



After The War Was Over: Jewish Life in Amsterdam in the 1950s

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At the start of his lifelong career, Magnum photographer Leonard Freed (1929-2006) lived in Amsterdam for many years, from 1957 to 1970. As an American Jew from a family of Russian immigrants, he felt at ease in this historic city with its liberal spirit and longstanding tradition of tolerance for Jews.

Freed was fascinated by the remarkable postwar recovery of Jewish life in Amsterdam, where only 20,000 out of 80,000 Jews had survived the Shoah. This became the topic of his first major documentary project as a professional photographer. He made a multifaceted and compelling portrait of the city's Jewish community, which had endured unimaginable suffering but was now striving to forget, and building a new life with exceptional resilience and vitality. His photographs capture the atmosphere of optimism that prevailed in the Jewish community at the time, and testify to the courage and willpower of those who had survived the war. Today we know that the traumas of war cannot be suppressed, but in those days, that seemed like the only way of coping. The buried pain and grief lingered on, resurfacing only many years later. Over time, Freed's photographs have therefore acquired additional layers of meaning. They now form a unique and valuable historical document.

In 1958, a small selection from Freed's documentary series was published in his first photo book, *Joden van Amsterdam* (Jews of Amsterdam), by publishing house De Bezige Bij.

In 2013, the Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam rediscovered the series in Freed's archives. The museum acquired 80 vintage prints and 150 new prints of previously unpublished images from Brigitte Freed, the photographer's widow.

This book presents some 150 photos, with an introduction by curator of photography Bernadette van Woerkom.

Leonard Freed born in Brooklyn, New York, first took up photography in 1953 while traveling in Europe. His work focuses on ordinary people going about their everyday lives, expressing a special bond with outsiders and the oppressed. Freed made many probing documentary photo series about social issues, including one on black Americans and their struggle for civil rights. In 1972, he was admitted to the famous photographic cooperative Magnum Photos. Throughout his career, he showed an ongoing interest in Jewish life around the world. Leonard Freed born in Brooklyn, New York, first took up photography in 1953 while traveling in Europe. His work focuses on ordinary people going about their everyday lives, expressing a special bond with outsiders and the oppressed. Freed made many probing documentary photo series about social issues, including one on black Americans and their struggle for civil rights. In 1972, he was admitted to the famous photographic cooperative Magnum Photos. Throughout his career, he showed an ongoing interest in Jewish life around the world.

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