

HENRI CARTIER-BRESSON

12 FEBRUARY – 9 JUNE 2014

His genius for composition, extraordinary visual intuition and ability to capture the most elusive and significant instants as they happened made Henri Cartier-Bresson (1908-2004) one of the greatest photographers of the 20th century. Throughout a career spent crisscrossing the world, turning his gaze on the great moments of history, he mingled poetry with a powerful sense of testimony. His work falls into three main periods. During the first, from 1926 to 1935, Cartier-Bresson fraternised with the Surrealists, began working as a photographer and went on his first major trips. The second, from 1936 to 1946, was marked by his political commitment, his work for the Communist press and his experience in films. The third, 1947 to 1970, covered the creation of the cooperative

Magnum Photos to the time when he stopped doing photo-reports. The photographer's career thus underwent different periods of development, which cannot really be reduced to the single idea of "the decisive moment", for a long time seen as the main key to interpreting his photographs. This retrospective exhibition retraces his career chronologically, with the aim of showing that there was not just one but several Cartier-Bressons. It respects the historical timeline of his pictures, and where possible features the prints made at the period they were shot. Through over 500 photographs, drawings, paintings, films and documents, bringing together both his most iconic works and lesser-known pictures, this exhibition endeavours to cast a new light on the photographer's work.

**Centre
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RISING SIGNS

Henri Cartier-Bresson's photographic work began in the Twenties. It arose from a combination of factors: an artistic predisposition, unremitting study, personal ambition, a little spirit of the times, personal aspirations and a great many encounters. He studied under André Lhote from 1926 to 1928, learning the classic rules of geometry and composition. He first applied these to his painting before experimenting with them soon afterwards with his camera. His first pictures are thus often structured according to the proportions of the Golden Section. Thanks to his American friends Caresse and Harry Crosby, he discovered Eugène Atget's photographs of old Paris. Starting in the autumn of 1930, he spent a period in Africa where he applied the formal innovations of the New Vision in photography, inherited from Russian Constructivism: unusual angles, extremely close-up shots and an attention to dynamics. A far cry from the ethnographer's point of view, these pictures are marked by the rhythm of Africans' daily lives.

THE ATTRACTION TO SURREALISM

Through René Crevel, whom he met at the home of Jacques-Émile Blanche, Cartier-Bresson began to mingle with the Surrealists in around 1926. The elements of chance and coincidence that Cartier-Bresson included in his compositions, like the movement captured in his shots, all evinced his sympathy with this movement, although he was never an official member of it. However, he regularly attended the meetings of the group's members. From these associations, he retained a number of motifs emblematic of the Surrealists' world, like wrapped objects, deformed bodies and dreamers with closed eyes. But he was even more influenced by the Surrealist attitude: the subversive spirit, a liking for games, the importance given to the subconscious, the joy of strolling through the streets, and lightning speed.

A MILITANT COMMITMENT

Like most of his Surrealist friends, Cartier-Bresson shared many of the Communists' political positions: a fierce anti-colonialism, an unswerving commitment to the Spanish Republicans and a profound belief in the need "to change life". His first photo-reports, commissioned by the Communist press, dealt with social subjects like the first paid holidays in 1936, or paid tribute to Party ideals, like "childhood". He also covered political meetings. During the coronation of George VI in May 1937, he mischievously turned his back on the sovereign and pointed his camera at the people looking at him.

CINEMA AND THE WAR

Cartier-Bresson's experience in films contributed to his political commitment. Between 1935 and 1945, he abandoned photography for film, whose narrative structure made it possible to reach a wider audience. In the US in 1935, he learned the basics of using a film camera from a cooperative of documentary makers, led by Paul Strand, who were highly inspired by Soviet political ideas and aesthetics. The name of the group was "Nykino", from the initials of New York and the Russian word for cinema. On his return to Paris in 1936, he began a collaboration with Jean Renoir that lasted until the war. He enlisted in the Film and photography sections of the French Troisième Armée during the Second World War, and spent three years as a prisoner before escaping and joining a group of Communist resistance fighters. Between 1944 and 1945, he filmed and photographed documentary images of the ruins of the village of Oradour-sur-Glane, the liberation of Paris and the return of prisoners from Germany.

THE DECISION TO BECOME A PHOTOJOURNALIST

The retrospective devoted to Cartier-Bresson by the MoMA in New York in February 1947 marked the institutional recognition of his creative genius. The same year, he cofounded the cooperative Magnum Photos, and focused on photojournalism. From then on, he accepted the constraints of the job, in terms of technical requirements and the topicality of the subjects. His pictures were published in magazines all over the world until the early Seventies. Some made a particular impression on the public, like the crowd of Indians in mourning during Gandhi's funeral, or the "gold rush" of the Chinese. On the sidelines of these events, he also showed people's daily lives in different countries: in Russia after Stalin's death, in Cuba in 1963, and in France after the disturbances of May 1968.

