The French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson (b. 1908) studied painting in the mid-twenties and in 1929 began to experiment with photography. In 1932 he acquired a Leica, a small, versatile camera that allowed him to respond to the most ephemeral action. Over the next three years, Cartier-Bresson created one of the most original and influential bodies of work in the history of photography. Guided by the rebellious spirit of Surrealism, he invented a style remarkable for its spontaneity, its graphic boldness, and its psychological intensity. This early work is very different from the much broader body of work that Cartier-Bresson created as a photojournalist in the decades after World War II.

This exhibition of eighty-seven black-and-white photographs is the first to focus exclusively on Cartier-Bresson's early work. The famous pictures of the period are joined by others that are unfamiliar or unknown, including several that had not been printed before. Four early paintings and a collage, also unknown to the American public, are included.


After its New York showing, the exhibition travels to The Detroit Institute of Arts (December 15, 1987 - February 7, 1988); the Art Institute of Chicago (March - April 1988); the Museum of Photographic Arts, San Diego (May 10 - June 26, 1988); the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (December 17, 1988 - February 26, 1989); and The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (March 31 - May 28, 1989).

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For further information or photographic materials, contact the Department of Public Information, 212/708-9750