

Exhibition ***Henri Cartier-Bresson*** ***Paris Revisited***



MUSÉE HISTOIRE DE PARIS CARNAVALET

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**« there's so much to say
*and I enjoy nosing around there
as a pedestrian »***

**Henri Cartier-Bresson,
on the subject of Paris,
28 May 2001**

Contents

Press release - p.4

The exhibition - p.5

Biography of Henri Cartier-Bresson - p.11

Catalogue of the exhibition - p.14

Visuals available to the press - p.15

About the exhibition - p.17

Paris by Eugène Atget and Henri Cartier-Bresson - p.18

« *Eugène Atget - Voir Paris* » - p.19

The Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson - p.21

Henri Cartier-Bresson at the BnF - p.22

Sponsors and media partners - p.24

Practical information - p.25

Paris Musées - p.26

Exhibition, musée Carnavalet - Histoire de Paris

Henri Cartier-Bresson Paris Revisited



Henri Cartier-Bresson, *Banks of the Seine*, 1955,
collection of the Musée Carnavalet – History of Paris
© Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson/Magnum Photos



Henri Cartier-Bresson, *Under the overground metro, boulevard de la Chapelle*, 1961.
Collection of the Musée Carnavalet – History of Paris
© Fondation Henri-Cartier Bresson/Magnum Photos

GENERAL COMMISSION : Valérie Guillaume, director of the Musée Carnavalet - History of Paris and François Hébel, director of the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson

SCIENTIFIC COMMISSION : Anne de Mondenard, head curator, Musée Carnavalet - History of Paris, Agnès Sire, artistic director, and Aude Rimbault, collection curator, Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson

EXHIBITION DESIGN :

Design : Alexis Patras
Lighting : Sarah Scouarnec
Signage : Arnaud Roussel

For its first exhibition after reopening, the Musée Carnavalet - History of Paris has joined forces with the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson, one of the greatest French photographers of the 20th century. The exhibition is revisiting the links between the artist and the city where he always lived and which was a great source of artistic inspiration.

After early years marked by the influence of the photographer Eugène Atget and the Surrealist artists, Cartier-Bresson became, from the 1930s onward, a long-haul traveller, with Paris as his home port. In a city that he never stopped exploring, his interest lay in the way people moved and occupied space. He photographed them in the street and in meetings. Passionate about current affairs, Cartier-Bresson was a witness to several major historical events, such as the Liberation of Paris in August 1944 and May 68. He made a point of going straight to the site of gatherings as soon as he could.

In Paris, as elsewhere, his camera never left his side. Photographing for him was a state of mind, a breath, an affirmation, and at times, a form of protest. His pictures of Paris, which occupy a major place in his work, reflect his urban wanderings but were also elements of photo-reportages and commissions he produced for the international press; the latter are often not widely known as Cartier-Bresson usually retained only one image from them in his books and exhibitions. This mosaic reflects a flâneur who was particularly attracted by the banks of the Seine and the fringes of Parisian society.

The result of several years of research, the exhibition will present original prints, including thirty or so previously unshown, publications and audiovisual recordings of the artist. Most of the photographs come from the collections of the Musée Carnavalet and the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson.

Planned jointly by the two institutions, this project harmonises with the exhibition *Eugène Atget – Voir Paris* presented at the Fondation HCB, based on the collections of the Musée Carnavalet.

A book comprising essays written by the curators, as well as 200 reproductions, has been published in French by Paris Musées, and in English by Thames & Hudson.

This exhibition is organised by the Musée Carnavalet - History of Paris, Paris Musées and the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson.

The exhibition

Henri Cartier-Bresson's love of wandering the streets is the link between the two facets of his work in Paris. He was an archetypal flâneur and attracted by the quays of the Seine or the city's socially excluded, while also being the author – though much less known – of many photographic reportages and commissions for the international press, of which he often included only a single image in his books and exhibitions.

Against this background, a complex link emerges between his city and his photography: Paris represented his life between professional trips and it is where his work began and ended, where it remained constantly active and where it was executed.

Paris, an artistic melting pot (1929-1933)



Place de l'Europe, behind la gare Saint Lazare, 1932
Collection du musée Carnavalet – Histoire de Paris
© Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson/Magnum Photos

Henri Cartier-Bresson became a photographer when he adopted the Leica, a hand-held device used at eye level. This camera suited his ambition: to take candid photographs on the spot. But the artist learned to see through painting—he was a frequent visitor to the Louvre—and to understand the world through literature. Born into an upper middle-class family, he had no desire to take over the family cotton thread business.

In 1926, at the age of 18, he joined the studio of Cubist painter André Lhote, where he developed a taste for geometry. He became friendly with Surrealist circles and attended debates organized by André Breton in the cafes of the Right Bank. He admired the spirit of revolt that drove this group.

From 1929 onwards, he began experimenting with photography using several cameras: a bellows Kodak which he held at abdomen-level, a camera placed on a stand, and a miniature Krauss camera, bought in Africa. He took inspiration from the images of modern photographers, such as the storefronts photographed by Eugène Atget and the snapshots by André Kertész, published in the avant-garde press.

