



VERZETS
RESISTANCE
MUSEUM
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CAS OORTHUYS

Resistance



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Photographer
verzetsfotograaf

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“It was hell. Only years later, after we had lost so many friends, after being hounded for so long, only then did we realise what had hit us.”

Cas Oorthuys

Introduction: Cas Oorthuys

Dutch photographer and resister Cas Oorthuys (1908-1975) takes hundreds of photos during the Second World War. This exhibition surveys his work and tells the resistance photographer's story with the benefit of new historical research.

Photography is permitted in the Netherlands during the occupation until November 1944, although restrictions apply to military sites and objects. While Cas works legally for clients, he also photographs resisters and their activities. When a general ban on photography is announced in 1944, Cas carries on taking photos, clandestinely recording the famine of the so-called Hunger Winter.

As Cas recalls after the war: "I suppose we never really discuss it (...) So many of our friends died. You lie awake thinking about it. That constant fear of the doorbell ringing, it never goes away."



Cas Oorthuys showing in late May 1945 how he secretly took photos under his coat, photographed by Charles Breijer.

Exhibition text: Resisting national socialism

Cas Oorthuys, a pastor's son, breaks with religion as a young man and joins the Communist Party. In 1930, he serves as an apprentice architect in Germany. There, he's appalled by the violent tactics that the brownshirts – the paramilitary of Hitler's NSDAP – employ against Jews and communists.

Back in the Netherlands, Cas works as an architect for Amsterdam municipality until he's laid off in 1932 at the height of the Great Depression. Cas sets up as a freelance photographer and graphic designer, while also running an advertising agency with artist and designer Jo Voskuil.

Through his friend Nico de Haas, in 1935 he begins working for magazines such as *Wij, Ons werk, ons leven* (Us, Our Work, Our Life) at De Arbeiderspers, the social democratic publishing company.

In 1936, Cas, Voskuil, De Haas and others organise an exhibition protesting against the Olympic Games in Nazi Germany called De Olympiade Onder Dictatuur (The Olympics Under Dictatorship), or D.O.O.D. Just before the show opens, Nico de Haas announces suddenly that he has joined the Dutch Nazi party, NSB. It's the end of their friendship.

Left display case:

Photos on the left

Photos: Photos by Cas Oorthuys on the cover of *Wij* magazine, 1930s.

Photos on the right

Photos 1-3: Prewar pamphlets. Design and photography by Cas Oorthuys. The brochure "*Links richten*" is about the Scottsboro case in America, against nine black teenagers who were sentenced to death after false accusations. It also contains a pre-publication of the book "*We slaves of Suriname*", by Anton de Kom.

Photo 4: Nico de Haas

Photo 5: Cas (from behind) working with others on the D.O.O.D. exhibition.

Family

Cas marries Sini Broerse in 1932. They have a son, Gerrit, and a daughter, Dorothee. In 1938, the couple separate. Cas falls in love with Lydia Krienen and in 1940 they marry. They live at Amstel 3 in Amsterdam. Cas and Lydia have two daughters: Hanna (Hansje) in 1941 and Fenna in 1944. They have another son after the war, Frank (b. 1960).

Right display case:

Photo 1 (bottom left): Sini Broese holding their son Gerrit on her shoulders, by Cas Oorthuys.

Photo 2 (bottom left): Cas with their son Gerrit, by Nico de Haas.

Photo 3 (bottom left): Dorothee

Photo 4 (top left): Cas with their daughter Hansje beside the window in Amstel 3.

Photo 5 (right): Album with birth announcements and photos of Hanna and Fenna Oorthuys as babies.

Exhibition text: Destruction

On 10 May 1940, Nazi Germany launches a surprise invasion of the Netherlands. Lydia: “We immediately threw all kinds of stuff in the stove, communist pamphlets, brochures.” They go to

IJmuiden harbour with Lydia's mother and her brother Frank to escape to England, but they're unsuccessful. *"Demoralised, we cycled back to Amsterdam."*

The following day, a bomb strikes Blauwburgwal in Amsterdam, near the Arbeiderspers building where Cas is working. He feels the force of the blast, hurries over and photographs the damage and the victims. On 15 May, after the destruction of Rotterdam, the Netherlands surrenders. He feels frustrated when he's told that his photos of Blauwburgwal won't be published.

