

The Museum of Modern Art

11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 245-3200 Cable: Modernart

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PRESS REVIEW:
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About 150 works by one of the 20th-century masters of photography, the French artist Henri Cartier-Bresson, will be on view at The Museum of Modern Art from June 25 through September 2. Selected and installed by John Szarkowski, Director of the Department of Photography, Cartier-Bresson: Recent Photographs is primarily concerned with work of the past decade. During this time he has placed special emphasis on portraiture, seen in the show in pictures of Charles Munch, Coco Chanel, Genet, and Max Ernst, among others, and in landscapes he photographed in Mexico, India, Israel, Japan, Hungary, and Yugoslavia as well as his native France.

"Above all, I craved to seize the whole essence, in the confines of one single photograph, of some situation that was in the process of unrolling itself before my eyes," the photographer said in The Decisive Moment, published in 1952. As Mr. Szarkowski points out, "This was a private and radical definition of photography, formed without regard for the requirements of professionalism or the canons of prevailing photographic taste. The pictures of Cartier-Bresson are complex in design, unornamented in surface, and seemingly drawn almost at random from the existential flow of life." He continues: "Discarding accepted standards of technical and pictorial excellence, Cartier-Bresson discovered a new formal order that had been hidden within the flux of movement and change."

Since the 1930's, Cartier-Bresson has attempted to enroll his own kind of photography in the service of journalism. Although his pictures occur in the context of journalism, they are not topical and ephemeral: he is always interested in the formal quality of the subject. "Although made in the hundredth part of a second, they speak of the character of decades and generations," says Mr. Szarkowski. His Greek Island (c. 1963), for example, conveys the stillness and simplicity of a village that is without time.

Portraits, too, provide the opportunity for Cartier-Bresson to capture the "decisive moment" in which personality is revealed. The architect Louis Kahn is defined at an instant of thought and communication, both in his face and in his hands. Even when his subject matter is concerned with the world of politics or history, such as his Student Demonstration, which has just been made in Paris, or Berlin Wall (1963), where children play in the shadow of the famous 20th-century monument, the results are not so much timely as universal. "Journalism has been the occasion, not the motive force, for his own best work", Mr. Szarkowski says, "Journalism concerns itself primarily with the world of hierarchical events, while Cartier-Bresson concerns himself first of all with the quality of ordinary life."

"Photography appears to be a simple matter," says Cartier-Bresson, "but it demands powers of concentration combined with mental enthusiasm and discipline. It is by strict economy of means that simplicity of expression is achieved. A photographer must always work with the greatest respect for his subject and in terms of his own point of view." Speaking of the special challenges of photo-reportage, in whose development he has been an outstanding figure, he adds: "We must take greater care than ever not to allow ourselves to be separated from the real world and from humanity."

Cartier-Bresson's photographs were first shown at The Museum of Modern Art in 1937 in the major historical survey directed by Beaumont Newhall. His first one-man show at the Museum in 1947 was accompanied by a monograph by Lincoln Kirstein and Newhall. Born in France in 1908, Cartier-Bresson was interested in painting and photography from childhood. He studied for two years with the painter André Lhote and at Cambridge for a year. In the late thirties he worked in films under Jean Renoir. Captured by the Germans in 1940, he escaped in 1943 and photographed for the French underground. Although he lives in Paris, Cartier-Bresson travels throughout the world.

Cartier-Bresson: Recent Photographs is drawn entirely from the Museum's
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collection and includes a retrospective gallery of about 30 photographs from 1929 to about 1950. After its New York showing, the exhibition will be on view at the Worcester (Mass.) Art Museum from October 16 through December 1, 1968, and at the San Francisco Museum of Art from March 11 through April 13, 1969 (tentative).

Photographs and additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, and Patricia Bauman, Associate, Press Services, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019, 245-3200.

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CARTIER-BRESSON: RECENT PHOTOGRAPHS

June 25 - September 2, 1968

Wall Label

The photographs of Cartier-Bresson began to attract public notice in the mid'thirties, after several years of private experiment had defined his essential style. This style, or system, was developed as a way of disciplining and thus intensifying his personal experience of the world. He said, "Above all, I craved to seize the whole essence, in the confines of one single photograph, of some situation that was in the process of unrolling itself before my eyes."

This was a private and radical definition of photography, formed without regard for the requirements of professionalism or the canons of prevailing photographic taste. That taste favored bold patterns, dramatic lighting, and luxuriously "photographic" textures; above all it favored subjects which had already demonstrated their artistic usefulness. The pictures of Cartier-Bresson on the other hand were complex in design, unornamented in surface, and seemingly drawn almost at random from the existential flow of life. Discarding accepted standards of technical and pictorial excellence, Cartier-Bresson discovered a new formal order that had been hidden within the flux of movement and change.

