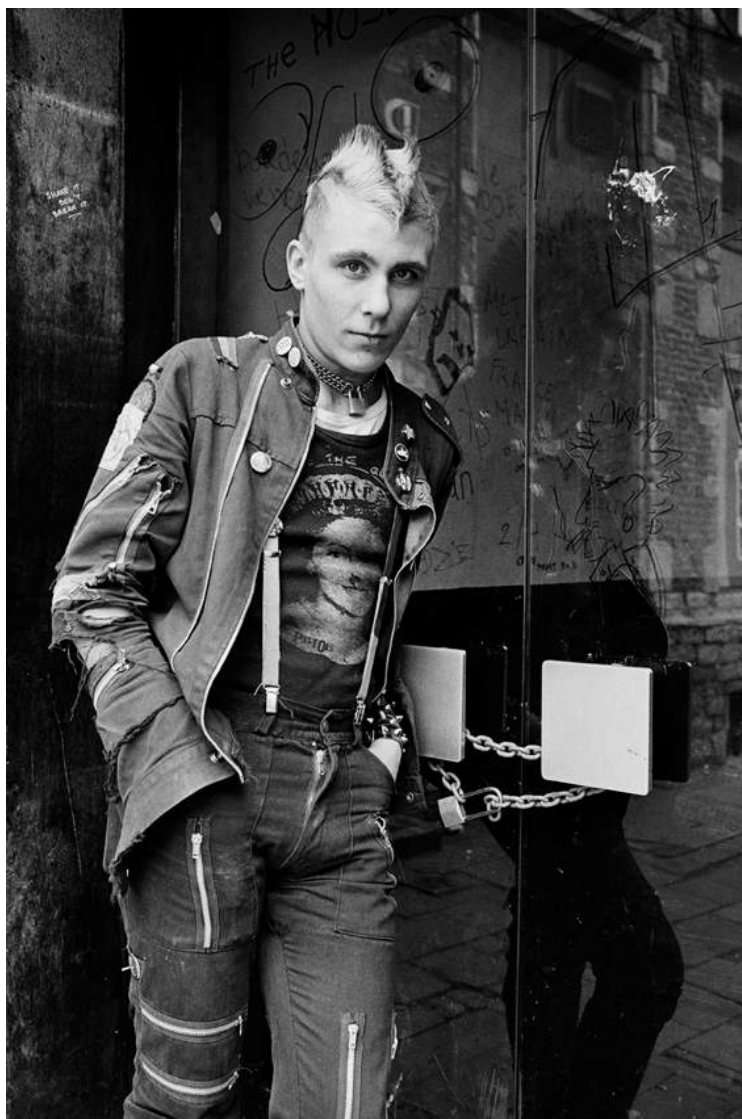
Untitled, Antwerp, 1984

Gelatin silver print
30 x 20 cm
Edition of 15
Signed and numbered on verso



Untitled, Ledeberg, 2011

Gelatin silver print
30 x 20 cm
Edition of 15
Signed and numbered on verso



Untitled, Antwerp, 1981

Gelatin silver print
100 x 67 cm
Edition of 3
Signed and numbered on verso



Untitled, Brussels, 1980

Gelatin silver print
30 x 20 cm
Edition of 15
Signed and numbered on verso



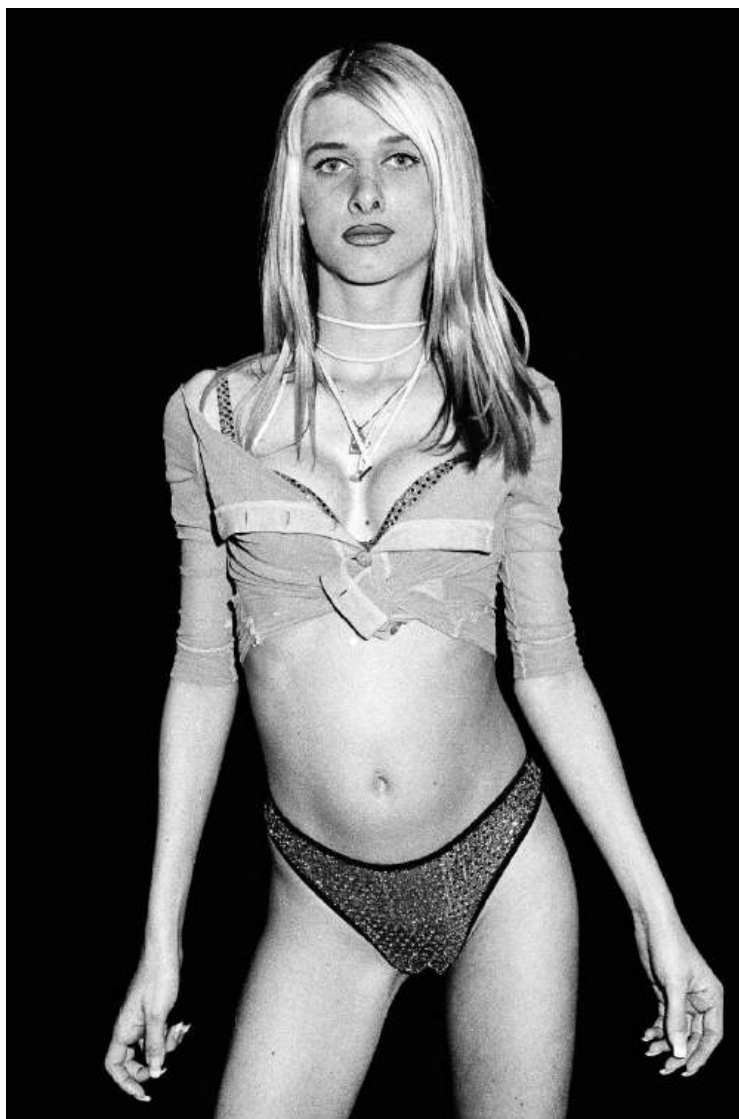
Untitled, Ghent, 1989

Gelatin silver print
30 x 20 cm
Edition of 15
Signed and numbered on verso



Untitled, Studio, 1990

Gelatin silver print
40 x 40 cm
Edition of 15
Signed and numbered on verso



Untitled, Ostend, 2002

Gelatin silver print
30 x 20 cm
Edition of 15