After the liberation, Cas again captures the effects of the war's violence. These photos appear in a book entitled *Revival in the Netherlands*.

Photos on the right side of the text

Bomb strike on Blauwburgwal (Amsterdam), May 11 1940.

Photo's on the left side of the text

1: War damage Arnhem, 1945.

2: Westkapelle, Walcheren, Zeeland. In 1944, the Allies bombed the Zeeland dykes to flood the land.

3: War damage Venlo, 1945.

4: War damage, Groningen, 1945.

5-8: Destruction and start of recovery at Rhenen, 1945.

“Cas saw (...) people dead and wounded for the first time. Especially, that injured woman, looking at him with wide-eyed reproach, resenting being photographed like that, that really got to Cas.”

Lydia Oorthuys-Krienen

Exhibition text: Occupation and censorship

Step by step, the German occupiers gradually Nazify Dutch society. In the summer of 1940, an NSB member takes over De Arbeiderspers. Cas carries on working, as does his friend and fellow photographer Charles Breijer.

Charles: *“It was a strange time at De Arbeiderspers. The Jewish employees were dismissed in 1941. We tried to avoid working for the newspapers, but we had to earn a living.”*

Cas compiles reportages for the relatively apolitical magazine Wij.

In May 1941, all journalists and press photographers are required to register with an official union of Dutch journalists authorised by the Nazi regime. Jews are excluded. Cas enrolls. He receives a membership card which allows him to be outdoors in the evening.

Left display case

Photo 1 (left): *Wij*, June 1940. Article by Mart Stam on the reconstruction of Rotterdam with photos by Cas Oorthuys. The report shows none of the destruction left by the bombing on 14 May 1940.

Photo 2 (middle): *Wij*, October 1941. Cover photo of Lydia and Hansje by Cas Oorthuys, taken on the roof of Amstel 3.

Photo (right): Cas Oorthuys's Dutch journalist union ID pass, 1941.

Right display case: February strike

In February 1941, the Nazi police round up hundreds of Jewish men at random in Amsterdam's first large razzia. Communists call a strike in protest. On 25 February, tens of thousands lay down their tools and take to the streets. At De Arbeiderspers people also stop work too. On that first day, Cas has no camera to record events. On the second

day, when the Nazis respond with violence, Cas takes one photo of a sanitation department truck parked across a tramline. The next day, the strike is over. De Arbeiderspers dismisses its Jewish employees who had stopped work. Cas only loses a day's pay.

Left:

A sanitation department truck parked across a tramline, photographed by Cas Oorthuys during the February strike. From a postwar commemorative album presented to Canadian liberators in 1946.

Exhibition text: National socialist propaganda

Nico de Haas, Cas's former friend who had joined the nazi Party NSB, resumes working for De Arbeiderspers in 1940. In late 1941, Nico places photos by Cas in Hamer, a national socialist magazine. Cas is appalled and resigns.

Cas returns to freelance photography and design. He has to hand in the Arbeiderspers camera he has been using. Cas buys the last

available Rolleiflex in Amsterdam for 200 guilders (equivalent to over €1400 today) with a loan from a friend.

Right display case:

Magazines on the right

Hamer, winter 1941. Nico de Haas uses photos Cas Oorthuys took in 1939 for *Wij* magazine in his article on 'Race and Work'.

Exhibition text: To the fields!

In 1942, publishing house Contact commissions Cas for various photo series. Among others by reprinting successful prewar titles, Contact is able to employ writers, photographers, translators and designers on work that will not yet go into print.

A commission for a series of photos of the Netherlands and its waterways is abandoned. Cas isn't allowed to photograph bridges, locks, beaches, canals or rivers since these are strategically sensitive. But for a series about agriculture, Cas goes into the fields! In fact, he continues photographing farming themes for Contact long after war. During the war this provides a steady income and allows Cas to

travel while Nazi restrictions increase. Which is a perfect cover for his resistance work.

