WATCH! WATCH! WATCH!

HENRI CARTIER-BRESSON

‘I watch, watch, watch’ wrote French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson (1908–2004) in 1963 in the American weekly Life. A patient, silent observer, yet equally light-footed and agile, Cartier-Bresson captured scenes of people and events with his compact 35mm Leica. Renowned today as one of the leading twentieth-century photographers, his exceptionally varied oeuvre covers a period of around fifty years. After an early phase inspired by Surrealism as well as the New Vision movement, he began a career as a photojournalist, initially working largely for the French communist press. After the Second World War and some detours into film, he resolutely continued his work in photography, though his political stance became increasingly liberal over time.

The Magnum Photos agency, co-founded by Cartier-Bresson in 1947, marked a milestone in his career. His work always focused on people. Through the photographs he took of daily life on his travels around the world, he also became one of the key exponents of street photography.

In 1952, he published his pioneering essay *Images à la sauvette* (literally: ‘Images on the Run’). Issued simultaneously in English as *The Decisive Moment*, this work proved crucial for his reception and influence on other photographers. Even now, Cartier-Bresson’s name is intrinsically linked to the theory of the ‘decisive moment’ elaborated in that essay. Thanks to his skill in capturing scenes at just at the right moment, many of his photographs have become iconic in the history of photography.

Biography

1908
On 22 August 1908 in Chanteloup-en-Brie, Henri Cartier-Bresson is born into a family in the textile industry

1926-1928
He studies painting under Jean Cottenet, Jacques-Émile Blanche and André Lhote. René Crevel introduces him to Surrealist circles, and he regularly attends their meetings.

1930-1931
In October 1930, he travels through various French colonies in Africa. When he returns to France in 1931, he decides to become a photographer and buys himself his first Leica

1932-1933
He works for the first time as a photojournalist and, in this role, documents the elections in Spain. His photographs are published in magazines as well as in his first exhibitions in New York and Madrid.

1934
He sympathises with the Communist Party, publishing his photographs as Henri Cartier to hide his privileged family background. He travels to Mexico with a scientific expedition. When it fails, he remains there for a year, working together with a number of Communist intellectuals.

1936-1939
Cartier-Bresson explores working in film, initially taking jobs as an assistant. In 1937–38, he makes three documentary films of his own on the Spanish Civil War. In March 1937, together with Robert Capa and Chim (David Seymour), he begins working for the *Ce Soir* newspaper. His commissions include documenting George VI's coronation celebrations in London.

1940-1943
Drafted at the start of the Second World War, Cartier-Bresson is assigned to the Film and Photography unit. On 23 June 1940, he is captured and held in a prisoner-of-war camp. After two unsuccessful escape attempts, he finally manages to flee Germany in February 1943.

Anonymous
Jacques Lemare, Henri Cartier-Bresson and Herbert Kline, Spain,
October 1937

Anonymous
Henri Cartier-Bresson prisoner, germany,
June 1942

1944-1945
For a planned publication, he photographs such figures as Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso. In 1945, he makes *Le Retour* (*'The Return'*), a documentary on prisoners of war and displaced persons returning to their home countries.

1947
Cartier-Bresson's first major retrospective opens in New York's Museum of Modern Art. He becomes a co-founder of the Magnum Photos agency.

1948-1950
In India on 30 January 1948, he meets Mahatma Gandhi just a few hours before Gandhi was assassinated. Cartier-Bresson's photographs of the funeral are published around the world. Afterwards, he travels on to China. On 3 December 1948, he arrives in Beijing. There, he documents the last days of China under the nationalist Kuomintang regime. He leaves China in September 1949. In winter 1950, after stops in Singapore, Indonesia and Iran, he returns to Paris.

1952
His first book *Images à la Sauvette* (*'Images on the Run'*) is published. The dust jacket is designed by Matisse.

1954
In July, Cartier-Bresson arrives in Moscow, the first western reporter to take photos in the USSR since the start of the Cold War.

1959-1965
In the USA, he works on a series of portraits. In 1963, he returns to Mexico. Shortly after the Cuban Missile Crisis he travels to Cuba.

1967
The IBM computer company commissions Cartier-Bresson for a reportage on *The Man and the Machine*, exhibited the following year.

1968-1970
Over the course of one year, he accompanies President Charles de Gaulle on a tour through France.

