

# THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

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A Photojournalist's Perspective, Seasonal Scenes and China

By William Meyers

**Eliot Elisofon**

**Gitterman Gallery**

**41 E. 57th St., (212) 734-0868**

**Through April 18**

There is a reason Life magazine dominated the market for more than 40 years: It had great picture stories. Eliot Elisofon (1911-1973) was a Life photojournalist for almost 30 years, covering such diverse stories as Gen. George S. Patton's campaign in North Africa and Ella Fitzgerald's birthday. None of the 49 black-and-white prints at Gitterman were published in Life, but they demonstrate the talent that made Elisofon an asset. There are eight pictures from his 1939 "Playgrounds for Manhattan" project that was exhibited at the New School; children are shown in the dirt at a construction site, playing hockey in the street, crawling in a sewer pipe and idling in a puddle. Another series of eight pictures, "David Smith's Studio" (1938), shows the young sculptor and his work with great sensitivity; Elisofon clearly understood what the artist's modernist work was about.

Many of the photographs on display are 3-by-4-inch contact prints, small in size but impressive in their fine detail and clarity of vision. "Ladders Under Manhattan Bridge" (1938) shows two ladders, quite tall, leaning against a pier of the bridge that is ornamented with classical architectural details. The juxtaposition of the delicate, utilitarian ladders with the stone echo of ancient Greece, and the dramatic handling of light and shadows, draws one in. Elisofon's collagelike combination of a fence made of doors and corrugated tin, the backs of some tenements, the gothic windows of a church, and a load of wash on a clothesline is itself a modernist work of art.