



Subway to Studio 54: a bygone New York - in pictures

Skaters, dancers, hustlers, boxers ... Swiss photographer Willy Spiller prowled the streets of the Big Apple from 1977 to 1985, capturing characters from all walks of life

All photographs by Willy Spiller

Wed 14 Apr 2021 07:00 BST

▲ 'Unabashed curiosity' ... A Train to Far Rockaway, 1978



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Leroy in Harlem, 1984

The series New York, 1977-1985, was shot while Willy Spiller lived in the Big Apple. Willy Spiller has his first Dutch solo exhibition at [Bildhalle, Amsterdam](#)

Photograph: All photographs: Willy Spiller 2016



Sunday Morning on Orchard Street, NY, 1980

Whether he focused his camera on subway rides, dancers at the legendary Studio 54 or hip-hop culture in the streets, Spiller captured many facets of a bygone world



Night Cruiser in Manhattan, 1983

In the process, Spiller combines his curiosity for his fellow human beings with an appreciation of the beauty of the banal in the world around him



A Train to Far Rockaway, 1978

His longtime friend and companion Paul Nizon once said: 'I've often asked myself what made Willy Spiller's photography so forthright, so refreshing and so riveting'



Elevated Station 180 St,
1982

Nizon concluded: 'I believe it's a blend of unabashed curiosity and roguish complexity combined with a fraternal sense of compassion'



Grand Central Station,
Subway

'This isn't something you learn at school: it's more a question of class, of predisposition, and ultimately of character'



72nd St Station West Side
IRT Line, Subway, New
York

'Behind the swashbuckling, wheeler-dealing facade there's a dreamer, a man hungry for life and beauty'



Lunch on Broadway, 1982

'And that is the reason Spiller sides with humanity, which is just another way of saying that he has an innate love of mankind'



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Top of Foto und Video - spannende Angebote im Mai. Gültig bis 14.5.21

Gleason's Gym, 1979

'That is the way he sees things. He is driven by artistic energy'



Dangerous Ride, Franklin Street Station IRT Broadway Line, New York Subway, NY, 1978

Spiller roamed the streets far and wide to capture a glimpse of the speed, energy and absurdity of the era



Dancers, Studio 54, 1979

Willy Spiller lives and works in Zurich, Switzerland. He studied at Zurich University of Art and Design and gained experience in photography in Milan



A Train to Brighton Beach, 1977

His images have appeared in numerous European newspapers and magazines and he has received prizes for both his published and exhibited work



Edna on Wheels, 1979

Spiller's photographs have featured in major exhibitions in Cairo, Milan, New York, Paris and Zurich



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