1974
Cartier-Bresson distances himself from Magnum Photos.

1987
In May, the not-for-profit Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson opens in Paris.

2003
In May, the not-for-profit Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson opens in Paris.

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

Genevieve Naylor
Henri Cartier-Bresson in Brooklyn,
January 1946

Henri Matisse
Cover for
The Decisive Moment
by Henri Cartier-Bresson,
New York,
Simon and Schuster,
1952

James Burke
Henri Cartier-Bresson photographing in China,
1948

Ihei Kimura
Henri Cartier-Bresson, Paris, 1954

THE NEW VISION MOVEMENT AND SURREALISM

IN SEARCH OF ‘OBJECTIVE CHANCE’

After a long trip through Africa in 1931, Henri Cartier-Bresson decided to devote himself to photography. With unexpected angles and perspectives, the reproduction of visual textures, and isolated and fragmented subjects, his early works are informed by the defining features of New Vision, one of the key photographic movements in the 1920s and 1930s. But Cartier-Bresson was also inspired by the Surrealist circles around André Breton and, in particular, the idea of ‘objective chance’. His photographs from these years contain such Surrealist motifs as store window mannequins, people asleep, or veiled objects.
The act of seeing and being seen also became a recurring theme in Cartier-Bresson’s work. In his self-portrait in a distorting mirror or his photo of a hardly identifiable animal cadaver, he defamiliarised everyday objects and, in this way, questioned the conventions of seeing.

Martigues, France, **1932**
In the late 1920s, Cartier-Bresson regularly attended the meetings of Surrealist circles in Paris. When the Paris Colonial Exhibition was held in 1931, the Surrealists and Communists called for a protest campaign against the French state’s smug celebration of itself at the show. Cartier-Bresson’s anti-colonial stance is evident in his photograph of a statue of Étienne Richaud, the former Governor of French Indochina. In his photo, taken in Martigues in southern France, Cartier-Bresson chose a perspective visually merging a young boy, part of the statue, with a horse in the background so the child seems to be urinating on the memorial. Cartier-Bresson captured the scene with his compact 35mm Leica, bought on his return from Africa.

Behind St. Lazare Station, Place de l'Europe, Paris, France, 1932
Cartier-Bresson's shot of a pedestrian jumping across a puddle at the Place de l'Europe in Paris is one of the few cases where he cropped and enlarged the original negative. In his photography, he believed in 'objective chance', capturing a visual image in a sudden and fortuitous awareness of a situation. 'For me, the camera is a sketch book, an instrument of intuition and spontaneity, a master of the instant which, in visual terms, questions and decides simultaneously. To take a photograph is putting one['s] head, one['s] eye, and one['s] heart on the same axis".

Valencia, Spain, 1933
Cartier-Bresson took this unusual composition in Valencia in summer 1933 during his first trip to Spain. The photograph not only draws viewers into a bewildering interplay of seeing and being seen, but also illustrates Cartier-Bresson's fondness of geometrical compositions based on the Golden Ratio, a preference he developed while studying with painter André Lhote. According to Cartier-Bresson, the essence of photography is the 'recognition, in real life, of a rhythm of surfaces, lines and values; composition [...is...] a simultaneousness coalition – an organic coordination of visual elements.'

Nacho Aguirre, Santa Clara, Mexico, 1934
Cartier-Bresson joined a Central and South America expedition as the official photographer, but when it ended abruptly in 1934 he stayed on in Mexico City. He quickly made new friends, including photographer Manuel Álvarez Bravo, artist Ignacio Aguirre and writer Langston Hughes. The ideas and insights he gained in his nine months in Mexico proved crucial to his career as a photographer. He developed his own visual language, influenced by Surrealism and the New Vision movement. Cartier-Bresson combined these various inspirations with a feeling for situations visually expressing social and political realities. This approach is evident, for instance, in a photograph taken in Mexico in 1934 where the montage-like composition echoes René Magritte's paintings. In this way, everyday motifs were arranged in new and enigmatic ways.