In 1933, he selected several of his early Parisian images for an exhibition, which took place at the Julien Levy Gallery in New York.

« It is to Surrealism that I owe allegiance, as it taught me to allow the camera lens to rummage through the rubble of the unconscious and chance. »

Henri Cartier-Bresson, 1995

Professional engagement (1936-1938)

Before making photography his profession, Cartier-Bresson went through a period of political activism. Like many intellectuals, he got closer to the Communist Party following the riots of 6 February 1934 in order to participate in the anti-fascist struggle. He also joined the Association of Revolutionary Artists and Writers and in 1935, participated in the exhibition called « *Documents de la vie sociale* ». Uncomfortable with his ties to a large industrial family, at that time, he signed his photographs simply Henri Cartier.

After producing images in Mexico and the United States, Cartier-Bresson gained financial independence in Paris by working as an assistant on Jean Renoir's films and also by publishing photo features in the Communist press, although he was not especially satisfied with these. In March 1937, with his friends David Seymour, known as Chim, and Robert Capa, he became an employee of the daily newspaper *Ce soir*, directed by Aragon. Around the same time, he also published subjects on popular hobbies in the weekly magazine *Regards* but the images published were seldom those he would later select for his exhibitions and books.

The Liberation of Paris (august 1944)



The Liberation of Paris, 25 August 1944
Collection Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson/Magnum Photos
© Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson/Magnum Photos

Following the signing of the non-aggression pact between Germany and the Soviet Union on 23 August 1939, the French government banned *L'Humanité* and *Ce soir*. Before being mobilized, Cartier-Bresson sorted through his negatives, keeping the ones that interested him and destroying the rest.

Captured by the Germans on 22 June 1940 in the Vosges, he escaped on 10 February 1943 and hid for three months on a farm in the Indre-et-Loire region before joining up with the Resistance in Lyon. He obtained false papers thanks to the National Movement of War Prisoners and Deportees (MNPGD) and made trips back and forth between the provinces and Paris.

On 19 August 1944, he returned to the capital while American troops waited in the outskirts. In Paris, he met up with other photographers like Robert Doisneau, Brassai and René Zuber and they worked together. The Liberation of Paris is one of the rare current affairs events covered by Cartier-Bresson. He wandered the streets of the capital for several days avoiding the fighting, following the construction of barricades, General de Gaulle's parade, and even photographed abandoned Gestapo headquarters.

**« I will always be an escaped prisoner. »
Henri Cartier-Bresson, 2003**

First commissioned portraits (1944-1946)



Jean-Paul Sartre and Jean Pouillon on the pont des Arts, Paris, 1945. Collection of the musée Carnavalet - Histoire de Paris

© Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson/Magnum Photos

Before Liberation, Cartier-Bresson photographed painters and writers, at the request of publisher Pierre Braun. These were intended to illustrate a series of small monographs entitled *Visages d'aujourd'hui* but were never published. Carmel Snow, director of the American fashion monthly *Harper's Bazaar*, commissioned other portraits of artists, writers and fashion designers, many of whom lived in Paris. These portrait sessions were an extension of the snapshot aesthetic so dear to the photographer. While faces captured in the street gave the impression of a chance encounter, those shot indoors seemed more the result of a courtesy visit than a posing session.

By revisiting his work for an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1947, Cartier-Bresson selected many portraits he had taken from 1944 onwards. In 1946, he printed some three hundred and fifty small-format prints himself. Several of these are on display here.

« A geometrician of life » (1951-1966)

In 1947, notably with his friends Chim, Robert Capa and British photographer George Rodger, Henri Cartier-Bresson founded the Magnum Photos agency in New York. This cooperative was responsible for circulating their photo-reportages and protecting their copyright. They decided to share the world between them, Cartier-Bresson chose Asia, where he spent three years—the longest foreign voyage of his life and career. He returned to Paris in November 1950 with recognition and glory in the form of numerous prestigious publications linked to major events: the death of Gandhi in India and the creation of the People's Republic of China by Mao Tse-tung.

In the spring of 1951, The New York Times asked him for a subject on Paris, which he expanded over the following years in order to offer it to foreign magazines. Between two trips, with his Leica in hand, the man who had become known as the master of the snapshot continued to stroll around Paris, a city on the verge of the “Glorious Thirty”, a period of economic prosperity. His images of the capital come from both walks and photo-reportages, both published and unpublished.

« I have a passion for geometry and feel joy when I am surprised by a beautiful organisation of shapes. Through that alone, the subject is given its full scope and seriousness. »

Henri Cartier-Bresson, 1961

Troubled by revolt

Demonstrations in the streets of Paris, fuelled by resistance and struggle, are a recurring motif in Cartier-Bresson's work. This fascination is connected to his character and libertarian ideas, which explain the distance from his family environment and justify his links with the Surrealist movement and later correspond with his anti-consumerist and environmentalist convictions.

Urban meetings or gatherings were also a prime motive for a photographer who sought, through framing, to bring order to the chaos. He witnessed the demonstrations that marked the end of the Fourth Republic in 1958. He was also present for the tribute to the victims killed at the Charonne metro station in 1962.

