

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Ave Pildas — Happy Birthday!

Elisa Leonelli · Tuesday, September 17th, 2024

On Sunday, September 15, a few dozen close friends of [Ave Pildas](#) gathered at his home and studio in Santa Monica to celebrate his 85th birthday.



Ave Pildas (c) Elisa Leonelli 1976

I told the story of our long friendship in “[Street Photography by Ave Pildas](#),” a 2015 article for Cultural Weekly about an exhibit of Ave’s Hollywood Blvd B&W photographs from the 1970s at L.A.C.E. gallery.



Ave Pildas (c) Elisa Leonelli 1976

Ave had asked me to write the introduction to *Photomat*, one of his small books, so I interviewed him.



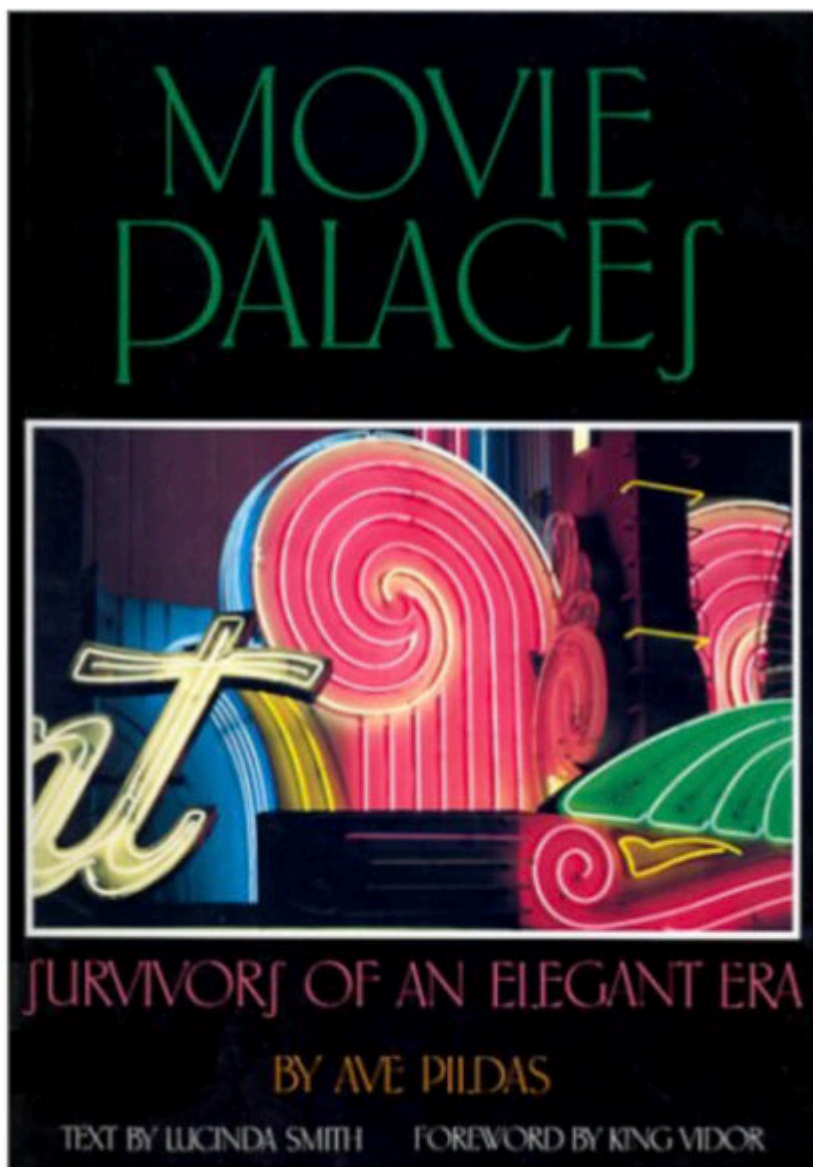
Ave Pildas (c) Elisa Leonelli 1976

In the fall of 2014, Ave had invited me to talk to his Otis College students about my B&W Street Photography from the 1970s. That inspired the [presentation of my work](#) that I gave at the LA Library in June 2015. It began with photographs from a February 1976 walk that Ave and I took together along Sunset Blvd to chat up people and take their picture.



Ave Pildas (c) Elisa Leonelli 1976

On January 1, 1977, Ave and I woke up early to photograph the Rose Parade, after going to Pasadena a couple of days before to document the preparation of the flower covered floats.



I have on one of my bookshelves a signed hardcover copy Ave's 1980 book *Movie Palaces*, next to his 2022 book *Star Struck*.

I remember attending a book signing at Arcana for this one, and chatting with Ave's wife of 29 years, artist *Phyllis Green*.



Elisa with Ave. November 1980

In November 1980, Ave was among the dozen close friends invited to my 33rd birthday party.