DARK HOURS, BRIGHT DAYS

EARLY POLITICAL PHOTOJOURNALISM AND SIGNS OF WAR

By the mid-1930s, Cartier-Bresson's works had already been printed in leading publications and shown at major exhibitions. From 1936, with jobs in various cinema productions, he gained experience in film as well. Over the next two years, he also directed three documentaries on the Spanish Civil War. At the same time, he was a photojournalist for the French Communist press and regularly published in Regards, an illustrated weekly, as well as the *Ce Soir* newspaper.
During his Surrealist phase, he was still focused entirely on single images. But for his reportages, he needed to think in series.
The statements of his photographs became increasingly clear.
In these years, he often published as 'H. Cartier' or 'Henri Cartier' to obscure his privileged family background.
In June 1940, his activities in photography and film initially came to an end. He was captured by German troops and held in the V A POW camp in Ludwigsburg.
In 1943, when his third attempt to escape proved successful, he immediately returned to working as a photographer.

Holidays, Paris 1936

In Cartier-Bresson's photojournalism, his assignments produced scenes of leisure activities such as camping, picnics in the countryside, or a visit to the Paris World's Fair of 1937. After the newly-elected Popular Front government pushed through reforms such as paid holidays and the 40-hour week, leisure grew in importance in the lives of many workers in France.

Coronation of King George VI, London, England, May 12, 1937

In London in May 1937, Cartier-Bresson produced a series of exceptional images when the *Ce Soir* newspaper sent him to cover George VI's coronation.

While all other press photographers vied for shots of the coronation rituals and the new king, he focused on the hundreds of thousands lining the streets at this spectacle, waiting for hours to see the new monarch. In particular, he was fascinated by people with periscopes or using other ways to catch a glimpse of the king over the throngs of people. In these photographs, Cartier-Bresson refused to subscribe to the conventional representation of power. His approach to this reportage was remarkable, as is apparent when comparing his shots with images in today's media coverage of similar mass events.

Oradour-sur-Glane, France, November 1944

In 1943, after successfully escaping from a German prisoner-of-war camp, Cartier-Bresson joined the French resistance. Back in freedom, he recovered his Leica camera from its hiding place photographed, painted and sketched. On 10 June 1944, the village of Oradour-sur-Glane, north of Toulouse, was the site of a massacre by German troops. In retaliation for attacks by the French resistance, a Waffen SS company rounded up nearly all the villagers and brutally murdered them. Cartier-Bresson photographed the site of the massacre, the village in ruins, and the few survivors. Like no other site in France today, the ruins of the village symbolise and epitomise the Nazi regime's barbarism. After the war, the ruins were given memorial status.
A memorial and documentation centre was opened there in 1998.

Liberation of Paris, France, 1944

In 1944, Cartier-Bresson and his camera documented the liberation of Paris. Yet for over 20 years, these photographs were forgotten until, after his mother's death, he found the original negatives in a biscuit tin. Unfortunately, the surviving shots only represent a small proportion of the photographs he took. Many of the negatives had been lost through errors in developing the films. The surviving shots show street barricades being built and the interior of the former Gestapo headquarters, German officers captured by resistance fighters, and jubilant crowds celebrating liberation from Nazi occupation. At that time, few of these images appeared in contemporary publications. Today, Cartier-Bresson's photographs belong to the most important records of these dramatic events.

Le Retour (The Return), France, 1946
direction: Richard Banks, Henri Cartier-Bresson, G. Krimsky
32:30 min
While in New York City before the war, Cartier-Bresson acquired the rudiments of film-making from friends in the 'Nykino' group. Back in France, he gained more experience by working for the director Jean Renoir. In 1937, inspired by Russian directors Sergei Eisenstein and Dziga Vertov, he joined forces with Herbert Kline to make the film *Victoire de la vie* ('*Return to Life*'). Their documentary focused on the medical assistance for republican soldiers wounded in the Spanish Civil War. Later, between May and October 1945, Cartier-Bresson directed a 30-minute documentary for the US Office of War Information on displaced persons and their return to their home countries. Like Cartier-Bresson, some working on the film had also been held in prisoner-of-war camps in Germany, including writer Claude Roy, composer Robert Lannoy and conductor Roger Desormière. Years afterwards, Cartier-Bresson commented: 'This was a film made by prisoners of war for prisoners of war.' The film focuses on the emotions of those deported. Through the skilful montage of documentary images, Cartier-Bresson created an impressive testament to their fate. The humanitarian perspective he took here was to significantly influence his work over the next decades. First shown in Paris on 24 January 1946, the film toured the USA the following year. There, it was shown at the Cartier-Bresson retrospective at New York's Museum of Modern Art and later in a cinema in Los Angeles.

