

ESHPh – Special Newsletter July 2013

On Professor Erich Lessing's 90th Birthday

The European Society for the History of Photography (ESHPh) extends its heartiest greetings to the distinguished Member of its Advisory Board on his birthday.

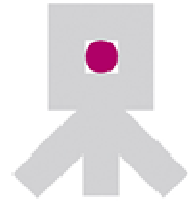
Erich Lessing was born in Vienna as the son of Jewish parents on 13 July 1923 and fled to Palestine in 1939 where he found his way to photography by a somewhat circuitous route. After his return to Austria in 1947, he began working for Associated Press. He became a member of the world-famous MAGNUM photographers' cooperative in 1951 and subsequently contributed to the world's most important magazines such as Life, Paris Match, Epoca, Quick and many, many more.

Erich Lessing became internationally famous with his documentation of the Hungarian uprising in Budapest in 1956 and his portraits of the French Premier Charles de Gaulle and Germany's Chancellor Adenauer. The images he captured on the sets of numerous films, including "the Sound of Music", "Zorba the Greek" and "Moby Dick", are unforgettable. The spectrum of the subjects he has dealt with ranges from political and social reportages to portraits. In addition, Lessing has assembled a collection of large-size slides on topics of European art history: the "Erich Lessing Kunst- & Kulturarchiv" (Erich Lessing Archive of Art & Culture) now comprises more than 40,000 images.

Starting in the 1960s, he focused his attention on history. More than almost any other photographer, his camera reveals what happens behind the façade. Erich Lessing has issued more than 60 books in Austrian, German, French, Dutch, American, Swedish and Italian publishing houses. He has also held lectures in Arles, during the Biennale in Venice, at the Salzburg Summer Academy, the Academy for Applied Arts in Vienna and many other institutions.

The "Lessing Photo Archive" was founded in 1990 followed, more than 20 years later, by the "Erich Lessing Gallery" in Vienna in 2012. He has received numerous international and national awards for his contributions to cultural history. On 27 August 2013 he will receive the Austrian Cross of Honour for Science and Art, First Class.

On the occasion of his 90th birthday, Erich Lessing generously donated his "Kunst & Kulturarchiv", as well as his complete photographic legacy of around 20,000 black-and-white negatives from the years between 1950 and 1970, to the Austrian National Library. In this way, one of the most important private photo archives has come into the possession of one of the most important public collections of documentation photography where it will be preserved for the benefit of future generations.



On Dr. Laurent Roosens' 90th Birthday

The European Society for the History of Photography (ESHPh) extends its heartiest greetings to one of its founders, its first president and honorary member on the occasion of his birthday.

Laurent Roosens was born in Antwerp on 21 July 1923. He was the initiator and driving force behind the foundation of the European Society for the History of Photography in 1978 and was the Society's president from 1978 to 1986. Today, he is one of its honorary members.

Laurent Roosens completed his chemistry studies at the Universities of Basel and Louvain (Belgium) at the Colour Institute of the University of Basel with a doctoral thesis on cyanine dyes. He married Myriam Campigotto in the same year and started working in the research department of what was then N.V. Gevaert Photo-Producten in Mortsels near Antwerp. At the end of his professional career, he was head of the Department of Scientific Information of the enterprise that had become Agfa-Gevaert in 1988.

As early as in 1963, Laurent Roosens started his private collection of "Gevaertiana", consisting of archival material from the company he was working for at the time, and this rapidly increased in size over the years. The establishment of the "Lieven Gevaertarchief", the historical archives of Agfa-Gevaert N.V., followed in 1988 and it found its home in a small castle the "Varenthof", which had been erected in 1889.

Laurent Roosens is widely respected as one of the pioneers of research into Belgian photographic history. The first major achievement in the field was the trail-blazing exhibition "125 jaar Fotografie" shown in the Sterkshof Museum of the Province of Antwerp in 1965. The success of the exhibition led to the Province of Antwerp deciding to establish a department of "Foto en Film" in the same museum in 1968 which subsequently formed the basis for today's "FoMu Provincie Antwerpen". Assisted by several collaborators, Laurent Roosens wrote a six-part, ten-volume history of N.V. Gevaert Photo-Producten between 1993 and 2011.

Laurent Roosens is still active as the honorary archivist of the "Lieven Gevaertarchief". Together with his colleague Jules Hens, he recently published "De Belgische foto-chemische Industrie 1879-1939" (Brussels: Lieven Gevaert-Leerstoel 2010). Laurent Roosens is currently working with the same co-author on a book about the European photo-chemical industry which is planned to be released as a private publication in 2014.