Ave Pildas © Elisa Leonelli 1983

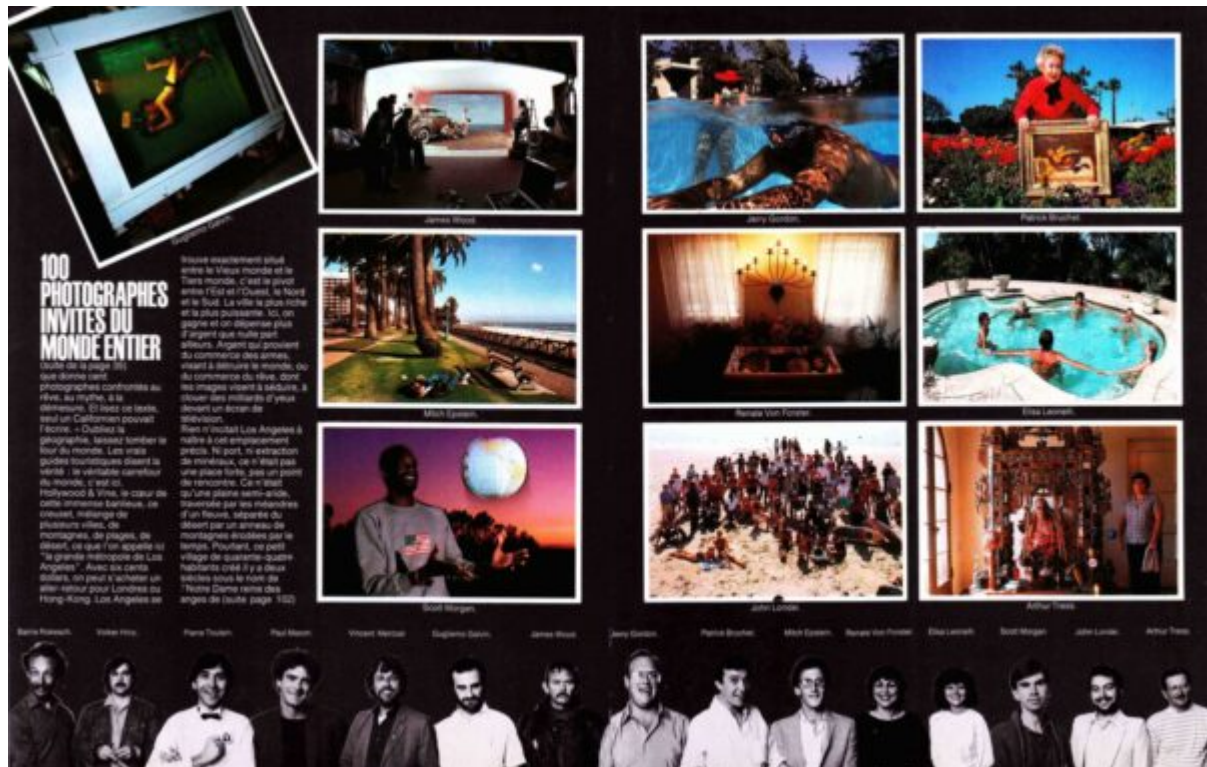
In Summer 1983, I met Ave in Arles, Provence, at the [Rencontres de la Photographie](#), where a selection of my slides was projected in the square, having traveled there with photographer [Franco](#)

Fontana, from our hometown of Modena.



Jean-Robert, Ave (c) Elisa Leonelli 1983

Ave was traveling through Europe in a van with his Rossignoli bike. See Ave next to my French photographer friend [Jean Robert Franco](#), who had driven from Paris.



In 1984 Ave and I were chosen with 100 other photographers to contribute to the book *24 Hours in*

the Life of LOS ANGELES. Several other friends participated: Loretta Ayeroff, Craig Dietz, Gusmano Cesaretti, Robert Landau, Victor Landweber, Gary Leonard, Lloyd Ziff, as did more famous photographers like Moshe Brakha, David Hockey, Robert Mapplethorpe, Tim Street-Porter, Raul Vega, William Wegman. One of my photographs of the nudist resort Elysium in Topanga Canyon was published on a two-page spread. Its founder [Ed Lange](#) was a photographer. See above an article in Photo magazine.

Ave Pildas thanked me when I singled him out with Yoram Kahana as the two [LA photographers](#) “who became my friends and gave me invaluable advice” on my [Photographs by Elisa Leonelli](#) blog.



In 2014, having reached my mid 60s, I decided to take portraits of my friends, most of them also seniors. I started with Ave, who suggested the digital camera I should buy, a Sony A 6000. I met him at the Perfect Exposure gallery where Ave’s 1960s B&W photographs of jazz musicians were exhibited, next to his recent color work.



Ave Pildas (c) Elisa Leonelli 2014

I collected all these photo sessions in a website — [click here](#) to explore it.



In 2023, Ave's director friend Patrick Taulère completed a documentary, *Ave's America*. Artist Richard Michael Conti composed the soundtrack. It's available on Amazon, [click here](#) for the trailer.

I mentioned Ave in articles I wrote about John Van Hamersveld and Lloyd Ziff in 2024.



Ave Pildas (c) Elisa Leonelli 2024

For his birthday party, Ave set up his Sony camera and 3 strobes inside light boxes to take portraits of his friends against a mottled grey backdrop and painted floor. I photographed Ave with my iPhone feeding pizza to his Doberman Gizmo.



Ave Pildas (c) Elisa Leonelli 2024

Happy birthday dear Ave!

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