Beginning in the latter 'thirties, Cartier-Bresson attempted to enroll his own kind of photography in the service of journalism. During the years since he has been an outstanding figure in the development of photo-reportage. Notwithstanding his spirited and sophisticated advocacy of the photo-journalist's role, however, the pictures shown here would suggest that journalism has been the occasion, not the motive force, for his own best work. Journalism concerns itself primarily with the world of hierarchical events, while Cartier-Bresson concerns himself first of all with the quality of ordinary life. Few of his pictures are tied to newsworthy episodes; although made in the hundredth part of a second, they speak of the character of decades and generations.

John Szarkowski

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Henri Cartier-Bresson was born in Chanteloup in 1908. He was from childhood interested in painting and photography. Beginning at twenty, he studied two years with the painter André Lhôte, then one year at Cambridge studying painting and literature. His photographs were exhibited by the Julien Levy Gallery in 1933, and included in Beaumont Newhall's pivotal historical survey at The Museum of Modern Art in 1937. In the late 'thirties he worked in films under Jean Renoir. Captured by the Germans in 1940, he escaped in 1943 and photographed for the French underground. His first museum one-man show was held at The Museum of Modern Art in 1947, accompanied by the first monograph of his work. In 1947 he was one of the founding members of the photographers' cooperative Magnum. He has since continued to travel and photograph throughout the world. His permanent home is in Paris.

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In my view photography has not changed since its origins, except in technical aspects, and these are not my major preoccupation. Photography is an instantaneous operation, both sensory and intellectual--expressing the world in visual terms, and also a perpetual quest and interrogation. It is at one and the same time the recognition of a fact in a fraction of a second and the rigorous arrangement of the forms visually perceived which give to that fact expression and significance.

The chief requirement is to be fully involved in this reality which we delineate in the viewfinder. The camera is to some extent a sort of notebook for recording sketches made in time and space, but it is also an admirable instrument for seizing upon life as it presents itself. Without the participation of intuition, sensibility, and understanding, photography is nothing. All these faculties must be closely harnessed and it is then that the capture of a rare picture becomes a real physical delight.

Photography appears to be a simple matter, but it demands powers of concentration combined with mental enthusiasm and discipline. It is by strict economy of means that simplicity of expression is achieved. A photographer must always work with the greatest respect for his subject and in terms of his own point of view. That is my own personal attitude; consequently I have a marked prejudice against "arranged" photos and contrived settings.

The intensive use of photographs by mass media lays ever fresh responsibilities upon the photographer. We have to acknowledge the existence of a chasm between the economic needs of our consumer society and the requirements of those who bear witness to this epoch. This affects us all, and particularly the younger generation of photographers. We must take greater care than ever not to allow ourselves to be separated from the real world and from humanity.

Henri Cartier-Bresson
from The World of Cartier-Bresson

(Viking Press, 1968)

CARTIER-BRESSON: RECENT PHOTOGRAPHS

June 25 - September 2, 1968

Checklist

1. Landscape near Paris, June 14, 1968
2. Student Demonstration, Paris, May, 1968
3. Colette, c. 1955
4. Paris, 1950
5. Greek Island, c. 1963
6. Briançon, 1950-55
7. Sculptor Giacometti going out for Breakfast, Paris, 1963
8. Beaune, Burgundy, France, 1956
9. Champagne Vineyard Owner, France, 1959
10. Paris, 1954
11. French Biologist Jean Rostand, 1964
12. Coco Chanel, Paris, 1965
13. Pierre-Jean Jouve, 1964
14. Charles Munch, 1967
15. François Mauriac, 1964
16. Landscape, near Belgium, 1967
17. French Alps, 1960
18. Paris Demonstration (Charonne), 1961
19. Henri Langlois, 1968
20. Jean Renoir, 1967
21. Elsa Triolet (Mrs. Louis Aragon), 1964
22. Le Clezio and his Wife, 1965
23. River Sailor and Family, France, 1962

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24. Jean Genet, 1963
25. Meudon, near Paris, 1964
26. General De Gaulle, 1960
27. Provincial Women listening to De Gaulle, 1962
28. Paris, 1959
29. Violette Leduc, 1964
30. Albert Camus, 1957
31. French Provincial Lady, 1956
32. Le Mans Auto Race, 1966
33. Le Mans Auto Race, 1966
34. India, 1966
35. Ahmedabad, India, 1966
36. Dyeing Saris, Ahmedabad, India, 1966
37. Ahmedabad, India, 1966
38. Cochin, India, 1966
39. Old Delhi, India, 1966
40. Fatehpur Sikri, India, 1966
41. Ahmedabad, India, 1966
42. Ahmedabad, India, 1966
43. Gobi Desert, China, Team Going to Announce Production Figures, 1958
44. Peking, China, 1958
45. Industrial Exhibition, Peking, 1958
46. Area under Demolition, Liverpool, 1963
47. Beckett, 1964
48. Greece, 1961
49. Holland, c. 1959
50. Orgosolo, Sardinia, 1966