Signed and numbered on verso



Untitled, Brussels, 2016

Gelatin silver print
30 x 20 cm
Edition of 15
Signed and numbered on verso



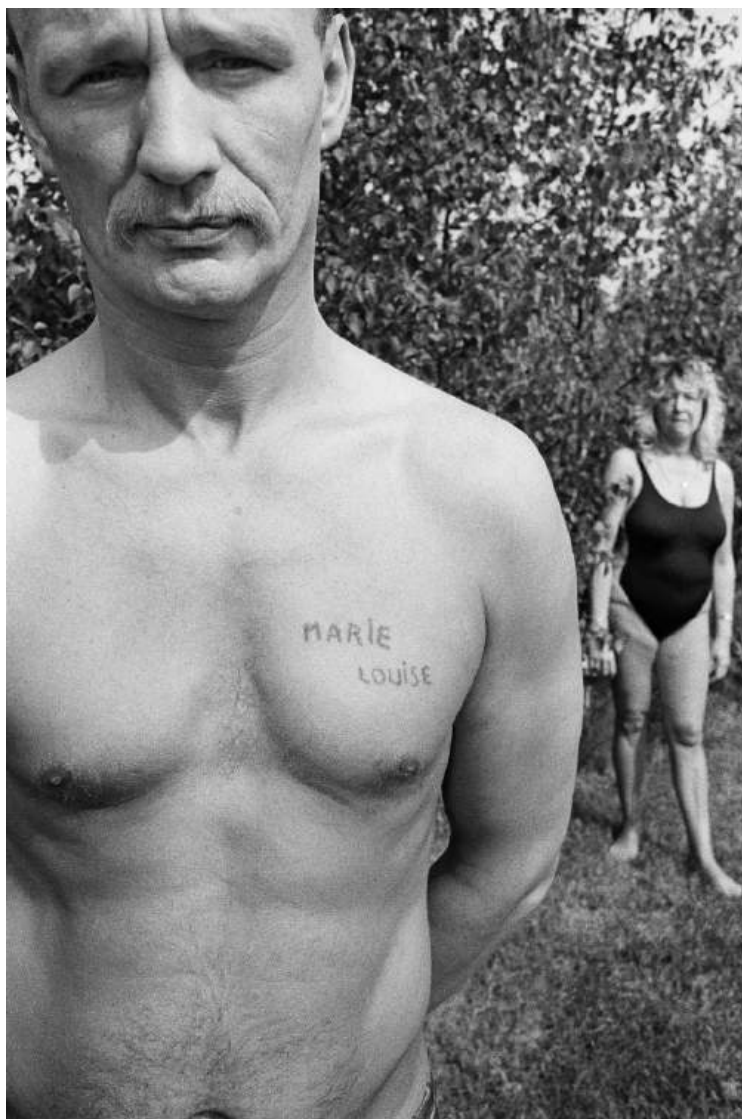
Untitled, Ghent, 2014

Gelatin silver print
30 x 20 cm
Edition of 15
Signed and numbered on verso



Untitled, Ghent, 2019

Gelatin silver print
30 x 20 cm
Edition of 15
Signed and numbered on verso



Untitled, Wachtebeke, 1989

Gelatin silver print
30 x 20 cm
Edition of 15
Signed and numbered on verso



Untitled, Studio, 1993

Gelatin silver print
40 x 40 cm
Edition of 15
Signed and numbered on verso



Untitled, Knokke, 1991

Gelatin silver print
30 x 20 cm
Edition of 15
Signed and numbered on verso



Untitled, Ghent , 1977

Gelatin silver print
30 x 20 cm
Edition of 15
Signed and numbered on verso