At a time when he had distanced himself from photojournalism, he bore witness to the events of May '68, which he captured in a comprehensive yet complex fashion: on the one hand, he photographed the students, erecting barricades, occupying the Sorbonne, or marching with workers; on the other, he shot the supporters of de Gaulle, on the Champs-Élysées, who sounded the death knell for the movement.



Near the stade Charléty, may 1968
Collection Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson
© Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson/Magnum Photos

A change of direction after 1968

Following the events of May '68, Cartier-Bresson moved away from Magnum Photos and the illustrated press in order to enjoy the freedom that had accompanied his photography at the start of his career.

Now aged 60, he travelled a lot less. In October 1968, at the request of *Reader's Digest*, he embarked on an in-depth feature on France and the French, taking the time to observe his country over the course of an entire year and over all four seasons. He published this exploration, in black and white but also in colour, in the book *Vive la France* (1970) with a text by writer François Nourissier. These images were exhibited at the Grand Palais the same year.

In this tableau of France, seemingly at peace after the revolt of May '68, Paris occupies an important place, as do the capital's inner suburbs, marked by the construction of large apartment blocks and the persistence of the slums, i.e., the confrontation of two distinct yet colliding worlds. Cartier-Bresson continued to explore the geographical limits of the capital, a work begun in the late 1920s, but always privileging people over the setting.

Drawing conclusions

In 1972, at the age of 64, after announcing that he was quitting photography, which was partially true, Cartier-Bresson asked artist Sam Szafran to give him drawing lessons. His friend Tériade, the publisher of *Images à la Sauvette*, along with friends encouraged him on this path. Cartier-Bresson needed to question himself, to escape from routine and notoriety. He drew in a classical fashion, from observation, sketching the city, which he approached in a radically different way than with his camera. Paris was no longer the setting but became the central subject, removing the characters from the frame.

Believing that photography was an action and drawing a meditation, Cartier-Bresson finally stayed still. Motionless, he sat and gazed in the same direction for hours. From his apartment on the rue de Rivoli, he observed the Jardin des Tuileries, glancing as far as the Louvre and the Musée d'Orsay, venues he had visited so much.

However, until the end of his life, he always kept his camera close to him so that he could, if an opportunity presented itself, capture a face or a more fleeting view of the same scene.

**« *Photography is an immediate action ;
drawing a meditation.* »**

Henri Cartier-Bresson, 1996

Conclusion

Cartier-Bresson's Paris is a mosaic built up over a lifetime of encounters, a few historical events and a great many small reportages, often unknown, on social issues that he produced for the press and publishers.

Cartier-Bresson never spoke at length on his choice of subjects, nor on the conditions under which he worked on them, and even less on the constraints with which he had to comply. His greatest achievement is to have created unity out of different images.

The picture that emerges is of an unconstrained artist who enjoyed opposites: reportages and isolated images, Paris and the rest of the world, photography and drawing, commitment but to no assembly, commissions and working at his own rhythm... These glaring contradictions describe a flâneur who worked on his own terms.

Biography of Henri Cartier-Bresson

Born in Chanteloup (Seine et Marne) in 1908, Henri Cartier-Bresson began by studying painting in the studio of André Lhote in Paris before devoting himself to photography. In autumn 1931, after spending a year in the Ivory Coast, he bought his first Leica in Paris. His work was shown in publications and exhibitions as early as 1933, initially abroad, then in France.

He travelled around Europe, Mexico and then the United States, and began to interest himself in filmmaking. In 1936 and 1939 he worked with Jean Renoir and during the same years produced three documentaries on the Civil War in Spain. He was taken prisoner in France by the Germans on 23 June 1940 but managed to escape in 1943 following two unsuccessful attempts.

The MoMA in New York gave him a solo exhibition in 1947 and, the same year, he founded the Magnum Photos agency with Robert Capa, David Seymour, George Rodger and William Vandivert. He then spent three years in the East. On his return to Europe, in 1952 he published his first book, *Images à la Sauvette*. He subsequently made many trips around the world and in 1974 decided to devote himself to drawing. Nicknamed «the eye of the century», he had witnessed great events of the 20th century: Gandhi's funeral in India, the last days of the Kuomintang in China and the first photographs of the USSR, among dozens more.

In 2003, he created the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson with his wife Martine Franck and their daughter Mélanie Cartier-Bresson. When he died in 2004, Henri Cartier-Bresson left behind him a unique heritage in the history of photography.

Timeline focused on Paris

1908

Born on 22 August in Chanteloup, Seine-et-Marne.

1924-1926

Studies at the Lycée Condorcet in Paris.

1926-1928

Studies painting under André Lhote in Paris and frequents the Surrealists at Place Blanche.

1929

Discovers the work of Eugène Atget, takes his first photographs.

1930-1931

Spends almost a year in Ivory Coast.

Automne 1931

Buys his first Leica in Paris.

Fin 1932-1933

Travels around Italy and Spain.

First photos published in *Voilà, Photographie and Vu*.