Dessau, DDT and camp inmates, Germany, May/June 1945
As home to the Junkers Aircraft and Motor Works, Dessau was one of the Nazi regime's key military production sites. Prisoners of war and forced labourers from across Europe were taken to work there, held in camps liberated at the end of the war. Cartier-Bresson's unique document of 400 negatives impressively evokes the chaotic situation of those liberated between extreme suffering and hope. He observed people in the DP (displaced persons) transit camps jubilantly celebrating liberation or lying on bundles of clothes, totally exhausted, before

setting out with their meagre belongings on their journey home. Cartier-Bresson's camera captured dramatic scenes, from the separation of a grieving couple to the surprise of young women when their clothing was disinfected with DDT pesticide by American soldiers.

Unmasking of the Gestapo employee, Dessau, Germany, May/June 1945
One of Cartier-Bresson's most famous photos was taken in Dessau. A crowd of ex-camp inmates had gathered for public questioning by the camp's new commanding officer. During this process, a former Gestapo informer was dramatically unmasked by one of her victims. In a film-like sequence of images taken with his Leica, Cartier-Bresson captured the punishment then inflicted on the informer – a disturbing sequence documenting the reversal of the former perpetrator-victim relationship.

INDIA AND CHINA

SOCIETIES IN TRANSITION

After the war, Cartier-Bresson's interest in Surrealist photography waned. Now, he saw himself above all as a photojournalist. As a founder of Magnum Photos in 1947, he became responsible for projects on the continent of Asia.
In India and China, Cartier-Bresson documented major political upheavals. In 1947, India became independent. The India under British rule was partitioned into two dominions: Pakistan, predominantly Muslim, and India, predominantly Hindu. Mahatma Gandhi sought to defuse and resolve the conflict partition fuelled between these religious communities. But in January 1948, Ghandi was assassinated. Shortly before, Cartier-Bresson had taken photographs of the Indian leader in Delhi. Cartier-Bresson also visited the disputed region of Kashmir, fought over by India and Pakistan, as well as a refugee camp in Kurukshetra. This contrasted starkly with his feature on the Maharajah of Baroda's birthday celebrations.

From 1948, on assignment in China for *Life* magazine, Cartier-Bresson's images of the last months of the Kuomintang regime were to shape the West's view of China for a long time. Returning ten years later, he documented the changes in Chinese agriculture and industry, as well as education and the health sector.

Gandhi death and funeral, New Delhi, India, January 1948

In 1948, Mahatma Gandhi was shot and killed by a Hindu nationalist. Cartier-Bresson's shots of Ghandi's funeral made him famous as a photojournalist reporting on global political events. Just a few hours before the Indian leader was assassinated, Cartier-Bresson had photographed him in his Birla House residence in New Delhi. Over the following days, he also captured scenes of Ghandi's family in mourning, his public cremation and his ashes as they were taken to be scattered in the river Ganges. Together with shots by Margaret Bourke-White, Cartier-Bresson's photographs were published in *Life*, the American weekly magazine, and later printed in many newspapers and magazines around the world.

Kurukshetra refugee camp, India, december 1947

Partitioning the Indian subcontinent into the two independent dominions of Pakistan and India produced unprecedented waves of migration among the Hindu and Muslim populations. A temporary city of tents was set up in Kurukshetra close to Delhi to house over 300,000 Hindu refugees from Pakistan. Several thousand years before, according to legend, the area around Kurukshetra in the eastern Punjab had been the site of a battle between Hindu deities. In 1947, the Indian government and aid organisations provided the refugees there with food, water, and medicine. Cartier-Bresson's image of refugees performing simple exercises is one of his best-known photographs taken in Asia.

Last days of the Kuomintang, Beijing, China, December 1948
When Cartier-Bresson travelled from Burma to China in December 1948 on assignment for *Life* magazine, he found a country in the process of disintegration. With the Kuomintang unable to halt the advances of the People's Liberation Army, leading nationalist military figures and political functionaries fled to Hong Kong or the island of Formosa (today Taiwan). The cities were in the grip of chaos and anarchy. In the first weeks of December, Cartier-Bresson stayed in Beijing, photographing everyday street life and religious ceremonies, the National Government's forced recruitment of troops and the Forbidden City with its complex of palaces.