Untitled, Brussels, 1980

Gelatin silver print
30 x 20 cm
Edition of 15
Signed and numbered on verso



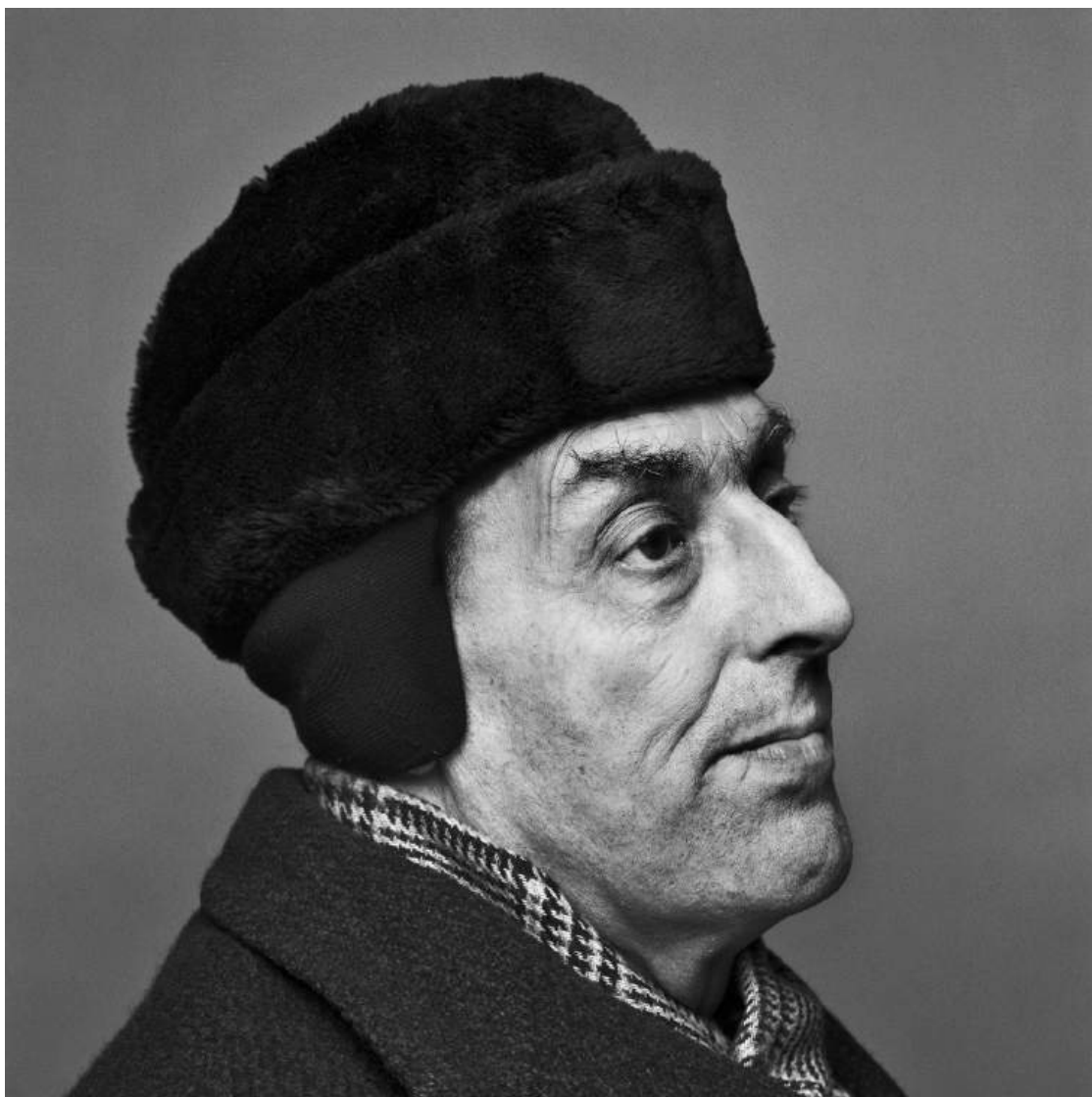
Untitled, Antwerp, 1980

Gelatin silver print
30 x 20 cm
Edition of 15
Signed and numbered on verso



Untitled, Antwerp, 1981

Gelatin silver print
30 x 20 cm
Edition of 15
Signed and numbered on verso



Untitled, Studio, 1996

Gelatin silver print
40 x 40 cm
Edition of 15
Signed and numbered on verso



Untitled, Ghent, 1988

Gelatin silver print
30 x 20 cm
Edition of 15
Signed and numbered on verso



Untitled, De Pinte, 1977

Gelatin silver print
30 x 20 cm
Edition of 15
Signed and numbered on verso



Untitled, De Pinte, 1977

Gelatin silver print
30 x 20 cm
Edition of 15
Signed and numbered on verso