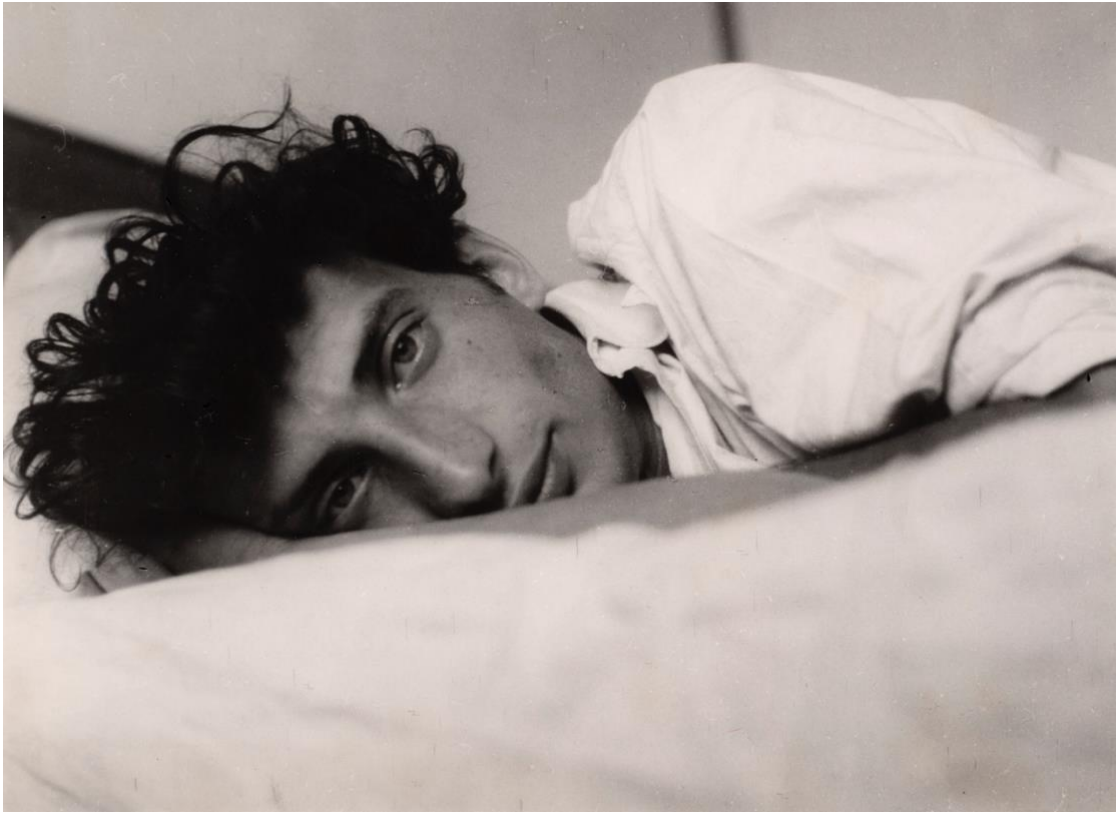




CHARLES EDE



**Édouard Boubat (French, 1923-1999)**

*Self-Portrait*, Paris, France, 1948

Gelatin silver print, inscribed as titled and dated by the artist (on the reverse)

30 x 40.5cm

*“Every photo is my first photo. I have avoided nothing, roads, trains, plains, tiredness, departures, passions, morning light, desire for others, life. People often ask me “How did you begin?” I like to answer: “With light”. I look out every morning, like a farmer, at the grey and white sky of Paris. I wake with the promise of sunshine”*

Édouard Boubat

(1923 - 1999)

Édouard Boubat (1923-1999) was a renowned French photographer celebrated for his poetic and humanistic approach to capturing the world around him. Often compared to other greats like Henri Cartier-Bresson and Brassai, Boubat's work distinguished itself through its profound empathy and focus on the beauty of everyday life. His subjects ranged from street scenes and portraits to landscapes and still lifes, always seeking to reveal the inherent beauty and grace in the mundane. His images exuded warmth, tenderness, and tranquillity, creating a lyrical and meditative visual experience that reflected his deep appreciation for the world.



Fig.1. Lella, Brittany, 1947



Fig.2. Les amoureux de Paris V, 1952

From 1943 onward, Boubat was subjected to *service du travail obligatoire*, the forced labour imposed on French citizens by Nazi Germany. During this harrowing period, he witnessed some of the most devastating horrors of the Second World War. After the war ended, he purchased his first camera in 1946 and began capturing images, often focusing on Parisian scenes and famously photographing his partner, Lella, whom he married in 1947. It was also at this time that he executed the present work and won the Kodak Prize for his work.