VISUAL ANTHROPOLOGY

In every country he visited for his reports, Henri Cartier-Bresson observed and photographed recurring themes and shared attitudes resulting from the upheavals in society after 1945. Like an anthropologist, in direct contrast to the pace and constraints imposed by the press, he carried out a number of surveys focused on certain themes across the board throughout the world. These reflected his pre-war interests and obsessions: choreography and the depiction of bodies in cities, the relationship between men and machines, the representation of power in public space, signs of the consumer society and those involved, and crowds – the embodiment of the revolutionary spirit, and also a highly stimulating exercise in photographic composition.

AFTER PHOTOGRAPHY

From the Seventies onwards, Cartier-Bresson began to distance himself from Magnum and gradually stopped taking commissions for photo-reports. While he did not abandon his Leica, his style became more collected and contemplative. The landscapes, portraits of friends and objects in his personal life that he captured on film evoke the poetic spirit of his early pictures. In a similar return to his roots, he went back to drawing, sketching in the open air or from life. He spent a great deal of time supervising the organisation of his archives, sales of his prints and the production of books and exhibitions. Slowness and observation imbue this final period in the work of an artist whose keen eye produced magnificent results, in every facet of his career and in every medium he used.

HENRI CARTIER-BRESSON

1908 Henri Cartier-Bresson is born on 22 August in Chanteloup-en-Brie.

1926-1928 René Crevel introduces him to the Surrealists. He attends several meetings of the group, whose members have joined the Communist party. He studies at the academy of painter André Lhote.

1929 He becomes friends with the American couple Harry and Caresse Crosby. At their home, Cartier-Bresson meets up with André Breton and Salvador Dalí again. He gets to know publishers, gallery owners and collectors, including Julien Levy. He learns about the formal innovations of American Straight Photography and the European New Vision.

1930-1932 Cartier-Bresson sets off for Africa. On his return, he goes on a journey to Eastern Europe, then travels to Italy with his first Leica.

1933 He begins to mingle with the AEAR (association of revolutionary writers and artists) in Paris. He visits a number of cities in Spain, and carries out his first photo-reports for the press.

1934 After the February riots in Paris, he signs two anti-Fascist tracts. In June, he begins a year-long stay in Mexico, mixing with artists and intellectuals who have close ties with the National Revolutionary Party then in power.

1935 He goes to New York to take part in the exhibition "Documentary and Anti-Graphic Photographs by Cartier-Bresson, Walker Evans & Álvarez Bravo" at Julien Levy's gallery. He becomes involved with Nykino, a cooperative of militant pro-Soviet film directors. In May and June, he participates in the exhibition "Documents de la vie sociale" staged by the AEAR in Paris. He gradually focuses on films more than photography.

1936-1939 Cartier-Bresson meets Jean Renoir. He becomes his assistant on *La vie est à nous*, commissioned by the Communist Party. He collaborates on *Partie de campagne* and *La Règle du jeu*, and works regularly for the Communist press. In 1937, he marries the Indonesian dancer Carolina Jeanne de Souza-Ijke, known as Eli (they divorce in 1967). A member of the Ciné-Liberté cooperative (the film section of the AEAR), Cartier-Bresson produces his first documentary, *Victoire de la vie*, on the Spanish Civil War.

1940-1945 He enlists in the "Film and photography" section of the Troisième Armée. He is taken prisoner, but escapes in 1943, and with Aragon's help joins a group of Communist resistance fighters, the future MNPGD (National Movement for Prisoners of War and Deportees). He becomes its official representative in the Comité de Libération du Cinéma and is put in charge of organising

a Comité de Libération de la Photographie de Presse. In 1945, the Office of War Information and the MNPGD assign him to direct a film on the repatriation of prisoners (Le Retour).

1947 First retrospective at the MoMA. He founds the Magnum Photos cooperative with Robert Capa, George Rodger, David Seymour and William Vandivert. His photo-reports appear in numerous magazines like *Life*, *Holiday*, *Illustrated* and *Paris Match*. In December, he travels to India with Eli, shortly after the Declaration of Independence.

1948 He meets Gandhi, just before his assassination. His photographs of the funeral are published by *Life*. Then he travels to Beijing just when the People's Liberation Army led by Mao Zedong is on the brink of toppling Chang Kai-shek's Nationalist government.

1952 He publishes his first book with the art critic and publisher Tériade: *Images à la sauvette* or *The Decisive Moment* in the American version.

1954-1955 *Danses à Bali* is published with a foreword by Antonin Artaud. Cartier-Bresson travels to Moscow, as the first Western reporter to enter the URSS since 1947. In 1955, he takes part in the exhibition "The Family of Man" at the MoMA. The Musée des Arts Décoratifs de Paris devotes a retrospective to him. He publishes *Les Européens* with Tériade.