First exhibition at the Julien Levy Gallery in New York and at the Ateneo in Madrid.

1934-1935

Stays in Mexico and the United States.

Takes part in the exhibition “*Documents of Social Life in Paris*” by the Association of Revolutionary Artists and Writers.

1936

Works as the assistant of film-director Jean Renoir on *La vie est à nous* and *Partie de campagne*.

Meets Robert Capa and David Seymour, called Chim, in the Montparnasse district of Paris.

1937-1938

Directs several documentaries on the war in Spain.

In March 1937, he teams up with Capa and Chim to work for the daily *Ce Soir* directed by Louis Aragon.

He publishes reportages in the weekly *Regards*, on popular leisure activities in particular.

1939

Works again with Jean Renoir on *La Règle du jeu*.

Destroys some of his negatives when war is announced.

1940-1943

Taken prisoner by the Germans on 23 June 1940.

Escapes on 10 February 1943 and joins the National Movement of Prisoners of War and Deportees.

S'évade le 10 février 1943 et rejoint le Mouvement national des prisonniers de guerre et déportés (MNPGD).

1944-1945

Creates portraits of artists for the publisher Braun but finally the book is not published.

Photographs the Liberation of Paris.

Produces *Le Retour*, a documentary on the repatriation of PoWs and deportees.

Begins to publish portraits in *Harper's Bazaar*.

1946-1947

Spends over a year in the USA and prepares his exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

Co-founds the agency Magnum Photos.

Fin 1947-1950

Spends three years in the East, covering Gandhi's funeral in India, the last days of the Kuomintang in China, and Indonesia's independence.

His photographs are published all around the world.

1951-1952

Produces several reportages on Paris.

1952

Publishes his first book, *Images à la Sauvette*, with an original cover created by Henri Matisse.

1954

He is the first photographer to be allowed to visit the USSR since the start of the Cold War.

1955

First exhibition in France held in the Pavillon de Marsan in the Louvre and organised by the Arts décoratifs.

1958

Returns to China for the 10th anniversary of the People's Republic.

1961

Series of portraits for *Queen* magazine.

1963

Second stay in Mexico. *Life* sends him to Cuba.

1965

Travels around Japan for several months.

1966

Returns to India.

New exhibition at the Arts décoratifs.

1967

Commissioned by IBM to produce a study on *Man and Machine* (exhibition and book).

Mai 1968

Photographs the revolt in Paris.

Octobre 1968-septembre 1969

Travels around France for the book *Vive la France*, accompanied by an exhibition (En France, held at the Grand Palais, 1970).

1970

Marries the photographer Martine Franck in Paris.

1972

Meets the artist Sam Szafran and asks him for drawing lessons.

1974

Withdraws as a principal of Magnum Photos but leaves the distribution of his archives there.

1975

First exhibition of his drawings at the Carlton Gallery in New York.

1984

Exhibition *Paris à vue d'œil* at the Carnavalet Museum.

1987

Exhibition *The Early Work* held at the MoMA.

2000

With his wife Martine Franck and their daughter Mélanie, he sets up the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson, whose purpose is to preserve his work.

2003

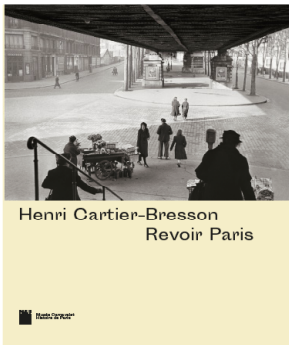
Retrospective *De qui s'agit-il?*, held at the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Opening of the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson in Paris.

2004

Dies on 3 August in Montjustin, Provence.

Catalogue of the exhibition



Henri Cartier-Bresson. Paris Revisited,
With texts by Anne de Mondenard
and Agnès Sire
Hardback, 256 pages, 200 illustrations
40€
Published by Paris Musées
English edition published by Thames & Hudson

“It would be trite to say that Paris was his home port and that the path we offer here reveals a kind of inverse mirror image of his international career. The photographs taken in Paris are primarily the result of his wanderings around the city – ‘being a flâneur demands a complete availability of the gaze’¹ – punctuated by portraits of famous people, often commissioned by the press. Paris is a crucible, and Henri Cartier-Bresson called it a ‘cauldron’ that brought together all of his artistic, intellectual and political passions. He went to Mexico, the USA and Asia, seeking out things to feed his curiosity and nourish his uncertainty. After the creation of Magnum, he travelled the world for twenty years, with few illusions about the career of reporter. ‘You’re never worse than when you’re trying to “document”, and I’ve also fallen into that trap myself...’².”

Agnès Sire’s essay *The bow and the arrow* (p. 7)

“In November 1984, as part of the Mois de la Photo festival, the Musée Carnavalet in Paris hosted the exhibition ‘Henri Cartier-Bresson: Paris à vue d’œil’. To celebrate the greatest French photographer from this geographical perspective might seem surprising given that his reputation was built on images taken all over the world, whose appeal seemed to push back borders.