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51. Rome, 1951
52. Newsstand, Naples, 1960
53. Naples, 1960
54. Museum, Naples, 1960
55. Italy, 1959
56. Coronation of Pope John XXIII, 1958
57. Zagreb, Yugoslavia, 1965
58. Yugoslavia, 1964
59. Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia, 1965
60. Prizren, Yugoslavia, 1965
61. Roadside, Ireland, 1963
62. Ireland, 1960
63. Dublin, 1960
64. Ireland, 1960
65. Tokyo, 1965
66. Brook in Nara, Japan, 1965
67. Mount Aso, Japan, 1965
68. Kyoto, 1965
69. Painter, Japan, 1965
70. Japan, 1965
71. Canadian Businessmen, Montreal, 1964
72. Montreal, 1965
73. In the Province of Quebec, 1965
74. Provincial Parliament, Quebec, 1965
75. Quebec Province, 1965
76. Yugoslavia, 1965
77. Greece, 1961
78. Teheran, Iran, 1966

79. Max Ernst, Dorothea Tanning, France, 1957
80. Varlin (Bondo), 1967
81. Alain Brustlein, Paris, 1965
82. Carl Jung, 1961
83. Ilya Ehrenburg, 1955
84. Old People's Home, Sweden, 1956
85. Switzerland, 1966
86. Students, Zurich, 1966
87. Mexico, 1963
88. Patzquaro, Mexico, 1964
89. Puebla, Mexico, 1963
90. Mexico, 1963
91. Mexico, 1963
92. Los Remedios, Mexico, 1963
93. Puebla, Mexico, 1964
94. Mexico, 1963
95. The Popocatepetl Volcano, Mexico, 1963
96. Patzquaro, Mexico, 1963
97. Mexico, 1963
98. Mexico, 1963
99. Texas, 1962
100. Texas Election Campaign, 1960
101. Election Campaign, Texas, 1960
102. Jackson, Mississippi, 1962
103. Lincoln Kirstein, 1964
104. Miss Eleanora Sears, Boston, 1962

- 105. Nobel Prize Winner Glen Seaborg, 1960
- 106. Art Buchwald, 1958
- 107. Mississippi, 1962
- 108. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1964
- 109. Alexey Brodovitch, 1964
- 110. A.J. Liebling, 1959
- 111. Robert Kennedy as Attorney General, 1960
- 112. Louis Kahn, Philadelphia, 1960
- 113. New Orleans, 1958
- 114. Reception, Washington, 1962
- 115. Bankers Trust Company, 1961
- 116. Air Force Graveyard, Arizona, 1967
- 117. Berlin Wall, 1963
- 118. Berlin Wall, 1963
- 119. Berlin Wall, 1963
- 120. Mea Sharim, Jerusalem, 1967
- 121. Eton, 1962
- 122. Russian Construction Workers, 1954
- 123. Athens, c. 1954
- 124. Hungary, 1965
- 125. Bed, 1960
- 126. Barcelona, Spain, 1932
- 127. Budapest, 1931
- 128. Paris, Avenue de Maine, 1929
- 129. Mexico, 1934
- 130. Valencia, Spain, 1933
- 131. Gypsy Women, Alicante, Spain

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- 132. Callejón of the Valencia Arena, 1933
- 133. Barrio Chino, Barcelona, 1933
- 134. Cordoba, Spain, 1933
- 135. Mexico, 1934
- 136. Gare St. Lazare, Paris, 1932
- 137. Tivoli, Italy, 1932
- 138. Mexico, 1935
- 139. Saul Steinberg, Vermont, 1947
- 140. Henri Matisse, 1946
- 141. Sunday on the Banks of the Marne, 1939
- 142. Madrid, 1933
- 143. Robert Flaherty, 1946
- 144. M. et Mme. Joliot-Curie, 1946
- 145. Jean-Paul Sartre, Paris, 1946
- 146. William Faulkner, 1947
- 147. Barcelona, Spain, 1932
- 148. Pierre Bonnard, 1944
- 149. Augustus John, 1950
- 150. New York, 1946
- 151. Near the Hall of Records, New York, 1947