1963-1965 He travels to Cuba, then spends several months in Japan.

1966 He meets the photographer Martine Franck, whom he marries in 1970.

1968-1974 After May 1968, he begins a report on his compatriots: *Vive la France*. From 1974 onwards, he gradually abandons photojournalism in favour of portrait and landscape photography, and the promotion of his work. He takes up drawing again.

1979 The book *Henri Cartier-Bresson: photographe* is published to accompany the eponymous travelling exhibition.

1980 The Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris presents the exhibition "Henri Cartier-Bresson: 300 photographies de 1927 à 1980".

2003 The Bibliothèque Nationale de France presents the retrospective "De qui s'agit-il?" The Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson is created in Paris.

2004 Henri Cartier-Bresson dies on 3 August in Montjustin.

EXHIBITION

CURATOR

Clément Chéroux

RESEARCH AND DOCUMENTATION

Julie Jones (Centre Pompidou)
Aude Raimbault (Fondation Henri
Cartier-Bresson)

PRODUCTION

Sara Renaud

ARCHITECT/STAGE DESIGNER

Laurence Fontaine

Exhibition produced with help from
the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson

FONDATION

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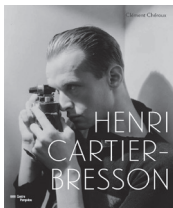
The exhibition "Henri Cartier-Bresson" is to be presented:

- At the Instituto de Cultura/Fundación Mapfre, Madrid, 28 June to 8 September 2014
- At the Museale dell'Ara Pacis, Rome, 25 September 2014 to 6 January 2015
- At the Museo del Palacio de Bellas Artes, Mexico, 22 January to 19 April 2015

PUBLICATIONS

CATALOGUE

Henri-Cartier Bresson
Clément Chéroux
400 pages, 500 illustr. - Price: 49,90 €



ALBUM

Julie Jones and Marion Diez
60 pages, 50 colour illustr. - Price: 9,90 €

BOOKS

Henri Cartier-Bresson - « Voir est un tout » - Interviews and conversations, 1951-1998
Edited by Clément Chéroux and Julie Jones
160 pages - Price: 19,90 €

APPLICATION

In partnership with the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson, Magnum Photos and Le Monde. Application for tablets available on Apple Store and Google Play.
Bilingual version in French and English.

AROUND THE EXHIBITION

GUIDED TOURS

At 2.30 pm on Saturdays and Sundays
At 7.00 pm on Wednesdays: 5, 12, 19, 26 March; 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 April, 7 and 14 May - (1 hr 30 min.)
€4.50; reduced price: €3.50 + "Museum & exhibitions" ticket at a reduced price

WORKSHOPS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

« Chacun son point de vue »

For families (designed for 3-5 year-olds). With staging, composition, lighting, etc., a whole range of fun exercises to sharpen the eye before finally taking the picture, together with a close look at a series of photographs in the exhibition.
Saturdays 8, 15, 22, 29 March and 5 April, from 3.00 to 4.30 pm.
€10 for one child and one adult (€8 for each additional person); reduced price: €8.

TAILOR-MADE TOURS

Saturdays of 15 March and 5 April
At 10.00 am: tour "Écouter voir"
(Listen to see) for the partially-sighted
At 11.00 am, lip-reading tour
Saturday 15 March, at 2.30 pm
and Thursday 10 April, at 7.00 pm
Tour in sign language

AUDIOGUIDE

Languages: French, English, Spanish, German and Italian. A guided tour of the exhibition "Henri-Cartier Bresson". Also discover 50 works from the museum's permanent collections and an architectural tour of the building.
€5, reduced price €4, free for under 13
On hire at the ticket office, level 0
Withdrawal at the audioguide area, level 0

INFORMATION

01 44 78 12 33

www.centrepompidou.fr

EXHIBITION OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

12 February to 9 June 2014
Galerie 2, level 6
Every day except Tuesdays
From 11.00 am to 9.00 pm.
Ticket offices close at 8.00 pm.
Late night opening every evening until 11.00 pm (except Tuesdays, when the Centre is closed).
Ticket offices close at 10.00 pm.

PRICES

Admission with the "Museum & Exhibitions" pass

Valid the same day for one admission to each area at the Museum, to all exhibitions, and to the View of Paris
€13; reduced price €10
Free for annual Pass holders and for those under 18

Online purchase and printing

(full price tickets only)
www.centrepompidou.fr/billetterie

TWITTER

#CartierBresson
<http://www.twitter.com/centrepompidou>

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Direction des publics, Service de l'information des publics et de la médiation, 2014
Leaflet based on texts in the exhibition catalogue

Conception graphique

MODULE

Imprimerie

Friedling Graphique, Rixheim, 2014