“It was extraordinary that Cas was able to continue working.”

Lydia Oorthuys-Krienen

Photo: Hay harvest, Pijnacker.

Photos on the left wall, from left to right

Photo 1: Farmer showing Bull, unknown location.

Photos 2, 3: Asparagus-harvest, Amerongen.

Photo 4: Haying, Zeeland.

Photo 5: Haying, Eemnes.

Exhibition text: Resistance

“I can’t remember when the resistance work began,” Cas recalls later. “It wasn’t a prearranged plan, we more or less stumbled into it.” Cas and Lydia organise places for people to hide and they shelter people in their home. They work with Cas’s first wife, Sini.

Cas takes photos to forge personal identity cards, delivers ration coupons and forged papers. His father, pastor Gerardus Oorthuys, is

at the heart of a religious resistance network and helps people in hiding. He and Cas work together on this, rebuilding their own relationship which had soured when Cas had joined the Communist Party.

Cas joins an armed resistance group along with several other communists: Raad van Verzet (Council of Resistance). His friend Charles de Breijer recalls: "Cas asked if we could hide something at our house. (...) He came round with (...) a huge suitcase and told us we didn't want to know what was inside." Later, Charles finds out what it contained: weapons, Nazi uniforms and forged personal identity cards.

Because of the risks involved, Cas only photographs resistance work occasionally. Some of his photos date from shortly after the liberation.

"We forged personal identity cards because it was necessary. Because (...) a new personal identity card creates a new person. No longer a Jew – no longer a student or a soldier."

Cas Oorthuys

Photos on the right wall, from left to right

Photo 10, 11: Shortly after the liberation, Cas photographs hiding places.

Photo 12: Jewish fugitive and communist resister Nathan Notowicz listens to a radio concealed in a book at Oorthuys's home, Amstel 3, Amsterdam.

Photo 13-16: Forgery of personal identity cards and other papers.

Photo 17: Black marketeers trading cigarettes, Amsterdam.

Photo 18-19: In May 1942, the Nazis order Jews to wear a yellow star on their clothes. Cas photographs a Jewish friend Anka Nienhuis-Szymelmic sewing a star on her coat. Taking photos of Jews is by then also illegal.

Photo 20: In March 1945, two men quickly lay a Dutch flag at Weteringplantsoen in Amsterdam, where thirty people had lately been executed in a reprisal for resistance.

Photos on the right wall, from left to right

Photo 1: Eus Alberdingk Thijm sketches instructions for guns at his hiding place in Amsterdam, April 1945.

Photo 2: Resistance fighters Epko Weert and Eus Alberdingk Thijm with a gun hidden under a toilet floor. Amsterdam, April 1945.

Photo 3-4: Frank Krienen, Lydia's brother, uses tubes of Vim to make bombs. Dropping his physics studies and going into hiding after being called up to work in Germany, he devotes his energies to resistance.

Photo 5-6: De Koerier (The Courier), an underground newssheet, is stencilled and prepared for distribution, April 1945.

Photo 7-9: Illegal pamphlets and graffiti.

Display case: Arrest and release

Sometimes Amsterdam gets too dangerous for Cas. In the summer of 1942, friends help him organise a place to hide out at Loenersloot where he and Lydia regularly stay.

On 28 May 1944, Cas is collecting ration coupons on Keizersgracht in Amsterdam. It's a trap: Cas is arrested. Lydia finds out that Cas is in jail. He smuggles a letter to her via the laundry: 'go to Nico'. Lydia gets in touch with Nico de Haas, Cas's onetime friend, now an NSB member and SS officer. Meanwhile, Cas is interned at Amersfoort concentration camp.

Almost three months later, he's released, most probably thanks to Nico de Haas. Nico had suggested that Cas be given an assignment in Germany, photographing major historical buildings which might be lost in the devastating air raids. Cas never has to take those photos. When he returns from Amersfoort he's suffering from a lung infection and convalesces in hiding on Prins Hendrikkade in Amsterdam.