Gold Rush, last days of the Kuomintang, Shanghai, China, December 1948
Shortly before the Communist army marched into Beijing, Cartier-Bresson travelled on to Shanghai where *Life* magazine had an office. At that time, this cosmopolitan port city was home to five million people from many different countries. The living conditions were, at times, chaotic. On 23 December 1948, Cartier-Bresson witnessed the dramatic event which has entered Chinese history as the 'gold rush'. With a currency crash and paper money almost worthless, people scrambled to reach banks and exchange their money for gold. Cartier-Bresson's shot of a desperate, densely-packed queue became iconic, a symbol of the collapse of a centuries-old social order. Together with other photos of his first visit to China, this work was published in 1954 in his book *D'une Chine à l'autre* ('*China in Transition*') with an introduction by Jean-Paul Sartre.

Independence Day, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, July 12, 1958
The Mongolian People's Republic was founded in 1924. Its annual independence day celebrations, with traditional horse races and wrestling and archery competitions, were held close to the capital Ulaanbaatar. The events attracted over 1000 athletes, all dressed in historical costume. Cartier-Bresson took colour photographs of the Mongolian wrestlers. As little as he liked colour photography, he saw it as a professional necessity since high-circulation magazines such as *Life*, *Epoca* or *Paris Match* specified colour photos for their assignments.

In artistic terms, though, throughout his life Cartier-Bresson favoured black-and-white photography.

Children Education and Propaganda
Beijing, China, July 1958
In 1958, the year of the People's Republic's tenth anniversary, Cartier-Bresson returned to China to document the rapid changes in the cities and in the countryside. He noted the omnipresence of political propaganda and society's militarisation with both women and men required to serve in the People's Army. With women now working in factories and children often living away from their parents, traditional family structures had also changed.
Afterwards, Cartier-Bresson summed up his trip in the sobering words: 'China is sacrificing the present to the future – which is most unpleasant for those who have to live with it. It is a regimented world, and it can be very tedious. But I believe we mustn't look at it emotionally. That does not help us to understand.
For China is a country which the western world cannot ignore.'

COMUNISM AND HUMANISM

ON ASSIGNMENT IN THE COLD WAR YEARS

In 1954, Cartier-Bresson became the first western photographer to visit the Soviet Union. In Moscow, he observed daily life in this Communist state. His photographs appeared in various international illustrated magazines, but were pilloried by critics as trivialising conditions in the country.
The Berlin Wall went up in 1961. The year afterwards, Cartier-Bresson visited West Berlin, not just the front-line city in the Cold War, but also a vibrant metropolis. He photographed a cityscape still marked by piles of rubble, the fashionista out and about on Kurfürstendamm boulevard, and the human drama on the inner-German border.
In autumn 1962, the Soviet missiles stationed on Cuba led to a military confrontation threatening to escalate into a nuclear war.

With the crisis defused, Cartier-Bresson was granted a visa to visit the island for five weeks. He took portrait photos of Fidel Castro and Che Guevara, and documented the all-pervasive socialist propaganda as well as the traditional Cuba.

Moscow, Russia, 1954

In 1954, Cartier-Bresson spent one month in Moscow. At that time, Russia's capital was in a radical rebuilding phase as old buildings were replaced by structures such as modern skyscrapers. Cartier-Bresson keenly observed daily life, focusing especially on the life of modern Russian women working, just like the men, in tractor or bike factories, and spending their leisure time shopping or dancing. Many of his photos conveyed a very different image of life in a socialist state from the ideas previously dominant in the West. Internationally, the interest in these photographs was huge. For Cartier-Bresson's Russia photos *Life* paid 40,000 US dollars, a record sum for a photojournalism feature. Since the photos also appeared in leading illustrated magazines in France, Germany, Italy and Switzerland, this may well have been Cartier-Bresson's most successful commercial assignment.