(...) At first glance, Paris may seem to represent the flipside of Cartier-Bresson’s work, a geographical location but not a destination of the kind that he collected: Spain, Italy, Mexico, America, India, China, Soviet Union, Japan...

(...)

Paris represented life between his journeys and was the place where his work began and ended, a place where it never paused. Consequently, it was necessary to wait until his work came to an end before an exhibition could be devoted to the subject – it represented an ending in itself.

(...)

In Paris, Cartier-Bresson never left home without his camera, which he kept at the hip, set up and ready to shoot. He used it to take notes, to keep a sort of diary. He would follow his nose, by foot or on the Metro. He was in his element, a watchful *flâneur* devoting himself to his passion for ‘the unexpected shot in which form and ground are closely interwoven’³. In Paris, as elsewhere, it was human beings that interested him: ‘Man and his life, so brief, so fragile, so threatened’⁴. He used figures as a basis for composing the image, at varying distances but never in extreme close-up. He did not ignore the city, but it was always there in the background, raising the question of the difference between photographs of Paris or photographs taken in Paris: ‘I make use of this setting to position my actors, to grant them their rightful importance, to treat them with the respect that is their due’⁵.”

Anne de Mondenard’s essay *The restless wanderer* (p. 10-13)

1 *Paris à vue d’œil*, op. cit., p.7

2 Interview with Yves Bourde, 5 Septembre 1974, taken from Michel Guerrin, Henri Cartier-Bresson and « Le Monde », Paris, Gallimard, 2008, p. 154.

3 « Henri Cartier Bresson : la photographie, la peinture », interview held on 12 October 1976, INA archives.

4 Interview with Daniel Masclat, « Un reporter [...] Henri Cartier-Bresson », Photo France, no. 7 (May 1951), p. 28-33.

5 Ibid.

Visuals available to the press

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Place de l'Europe, behind the gare Saint Lazare, 1932
Collection of the musée Carnavalet – History of Paris
© Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson/Magnum Photos



The pont des Arts, 1936
Collection Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson
© Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson/Magnum Photos



Jean-Paul Sartre and Jean Pouillon on the pont des Arts, Paris, 1945
Collection of the musée Carnavalet – History of Paris
© Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson/Magnum Photos



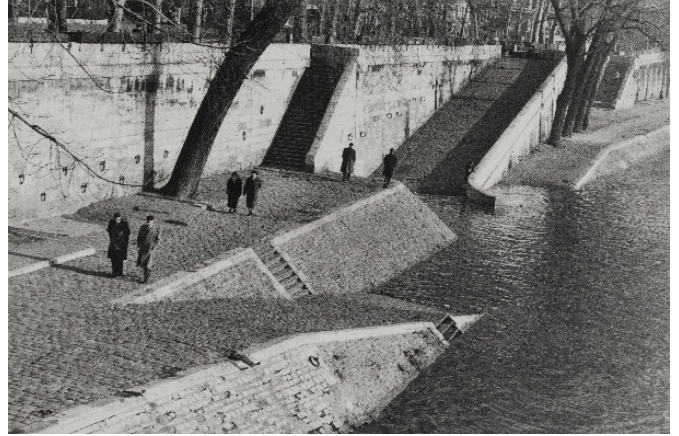
The Liberation of Paris, 25 August 1944
Collection Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson
© Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson/Magnum Photos



Bookseller on the banks of the Seine, 1952
Collection Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson
© Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson/Magnum Photos



Under the overground metro, boulevard de la Chapelle, 1951
Collection Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson
© Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson/Magnum Photos



Banks of the Seine, 1955
Collection of the musée Carnavalet - History of Paris
© Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson/Magnum Photos



The Tuileries Gardens, 1974
Collection of the musée Carnavalet - History of Paris
© Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson/Magnum Photos



Near the Charléty Stadium, May 1968
Collection Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson
© Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson/Magnum Photos



Place de la Bastille, 1953
Collection of the musée Carnavalet - History of Paris
© Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson/Magnum Photos

About the exhibition

The choices offered will be updated in line with the development of the health crisis.
Please check the museum's website www.carnavalet.paris.fr

Exhibition visits

Saturdays at 10h.

Lecture cycle

In September and October (see our online calendar).

« Les Paris de l'art »

Streamed courses of art history.

« *Henri Cartier-Bresson. Paris Revisited* » by Anne de Mondenard, exhibition curator.

Full price: 8€

Reduced price: 6€

Youngsters and families

See our online calendar:

• **Storytelling visits «Stories at a glance»**

This storytelling visit lets you listen to stories inspired by some of the works in the exhibition.

The children will be encouraged to observe and comment on the works under the direction of the storyteller. Then they will hear poetic accounts whispered by the characters or the landscapes seen in the photographs chosen.

• **Cyanotype workshops**

Linked with the exhibition, the workshops will teach children about the cyanotype technique by showing them how to create their own negative.

For the disabled

Tactile workshops for groups to create relief reproductions of photographs (September–October).

Writing competition 18–26 years

With the photograph taken by Henri Cartier-Bresson on the exhibition poster used as a cue, the competition entrants are invited to write a short graphic novel linked to the place today (details will be given on our website in September).