Display case

- 1: Hansje in Loenersloot, 1942.
- 2: Ration coupons
- 3: Lydia notes below the drawing: "*Cas is back home; back from Kamp Amersfoort, found this welcome from Tenny.*" Tenny is artist Metten Koornstra, a close friend.
- 4: Forgery materials
- 5: Personal identity cards

Exhibition text: Hunger Winter

In September 1944, the war looks set to end soon. German Jewish refugee Fritz Kahlenberg organises a group of photographers to record the liberation. He invites Cas to join. But the Allied advance stalls in the southern

Netherlands. And in the western provinces, famine takes hold. Kahlenberg asks the photographers to record the worsening situation in the Netherlands, despite the general ban on photography. He sends photos through the resistance network to the Dutch government in exile in London. After the war, the group become known as the Underground Camera.

Cas takes hundreds of photos of the horrific conditions during the Hunger Winter.

Photographer and friend Ad Windig: "...Cas [was] always extremely tense and worried." Cas, Lydia and their children remain in Amsterdam throughout the Hunger Winter. His first wife Sini takes their children, mainly on foot, to relatives in Groningen where there's still enough food.

Photos on the left wall

Photo 1 (on the left side of the text): This photo of a woman in Amsterdam became world-famous when it was shown in a travelling photo exhibition, The Family of Man, of New York's Museum of Modern Art in 1955.

"When we finally began photographing in that last year of the war (...) it was no longer about the oppression, more the

destitution – the starvation – the abject misery of the Hunger Winter...”

Cas Oorthuys

Photo 2 (on the right side of the text): The same woman as in the large photo on the left can be seen here on the right, sitting next to her neighbor on a sidewalk (upper left photo).

Photos on the right wall

Photo 3 (left): In that last winter of the war, there was also a shortage of fuel. This photo (3) shows a man looking for something to burn amid the trash. The other photos (4;5) show people taking wood out of vacated houses.

Photos (middle): City dwellers head to the countryside to find food in exchange for cash or valuables such as jewellery or cloth.

Photo (right): Famine victims are laid out in Amsterdam’s Zuiderkerk, as the mounting number of dead, the lack of wood for coffins and the frozen ground make burial impossible. Some are covered with paper, since cloth is also scarce.

Exhibition text: Liberation

On 5 May 1945, German troops surrender. In addition to the partying crowds, Cas also takes photos of arrested collaborators and 'Nazi sweethearts', women who had consorted with the enemy who were being publicly shorn. On 7 May 1945, Cas goes to Amsterdam's Dam Square.

Lydia: "People were dancing in front of our house along the Amstel. It was one massive party in those days. On 7 May, Cas took Hansje with a nurse (...) by bike to the celebrations at Dam Square. Suddenly Germans began shooting at the crowd from the Groot Club building: dozens of people died and over 120 were injured. Amid the panic, Cas told the nurse to take Hansje home while he stayed to take photos."

Later, Cas travels the country and records the aftermath, as seen at the beginning of the exhibition.

"...the long anticipated yet far from joyful liberation."

Cas Oorthuys

Photos on the left wall next to the text

Liberation, Amsterdam, 1945.

Photos on the right wall

Photos 4-6: Arrest of Collaborators and shaving the heads of Nazi sweethearts.

Photos 7-10: Shooting at Dam Square, Amsterdam, 7 May 1945.

Exhibition text: Journey through Germany

In 1946, Cas receives two commissions from ABC Press to take photos in Germany. He photographs devastated German cities and reports on the Nuremberg trials in which 24 of the leading Nazis are held to account. One of these is Arthur Seyss-Inquart, who led the Nazi regime in the Netherlands.

Cas is shocked by what he sees: *“Dreadful people. Don’t understand them at all. A person like Seyss-Inquart for example, like a kind of pastor. He acts like someone who’s absolutely certain he’s right. Convinced that he was doing what was best for the Netherlands.”*

Photos on the left side of the text

Photos 1-2 (left): Hannover, Germany.

Photo 3 (right): Frankfurt, Germany.

Photos on the right side of the text

Photo 4 (upper left): Dutch journalists at a session of the Nuremberg trials.