The Mur to West Berlin, Germany, 1962

When Cartier-Bresson visited Berlin in 1962, the cityscape was still marked by piles of rubble and extensive stretches of waste land. Moreover, the Berlin Wall, splitting the city, was just one year old. In West Berlin, Cartier-Bresson saw children turning the Wall into their playground. He was fascinated by the human dramas caused by the inner-German border, such as people on the viewing platform at the corner of Ruppiner Strasse and Bernauer Strasse trying to contact friends and family in East Berlin. Cartier-Bresson moved between the Berlin Wall's oppressive reality and the upmarket Kurfürstendamm boulevard where he photographed passers-by in front of elaborate displays in department store windows or captured images of fashionably dressed young people and sedate couples.

Germany 1962. Part 1: Berlin

Direction: unkown with photos by Henri Cartier-Bresson

13:47 min

In August and September 1962, the Bayerische Rundfunk, a public broadcaster based in Munich, invited Cartier-Bresson to produce several films – a cooperation only recently rediscovered. For German television, he made a total of five fifteen-minute films comprising edited sequences of his photographs accompanied by music and a spoken commentary. He had taken the shots that same year in Munich, Berlin, Hanover, Bremen, and Frankfurt am Main, as well as in the Bavarian Alps and the Moselle and Rhine valleys. In retrospect, although the broadcaster gave Cartier-Bresson a free hand in choosing the photos and even editing the film, he was critical of the project. He was unhappy with the length of the films as well as the large number of photographs he used.

Cuba, 1963

Cartier-Bresson's feature Inside *Castro's Cuba*, shot on assignment for *Life* magazine, offered an insight into daily life in this socialist country. Not only did he photograph the omnipresent propaganda on murals and in slogans, but also the traditional Cuba of cigar making, cockfighting and images of saints. His reportage was published by *Life* and also appeared in other magazines including Germany's *Stern* as well as the *Schweizer Illustrierte Zeitung* and Italy's *Epoca*. While the accompanying texts in Life were informed by America's Cold War rhetoric, the European illustrated magazines tended to promote a more moderate political stance. In West Germany, the feature appeared shortly after the Federal Republic broke off relations with Cuba when the Cuban government recognised East Germany as a sovereign state.

MAN AND MACHINE

INDUSTRIAL LABOUR AND LEISURE

From the 1950s, Cartier-Bresson became interested in the relationship between the human being and machines. His photographs in *Man and Machine*, published in 1968, largely derived from a commission by IBM, an American computer manufacturer. The broad spectrum of these images of human labour were neither idealised, nor evinced a special fascination for technology or a critique of working conditions. Instead, Cartier-Bresson celebrated the symbiotic relationship between humans and machines as they seemingly merge. In the Information Age from the early 1960s, physical labour was replaced by working at computers. Cartier-Bresson's images of industrial labour contrast with his photographs of leisure activities, such as his *Rituals of Pleasure* series taken in America in summer 1960. Two years later, on assignment for *Vogue*, Cartier-Bresson visited the English seaside resort of Blackpool. There, rather like a behavioural scientist, he watched human activities from the odd to the absurd.

Blackpool, England, July 1962

For an assignment for *Vogue*, Cartier-Bresson visited Blackpool, one of Europe's largest holiday and leisure destinations. This popular working-class resort is also famous for its landmark Blackpool Tower, a replica Eiffel Tower built in 1894. Against this 'Parisian' setting, Cartier-Bresson took shots of the pier's amusement arcades, as well as fairground performers, tattoo artists, fortune tellers, and palmists. In the dance halls, the dancers grooved to rock'n'roll or the twist. Popular pastimes included bingo or minigolf, or walking down the beach and watching elephants and zebras bathing in the sea. Rather like a behavioural scientist, Cartier-Bresson observed this quirky magnet of mass leisure with its bizarre mix of the funny and absurd.

AMERICA IN PASSING

BLACK AND WHITE AMERICA BY HENRI CARTIER-BRESSON

Cartier-Bresson first travelled through America in 1935. He returned several times from 1947 while the segregation laws were still in force. On these journeys, his camera captured demonstrations by African Americans against inequality and for social change. He also took portrait photos of key figures in the civil rights movement, including the activists Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. In the post-war years, many families moved from the Southern States and the Caribbean to New York City. Cartier-Bresson liked the metropolis and photographed the diversity of Black neighbourhoods such as Harlem, home to a flourishing cultural life. In the Southern States, he observed various aspects of daily life under the segregation laws. Along with his photos of hard physical work, conflicts, and tensions, he often recorded moments of confidence and pride as well. Cartier-Bresson's America photographs take a nuanced look at the difficulties, hopes, and realities of Black Americans, not just addressing their grief and identity. They also document the life of the White population. The scenes he shot are often marked by a touch of humour and, at times, a critical edge.
Cartier-Bresson's photobook America in Passing was first published in 1991 as a summary of his trips to the USA.

