



Erwin Olaf

<http://www.ba-reps.com/artists/erwin-olaf>

BIOGRAPHY

Born in Hilversum in the Netherlands in 1959, Erwin Olaf lives and works in Amsterdam since the early 80's. His current studio is situated in a former church hall.

Mixing photojournalism with studio photography, Olaf emerged in the international art scene in 1988 when his series 'Chessmen' was awarded the first prize in the Young European Photographer competition. This award was followed by an exhibition at the Ludwig Museum in Cologne, Germany. Since then Olaf has continued to explore issues of gender, sensuality, humor, despair and grace in each successive series.

Printing his early work in documentary style black-and-white, he first gradually introduced color and then digital manipulation. There is great contrast between each series. *Mature* (1999): golden-hued portraits of elderly women in the poses of kittenish supermodels; *Fashion Victims* (2000): a lewd commentary on the consumerism of sex and designer labels; *Royal Blood* (2000): minimalist white-on-white portraits, depicting the vengeful nature of members of the aristocracy who have suffered unsavory deaths; *Paradise* (2001): picturing a dark and baroque underworld of gleeful clowning and lunacy; *Separation* (2003) portraying an ice cold and introverted family in a sterile living room. In his four most recent series *Rain*, *Hope*, *Grief* and *Fall*, Erwin Olaf returns to classic imagery with minimal computer retouching.

Video and film offer new possibilities to explore. His first film *Tadzio* (1991, co-directed with painter F. Franciscus) was soon followed by comic videos for children's television, short documentaries, music clips and commissions by the Dutch National Ballet. Recently Olaf has created autonomous video works like *Separation*, *Rain* and *Grief*, starring models who also appear in the accompanying photo series. In the films they play a different character, as though his moving images provide a parallel history to his color photographs. These short films have been selected for film festivals all over the world.

Many publications have been made on Olafs' works. *Joy* (1993) reviewed his early black-and-white photography and was accompanied by a major solo exhibition at the Kunsthal in Rotterdam. The 274-page book *Silver* functioned as the catalogue for his retrospective in 2003 at the Groninger Museum. After other books like *Rain/Hope* (2006) and *Grief* (2007), the prestigious *Aperture*



Foundation published the monograph simply named Erwin Olaf, that was presented during the opening of his solo exhibition in The Hague Museum of Photography (Sept -Jan 2008).

Other solo shows have been staged in institutions like the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, the Frankfurter Kunstverein, the MOCCA in Toronto, Galleria Arte Moderna in Bologna, the Montevideo Institute in Amsterdam, the Sztuki Museum in Lodz, Poland, the Chelsea Art Museum in New York, the Australian Centre for Photography in Sydney, the George Eastman House in New York, the Maison Européenne de la Photographie in Paris, the Southeastern Centre For Contemporary Art in North Carolina, the Museum of Modern Art in Moscow and Space E6 in Shenzhen, China.

Over the years many of Olaf's works - from his unabashed nude portraiture and intense symbolism to the unflinching gaze in his blood-drenched images of staged violence - have provoked controversy. Not surprisingly, this ability to attract attention has seen his work embraced by the advertising world, resulting in commercials for Lavazza, BMW, Microsoft and Nintendo among many others. Lately Erwin is frequently shooting in commission for magazines such as The New York Times Magazine, The Sunday Times Magazine, Elle and Citizen K.

In 1999 his worldwide campaign for Diesel Jeans won him the coveted Silver Lion at the Festival for Advertising in Cannes. He was awarded the same prize two years later for his imagery produced for Heineken. Among numerous other international art and media prizes, in 2006 he was awarded Photographer of the Year in the International Color Awards. In 2007 Kunstbeeld magazine chose him Artist of the Year of the Netherlands. Recently he received a Lucie Award for his entire oeuvre.



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Select Awards

2008 Lucie Awards

Erwin Olaf is awarded the Lucie Award for his achievement in advertising.

2006 International Color Awards

Erwin Olaf is awarded the first place, 'Outstanding Achievement', by the International Color Awards, Masters Of Color Photography.

2005 Photography Annual Award

The Hairdresser's, from the series 'Rain', is awarded a Photography Annual Award by the Photo District News.

2004 Awarded Silver, AOP

Separation is awarded Silver by The Association of Photographers in London.

2003 Paradise The Club, Merit The Association of Photographers, London

The Association of Photographers, London

2003 Grote Paul

Erwin Olaf is awarded the Grote Paul

In 2003 Erwin is awarded de Grote Paul, a special award for the number one ranking the Dutch Top-40 photographers.

2003 Photography District New York

Nicorette advertising, New York

The Nicorette-series is awarded with 'Gold' by the PDN

2001 Silver Lion

Cannes Lions International Advertising Festival

One of the photographs from the Heineken-series is awarded a Silver Lion at the Cannes Lions International Advertising Festival



1999 Silver Lion

Cannes Lions International Advertising Festival. One of the pictures of the 1999 Diesel campaign is awarded a Silver Lion at the Cannes Lions International Advertising Festival in 1999.

1988 First Prize Young European Photographers

Young European Photographers, Deutsche Leasing AG Bad Homburg. The series "Chessmen" is awarded the first prize in the Young European Photographers selection.