



607. JUVISY, FRANCE 1938 (PRINTED 1947)

(French, 1908-2004)

Gelatin silver print.

9 1/8 x 13 11/16" (23.3 x 34.8 cm).

Gift of the photographer

Audio courtesy of Acoustiguide

PETER GALASSI:

This picture, made in 1938, was for many, many years known as Sunday on the Banks of the Marne.

The popular front government that came to power in France in the spring of 1936 had as its most important lasting achievement, the establishment of a law guaranteeing French workers two weeks of paid vacation. And so in the late '30s, the image of working people at leisure in the countryside, right outside of Paris, was a politically progressive image.

They're actually not on vacation. It's just a weekend excursion to Juvisy, which is about a 15-minute train ride south of Paris. So although it does show you that the French know how to live, it's also a picture that's rooted in a very particular historical moment.

This is a picture actually made before the war. But it's typical of Cartier-Bresson's post war work, where you have just a handful of characters, who are shown together in a scene of complete clarity. The single simple most active pictorial element is there is no horizon. So that then flattens out and simplifies the whole thing. You don't have to deal with what's on the other bank of the river.