Nashville, USA, February 1961
As a keen observer, Cartier-Bresson saw the segregation and social discrimination of African Americans at first hand in the Southern United States. On a visit to Nashville, Tennessee, in February 1961, he captured the moment when white Americans prevented black college students from entering a segregated movie theatre. Since black audience members were only given seats on the balcony and stairs, student protesters formed a line to ask for tickets in the stalls. One after the other, they were refused entry. They then rejoined the line at the back and tried again. The cordon of white men blocking their way began to shout abuse and hit them. The police arrested the protesters instead of the men who

became violent. Ultimately, the cinema owner intervened and allowed black and white audience members to sit in the stalls. This racial conflict was reported in the media across the United States.

Members of Iota Phi Lambda, Tuskegee Institute, United States, 1961
Educationalist and civil rights campaigner Booker T. Washington (1856–1915) played a pioneering role in calling for the equality of the African American population in society and the end of segregation. In his honour, a memorial statue entitled *Lifting the Veil of Ignorance* was set up on the Tuskegee Institute campus in Alabama. In 1961, the members of the traditional Iota Phi Lambda Sorority, an association for African American women working in business or as freelance professionals, agreed to Cartier-Bresson taking their photograph in front of the statue. The image of the women with handbags or briefcases and wearing fashionable hats with flowers and name tags on their blouses or jackets is a testament to their commitment and self-esteem. Founded in 1929, the Iota Phi Lambda Sorority was the first of its kind to be established as a reaction to the discrimination faced by African American women.

Malcolm X, Harlem, New York, United States, March 15-17, 1961
While documenting the Black Power movement's activities in New York City, Cartier-Bresson also took portrait shots of Malcolm X, its public face and political leader, in a Nation of Islam restaurant in Harlem. Malcolm X is sitting at a table with a framed portrait of Elijah Muhammad, the founder of the Nation of Islam, on the wall behind him. Although Malcolm X seems to be alone at the table, part of a jacket sleeve on the lower left is also included in the shot. Malcolm X is looking towards the photographer, who was aware of his subject's importance. At the same time, this scene is a telling example of Cartier-Bresson's love of 'picture in a picture' compositions.

TV program "To Tell the Truth", New York, USA, January/February 1959
In Europe, until television became the leading medium for visual content, illustrated magazines played a key role as a window on the world. This shift had already occurred a decade earlier in the USA. By 1957, north America had over 500 commercial broadcasters. Although usually

regional, their programmes could reach up to 40 million households. Cartier-Bresson's photographs often explored the presence of TV images, advertising and election propaganda, juxtaposing such visual signs with their surroundings.

RITUALS OF POWER

MAJOE EVENTS

In the 1930s, Cartier-Bresson already became interested in the behaviour of masses of people at, for instance, sports events, demonstrations, or political rallies. In 1962, he photographed the funeral of eight people killed during an anti-Algerian War demonstration in Paris, all victims of police brutality at the Charonne metro station. He impressively captured the crowds in the funeral procession and the emotions of the mourners. As the official photographer, Cartier-Bresson accompanied President Charles de Gaulle on a tour of provincial France. In 1970, he was in Burgos, Spain, on assignment to record the trial of members of the Basque separatist organisation ETA (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna). Since this was a closed trial, his photos of those involved were taken in the hotel where they were staying.
As a silent observer, Cartier-Bresson avoided taking sides and emphasised that he had no political agenda. Nonetheless, viewers can always sense an underlying sympathy for the act of rebellion.

Travels of General Charles de Gaulle, 1961,
and their funerals, Colombey-les-Deux-Églises, 1970

Cartier-Bresson requested a private portrait shoot with Charles de Gaulle – but in vain. The French President replied that he only wanted to be photographed in the process of exercising his political duties. So in September 1961 Cartier-Bresson accompanied de Gaulle on his tour of provincial France. A few weeks before, members of the far-right *Organisation de l'armée secrète* (OAS) had targeted de Gaulle in a bomb assassination attempt, but he had survived unscathed. In his photographs, Cartier-Bresson was more

interested in the French President's personal relationship to ordinary people than official protocol. Some years later, he took a similarly discrete approach when he photographed de Gaulle's funeral. At the simple ceremony with family, friends, and locals, Cartier-Bresson focused above all on the emotions of the mourners.