Paris

by Eugène Atget (1857 - 1927) and Henri Cartier-Bresson (1908 - 2004)

Approximately two generations separate these two photographers. **Eugène Atget** gave up a career as an actor, **Henri Cartier-Bresson** that of a painter, in order to pursue a relatively new art: photographic recording.

In an unprecedented double exhibition and a new approach, **Fondation HCB** (June 3 to August 19, 2021) and **musée Carnavalet – Histoire de Paris** (June 15 to October 31, 2021), bring their collections together to reveal the essence of Paris in the work of these two great figures of French photography.

From the most classical architecture to the most remote courtyards, Atget, more interested in the city, obsessively depicted a Paris marked by history, offering his prints to painters and libraries. Characters that show up in the frame blend into the background.

Cartier-Bresson, having frequented the Surrealists in the 1920s, proved to be a long-haul traveler with Paris as his home base. More than the city, it was humans that interested him. He captured them on the streets or during encounters.

Atget said little to nothing about his own work. Reported statements served to define his project as essentially documentary, but it was his direct, poetic approach that fascinated many of his contemporaries. This produced contradictory commentary on his unusual œuvre. With a rich collection of his work held at the musée Carnavalet, Cartier-Bresson made many statements about his own work, much of it in opposition to what one wanted it to be saying. What results is another type of complexity, attested to through the study of the archives conserved at his foundation.

The two photographers were also avid readers. Both figures were fundamentally independent, a bit austere, and fostered neither intellectual concepts nor artistic principles as foundations from which to value experience. They invite us to exercise our gaze, to consider the complexity of the world as the source of our faculty of imagination. Fate would have it that these two bodies of work, emancipatory for photography, first find acknowledgement in the United States before achieving a vast posterity. The two curators conceived this original selection to reflect the poetic dimensions of the two artists.

For the re-opening of museums and particularly of the musée Carnavalet after four years of closure for renovation, these exhibitions celebrate Paris through singular perspectives prior to its status as one of the world's-most-photographed city.

**Exhibition held at the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson
3 June - 19 September 2021**

Eugène Atget - Voir Paris

This exhibition, presented at the Fondation HCB, is the fruit of long research efforts jointly undertaken by the two institutions throughout the musée Carnavalet - Histoire de Paris' collections. The result is an outstanding presentation of the œuvre of Eugène Atget (1857-1927), a unique figure and photography pioneer. Above all an artisan, Atget's prolific output of photographs was intended for artists and lovers of the old Paris; he rose to fame posthumously. A forerunner of modernity is seen in his work by art critics and photographers, among them Henri Cartier-Bresson, whose early work sought to imitate Atget. Paris' place within the œuvre of Cartier-Bresson is also the subject of an exhibition at the musée Carnavalet from June 15 to October 31, a project in partnership with the Fondation HCB.

First acknowledged in the United States and by the French surrealist scene before finding acclaim with succeeding generations of photographers, Atget still exerts unprecedented influence in the 21st century, though reception of his work remains mixed. Bearing a view camera and glass plates, he often captured his subject at dawn. For almost thirty years, he sought to make a collection of the Paris of his time. He also explored city limits, what is known as "the zone". Today, his images of nearly-deserted streets, store fronts, and courtyards evidence urban change at the turn of the 20th century.

Beyond its documentary aspects, Atget's photography expresses a deep aesthetic sensibility, illustrating the incalculable contribution he made to the medium. As Paris changed, Atget's work method evolved accordingly, becoming more and more sensitive to the light and to atmospheric effects.

This devotion to detail (using a modest subject matter), in contrast to the triumphant pictorialism of the time, is also singularly modern, allowing a notion of pleasure to surface—one which is rarely mentioned in reference to Atget. The exhibition and its accompanying publication propose



Eugène Atget, *Coin de la place Saint-André-des-Arts et de la rue Hautefeuille, VIe, 1912*

© Paris Musées / musée Carnavalet - Histoire de Paris

CURATORS

Anne de Mondenard, Head of the Photography and Digital Images Department, musée Carnavalet - Histoire de Paris
Agnès Sire, Artistic director, Fondation HCB

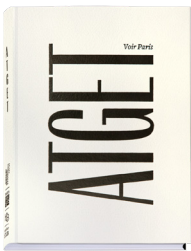
The exhibition is organized by the musée Carnavalet - Histoire de Paris, Paris-Musées and the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson.

The musée Carnavalet - Histoire de Paris houses a collection of over 9,000 prints by Atget, the largest archive on the photographer. The exhibition Eugène Atget - Voir Paris presents a selection of around 150 of the artist's original prints.

BIOGRAPHY

Eugène Atget was born in Libourne, France in 1857. He gave up a career as an actor and took up photography starting in 1888. He was self-taught. In 1890, he began producing material for use by artists: shots of plants, landscapes and diverse objects. In 1897, he started to take photographs of the Paris of his time systematically, attentive to scenes of urban life, architectural detail and the capital's topography. Towards the end of his life, he met Man Ray's assistant, Berenice Abbott, who took two portraits of him. He died in Paris in 1927. Abbott learned of his death just as she was planning to offer him the portraits. Along with gallerist Julien Levy and Atget's executor, André Calmettes, Abbott aided in rescuing Atget's studio archive, the recognition of his work through various publications, and the admission of the Abbott/Levy collection to the New York Museum of Modern Art's collection in 1968.