Photo 5 (bottom left): Arthur Seyss-Inquart is sentenced to death at the Nuremberg trials.

Photo 6 (right): Local residents read press reports of the sentences passed at the Nuremberg trials.

Exhibition text: Supporting Indonesian independence

During the Second World War, Japan, allied to Nazi Germany, occupies the Dutch East Indies. On 15 August 1945, Japan surrenders. Two days later, Indonesians declare the independent Republic of Indonesia.

In 1947, ABS Press commissions Cas for a two-month tour of Indonesia. He photographs everyday life, militant politically-aware Indonesians, slogans on walls, Dutch soldiers, the first meeting of the Indonesian Republic's parliament and negotiations at Linggajati, where the Dutch agree to recognise the new republic.

Back in the Netherlands, Cas compiles a photo book about Indonesia: *Een staat in wording* (A State in formation). He expects the Netherlands – itself recently liberated – to be willing to give Indonesia its independence, as agreed at Linggajati. But to Cas's horror, soon after the book appears, the Dutch government launches a massive military operation to restore the colonial regime. It's not until 1949 that the Netherlands recognises Indonesia's independence, under pressure from the United Nations.

Right wall with text

Photo 1 (left): Cas chose this photo for the cover of his book about Indonesia. It shows a smiling Indonesian boy carrying a map of Indonesia. The symbolism is clear: he holds his nation's future in his hands.

Photos 2-4 (right): Indonesian people.

Display case

Over the years, Cas publishes numerous photo books. In 1970, he produces *Het laatste jaar* (The final year), featuring photos of the final year of the war. He begins the book with a poem.

Many quotes used in the present exhibition are from this poem.

Right wall without text

Photo 1 (left): Sutan Sjahrir addressing the independent Republic of Indonesia's parliament as prime minister.

Photo 2 (middle): Liberation slogans.

Photos 3-4 (right): Members of Indonesian popular forces.

Photo 5 (right): Indonesian boy making a spear from a bamboo stick.

Exhibition text: Three winners

Cas Oorthuys took no less than half a million images during his lifetime and contributed to at least two hundred photo books. From secret photos during the Second World War, to workers in factories and resurgent cities during post-war reconstruction. With his photo series, Cas always tells a story. And those stories show, throughout his oeuvre, his commitment to his fellow man.

Even today, Cas's work inspires other photographers. That's why the Resistance Museum, together with newspaper *Het Parool*,

organized a photo contest centered around the themes of resistance and humanity. From all the submissions, the jury - consisting of Liesbeth van der Horst (Director of the Resistance Museum), Eva de Vos (Director of Photography of newspaper *Het Parool*), and Frank Oorthuys (son of Cas Oorthuys) - selected these three winners.

Westermarkt, Isis Koelman van Doornik.

"Summer 2023. Westermarkt Amsterdam. An early Sunday morning. A man, sleeping on the bench. His vulnerability open and exposed before the eye of my two-eyed camera. A camera that Cas also loved to use."

The jury: "A wonderfully human photograph. Cas would have looked at this with a smile on his face. Or perhaps the man is exhausted by the hard work? The picture could have gone straight into the photo book *People*, taken by Cas in 1969!"

Bed, Bath, Bread, Simon van Leijen.

"Cycling through The Hague, I came across this demonstration near the Binnenhof. Refugees with nowhere to go, demonstrate for basic needs. Poignant that this photo from 2018 is still

relevant. Compassion with humanity can sometimes be far away."

The jury: "A strong image and very current. Graphically also very beautiful. In a lot of Cas' photo series you see that he makes close-ups of hands, or that in a portrait the hands are clearly in the picture. He felt those hands tell a lot about people."

Love in the picture, Hans Meijer.

"With my analog Hasselblad camera I walked through the Rijksmuseum passage. Love captured in an unguarded moment. Black and white and square as Cas liked it."

From the jury report:

"Beautiful graphic photograph. Very much the kind that Cas also liked to make and loved. Super sharp and beautifully exposed. Nice how the couple looks at each other."