Funeral of Charonne victims, Paris, France, February 13, 1962

In Paris in February 1962, the largest crowd since the city's liberation took to the streets when eight victims of police brutality were buried on Père Lachaise cemetery. They had been killed on 8 February while trying to take refuge at the Charonne metro station during police action against an anti-Algerian War demonstration. Today, the commemoration of the event includes a square in the 11th arrondissement dedicated to the 'martyrs of Charonne'. Cartier-Bresson accompanied the funeral procession, capturing the reaction of those present in powerful and haunting portraits.

Student revolt in Paris, May 1968

Cartier-Bresson had been interested in political demonstrations ever since his involvement in providing images for the Communist press. In Paris in May 1968, he took hundreds of photographs when students took to the streets. In these photographs, still little known today, he painted a differentiated picture of events. Not only did he document the student revolt and its activities, from occupying the Sorbonne to building street barricades, but also de Gaulle's supporters as they joined counter-demonstrations in support of the existing order. Irrespective of his sympathies for this wave of civil unrest, Cartier-Bresson refrained from taking sides. Instead, when observing such events, he focused on the specific psychology of a situation. He always emphasised that his photography did not have a political agenda. 'I have no "message" and no "mission". I have a point of view.'

Process of Burgos, Spain, December 1970

In 1970, the New York Times commissioned Cartier-Bresson to travel to Burgos, Spain, to document a Francoist military tribunal prosecuting members of the Basque separatist organisation ETA (*Euskadi Ta Askatasuna*). With no journalists allowed to enter

the court building, he took his photographs of the trial's protagonists, from the presiding judge, a former cavalry officer with no legal training, to the families of the accused, in the hotel where they were staying. The show trial ended with eight defendants sentenced to death. Later, in the face of international protests, their sentences were commuted to life imprisonment. A further ten defendants were given lengthy prison sentences. The Burgos trials marked a turning point in public resistance to the Franco regime. The regime itself only ended with the dictator's death in 1975

URBAN WORLDS

STREET PHOTOGRAPHY

Cartier-Bresson is regarded as one of the best street photographers. His motto was 'take life by surprise'. With a playful ease, Cartier-Bresson captured the ubiquitous advertising posters, political propaganda, and slogans in public space. He was particularly interested in situations where people were juxtaposed with these visual signs, often creating almost surreal scenes. Similarly, Cartier-Bresson explored the phenomenon of global consumerism evident such as in passers-by fascinated by displays of goods in store windows. Although the human being always lay at the heart of Cartier-Bresson's photography, he did occasionally focus on architectural subjects as well. In the 1960s, he recorded the changes on the periphery of Paris. While the metropolis expanded, the agricultural areas were shrinking. The migrant workers usually lived in modern residential estates. In front of this dreary, monotonous architecture, Cartier-Bresson captured anonymous life in these dormitory suburbs.

PORTRAITS

Cartier-Bresson's photography always focused on people. For his portraits, he remained in the background watching, waiting for the 'decisive moment' that revealed the character of his sitter. After escaping from a German prisoner-of-war camp, Cartier-Bresson completed his first larger series of artists' and writers' portraits. These intimate photographs offer an insight into the inner life of his models. Compared to the narrative background, the figures account for just a small part of these compositions.

TRAVEL FEATURES

BASILICATA

In 1951, Cartier-Bresson visited Basilicata, a mountainous region in southern Italy, to document the living conditions in Matera for the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. At that time, several people there still lived in primitive caves. He captured the place's character and its stark surroundings in photographs including a religious procession or women around the village well, dressed in costumes traditional since antiquity.

SPAIN

In the 1950s, even though still under the repressive Franco regime, Spain opened up to international tourism. In 1953, Cartier-Bresson travelled through Castile. On assignment for Holiday, he visited Madrid, Burgos and Segovia before journeying on to Pamplona. Spain was seen as a conflicted country. Although Cartier-Bresson opposed Franco's dictatorship, his political stance hardly shimmers through in these photographs.