Fig. 3. The artist and Lella, 1950 (next page)





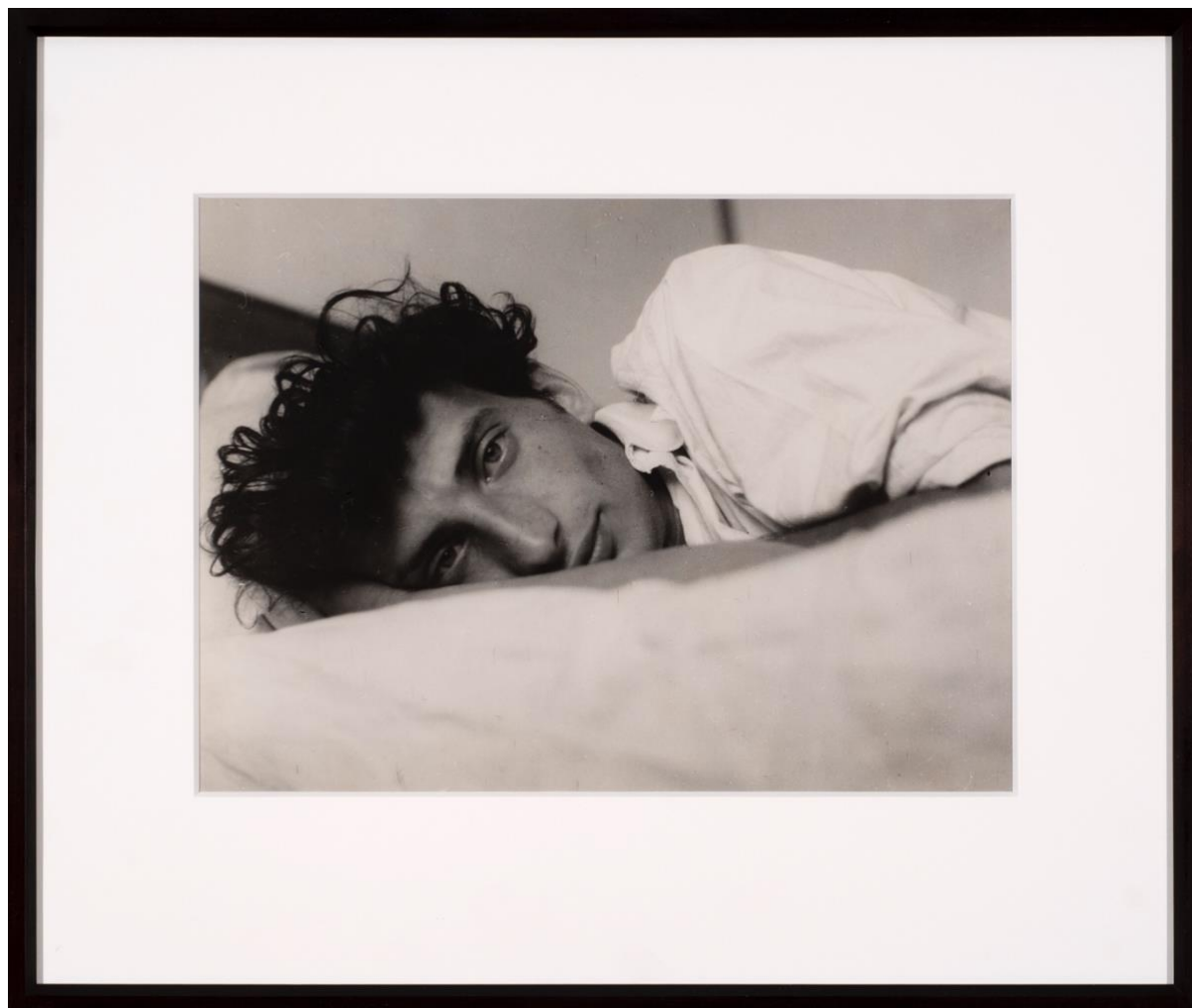
As the world was grappling with the aftermath of the horrors of war, Boubat's humanistic approach provided a sense of hope and renewal. His photographs celebrate life and the human spirit, offering a counter-narrative to the prevailing themes of conflict and hardship. Boubat's mastery of light, composition, and timing allowing him to capture fleeting moments that convey a sense of timelessness and universal truth. His empathetic approach to his subjects, including himself, creating a unique connection between the viewer and the photograph, and capturing the essence of his subjects without intrusion or exploitation.

A key aspect of Boubat's practice was self-portraiture, the present being one of the earliest examples. Through these self-portraits, he explored themes of identity, existence, and the passage of time, providing insight into his introspective nature and contemplative view of life. These self-reflective images were not just depictions of the photographer but reflections of his inner world and artistic philosophy.



Fig.4. Paris, 1948





*One Sunday on the quay by Notre-Dame Zoo with its hens, chicks, dogs, cats and birds, we met Picasso. 'I would love to see your studio.'*

*'Come on Friday; but bring some of your work.' I showed him some of my first prints.*

*If I were a photographer, I'd do it just like this.'*

Édouard Boubat

(1923 - 1999)

Subportrait 1948  
E. Boubat

## Selected Biography

### 1923

Édouard Jean Boubat, is born in Paris, he grows up on the Rue Cyrano-de-Bergerac, Montmartre.

### 1938-42

Édouard Boubat studies photogravure at the École Estienne.

### 1943

He is called up for two years of compulsory labour (S.T.O.) in a factory in Leipzig, Germany.

### 1945

Édouard Boubat returns to Paris after the liberation. He meets Lella, his muse, with whom he will live for five years.

### 1946

He sells a six-volume dictionary in order to buy his first camera, a 6 x 6 *Rolleicord*. He takes his first photograph, '*Little Girl with Dead Leaves*', in the Jardin du Luxembourg, Paris.

### 1947

Édouard Boubat marries Lella. He wins the first Kodak prize at the second *Salon International de la Photographie* organized by the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, where '*Little Girl with Dead Leaves*' is exhibited.

### 1948

He takes pictures of Paris, especially the everyday life of the city, including the present Self-Portrait.

### 1949

He shares a prize with Robert Doisneau at the *Salon de la Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, where his work is on show.



Fig. 5. Little Girl with Dead Leaves, 1946