PUBLICATION



Accompanying the exhibition is a book entitled *Atget - Voir Paris*, published by Atelier EXB.

Bound

42€

21 x 26 cm

Around 170 photographs, 224 pages

Only available in French

Texts by Anne de Mondenard, Agnès Sire
and Peter Galassi

ISBN 978-2-36511-281-9



Eugène Atget, *Vieille maison*, 6, rue de Fourcy, IVe, 1910
© Paris Musées / musée Carnavalet – Histoire de Paris

The Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson



As responsible for the conservation of Henri Cartier-Bresson's work, the Fondation HCB warmly embraced the chance to work with the Carnavalet Museum – History of Paris on developing the exhibition *Henri Cartier-Bresson – Paris Revisited*, a project that echoes the exhibition *Eugène Atget – Voir Paris* currently on show at the Fondation HCB and created from a selection of exceptional prints from the collections of the Carnavalet Museum – History of Paris. The capital has never seen so many celebrations of HCB as this summer, which will also include the exhibition *Henri Cartier-Bresson – Le Grand Jeu* at the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Collections: preserving, promoting and supporting research

Created in accordance with the wishes of Henri Cartier-Bresson, his wife Martine Franck and their daughter Mélanie Cartier-Bresson, the Fondation HCB opened its doors in May 2003. It now holds the photographic archives of Henri Cartier-Bresson and Martine Franck. The Henri Cartier-Bresson collection, an exceptional and inalienable legacy, comprises more than 100,000 documents, original prints, contact sheets, drawings, publications, rare books, letters, films and more. In August 2012, this was joined by the work of Martine Franck. Since then, the foundation's collection has continued to grow and be studied.

The Fondation HCB also has the goal of promoting the work of Henri Cartier-Bresson and Martine Franck and transmitting their bodies of work by presenting exhibitions in France and internationally in collaboration with the most prestigious institutions. Supported by a detailed inventory, the foundation's photographic and documentary collection is also made available to researchers and exhibition curators.

Exhibitions: from legacy to contemporary photography

The Fondation HCB has developed itself to become an exacting reference in photography, establishing a unique position for itself since it opened in Montparnasse in 2003. Three or four cycles of exhibitions are organised each year to show the public the “treasures” of its collection and the work of great classic or contemporary photographers. Over the past eighteen years, the Fondation HCB has presented more than fifty exhibitions, offering an impressive hit list in photography.

As part of its efforts to support contemporary photography, the Fondation HCB grants the HCB Award to support the creative work of an established photographer, which is then made the subject of an exhibition and a publication produced by the foundation. Representing 35,000 euros, the HCB Award is awarded every two years by an international jury. In 2019 the grant was awarded to the French photographer Mathieu Pernot for his project *Le Grand Tour*, which will be exhibited in 2022 at the Fondation HCB. The Fondation d'entreprise Hermès is the patron of the HCB Award.

79 rue des Archives

In 2018, the Fondation HCB moved into new premises at 79 Rue des Archives in the centre of the Marais district in Paris. Offering greatly improved conditions for conservation of the collections and for the reception of the public, this new space allows the foundation to broaden the scope of its missions: to conserve and transmit its exceptional heritage while also stimulating reflection and debate on photography through exhibitions and meetings between artists, people in the photographic profession, and an ever-increasing public curious about photography.

**« The only foundations that can be built
are with human warmth. »**

**Henri Cartier-Bresson, Paris, le 11 May 2004.
Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson**

Exhibition at the BnF | François-Mitterrand | Galerie 2
May 19 - August 22, 2021

Henri Cartier-Bresson Le Grand Jeu



Henri Cartier-Bresson, *Derrière la Gare Saint-Lazare, Place de l'Europe*, Paris, France, 1932. © Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson / Magnum Photos



Henri Cartier-Bresson, *Couronnement du roi George VI, Trafalgar Square*, Londres, Angleterre, 12 mai 1937. © Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson / Magnum Photos



Henri Cartier-Bresson, *Alberto Giacometti, Rue d'Alséla*, Paris, France, 1961. © Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson / Magnum Photos

The BnF is set to introduce the French public to « *Henri Cartier-Bresson. Le Grand Jeu* » (*Henri Cartier Bresson. The Great Game*), a unique project centred on the photographer's Master Collection. The exhibition is the fruit of an exceptional collaboration between the Bibliothèque nationale de France and Pinault Collection, with assistance from the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson. Following a first airing last autumn at the Palazzo Grassi in Venice, it is to be presented in Paris, with a scenographic itinerary specially adapted to the BnF's layout.

An ensemble created in 1973 by the artist himself at the request of his friends and collectors Dominique and John de Ménéil, the Master Collection brings together « *the best possible prints of Cartier-Bresson's 385 best photographs* ». 6 editions of the Collection were printed and distributed across the world¹, providing a remarkable overview of the photographer's body of work.

The exhibition « *Henri Cartier-Bresson. Le Grand Jeu* » submits the Master Collection to the viewpoints of five guest curators, all of whom have close connections with photography in common : François Pinault, collector, the photographer Annie Leibovitz, the writer Javier Cercas, the film director Wim Wenders, and Sylvie Aubenas, heritage curator at the BnF. No monograph, theme, geographic area or chronology in this exhibition, but rather a confrontation of five points of view on the work of the « eye of the century », revealed in the course of an unparalleled architectural walkabout.

The rules of the game / five installations

As the exhibition's chief curator Matthieu Humery explains, "*The Great Game – a title somewhat reminiscent of the element of chance so dear to the surrealists – is first of all a reference to the artist's choice. The term has more than one meaning, though, and can also evoke entertainment and recreation. And finally, the notion may refer to all the rules we have to submit to, "compliance with the game". But, above all, [in the French version of the title] "jeu" (game) is also and above all a homophone of "je" (I). Hence, a true exquisite corpse, the Great I is glorified, first of all through the tribute paid here to one man's body of work, and also through the visual expression of each curator's self, which is necessarily manifested in the game they have created.*"

¹ The 6 editions of the Master Collection are now conserved at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the University of Fine Arts in Osaka, the Bibliothèque nationale de France, the Menil collection in Houston, and the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson and now Pinault Collection in Paris.

The rules of this particular game are simple enough : the five co-curators each had to select fifty of the artist's images. Selection was limited to Cartier-Bresson's picks for the Master Collection. None of the curators were aware of the others' choices. The scenography, framing and colour of the hanging rails – all such exhibition components were left to the curators' absolute discretion. Hence, each area is an exhibition in its own right, independent of the others. Free to go their own way, each of the five curators delivers their own story and feelings, revealing the role that these images have taken on in their own work and life. Each of the five installations immerses the visitor in a particular aspect of the photographer's and his curator's world.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Exposition de la Bibliothèque nationale de France,
co-organisée avec Pinault Collection - Palazzo
Grassi, en collaboration avec la Fondation Henri
Cartier-Bresson

May 19 - August 22, 2021
Galerie 2
BnF | François-Mitterrand
Quai François Mauriac, Paris XIIIe

Tuesday to Saturday 10 am > 19 pm
Sunday 13 pm > 19 pm
Closed on Mondays and public holidays

Admission 9€, reduced rate 7€
Free admission for Reading / Culture Pass and
Research Pass holders
Mandatory reservation, also possible on the day of
the visit (subject to availability)

PUBLICATION



Henri Cartier-Bresson. Le Grand Jeu
Trilingual edition (French, English and
Italian)
304 pages
63€
Co-edition Marsilio Editori, Palazzo Grassi -
Punta della Dogana and BnF

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photography specialist, photography advisor
to Pinault Collection

Curators

Sylvie Aubenas, director of the BnF's Depart-
ment of Prints and Photography
Javier Cercas, writer
Annie Leibovitz, photographer
François Pinault, collector
Wim Wenders, film director

The exhibition project's Scientific Advisor
Agnès Sire, directrice artistique of the
Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson

*In partnership with Arte, Le Monde,
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Practical information

CARNAVALET MUSEUM – HISTORY OF PARIS

23 Rue de Sévigné

Tel. 01 44 59 58 58

www.carnavalet.paris.fr

It is obligatory to wear a mask for all visitors from the age of 11. Hydroalcoholic gel is available, numbers are controlled and visitors must follow a set path around the exhibition.

Access to the exhibitions is only possible by reserving a time-stamped ticket on the site **www.billetterie-parismusees.paris.fr** or by calling 01 44 59 58 58.

The exhibition is accessible to people with motor disabilities and reduced mobility. Skip-the-line tickets on **www.carnavalet.paris.fr**

OPENING TIMES

Open every day from 10h to 18h except Mondays and certain public holidays (1 May 1, 25 December and 1 January). (The ticket office closes at 17h30).

TICKETS

Full price: 11 €

Reduced price: 9 €

Free for under 18

TRANSPORT

Metro stations : Saint Paul ou Chemin Vert

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City of Paris museums also benefit from an exceptional collection of buildings: private mansions in the heart of historical districts, palaces built for universal exhibitions and artist's studios. These advantages mean that the museums are exceptional sites that are preserved thanks to a renovation plan with a budget of over 110 million euros that was initiated in 2015 by the City of Paris

The Paris Musées Board of Directors is presided over by Carine Rolland, Deputy Mayor of Paris for Culture and the Quarter-hour City. Afaf Gabelotaud, Deputy Mayor of Paris for Companies, Employment and Economic Development is Vice President. Anne-Sophie de Gasquet is General Director as of April 2021.

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La carte Paris Musées

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The Paris Musées Pass is strictly nominative and may not be loaned. It is valid for one year from the date of subscription.

*Except for the Archeological Crypt on Île de la Cité, the Paris Catacombs and Hauteville House.