

HENRI CARTIER-BRESSON Fotografo

21 ottobre 2017 > 25 febbraio 2018
Galleria d'Arte Moderna
Palermo, Via Sant'Anna 21

Press Release

140 photos by Henry Cartier-Bresson will be on display at the *Galleria d'Arte Moderna* in Palermo from 21 October 2017 to 25 February 2018 to celebrate the great master, allow for a full immersion in his world and discover the wealth of beautiful details of each of his images, which express his awareness and lucid thinking about his historical and sociological reality.

Henry Cartier-Bresson was only twenty-four when he shot the photo selected for the poster of this new monographic exhibition opening in Palermo. He had bought his first Leica a mere two years earlier but he was still exploring what he wanted to become professionally. He was hesitant and tempted by numerous options ranging from painting to cinema *"I'm only a nervous man, and I love painting[...] while I understand absolutely nothing about photography"*, he said.

Understanding nothing about photography meant, among other things, that he did not develop his own photographs: he left experts to deal with that. He did not want either to improve his negatives or edit the frames because. In his view, a shot had to be judged solely from what was achieved in the *here and now*, in the subject's immediate reaction. For Cartier-Bresson, technique was only a *medium* and it did not have to overcome or subvert the original experience, the true moment in which the significance and quality of a picture is decided.

"For me, the camera is like a notebook, a tool to aid my intuition and spontaneity, the master of the moment, which in visual terms, both demands and decides at the same time. To 'impart meaning' to the world, you have to feel involved in what you are looking at through the viewfinder. That's an attitude that demands concentration, mental discipline, sensitivity and a sense of geometry. You can only achieve simplicity of expression through minimal use of equipment".

Henri Cartier-Bresson never took the same photograph twice, never made a selection of his photos: he either accepted or deleted them, nothing more than that. So, we can fully agree with him when he claimed that he understood nothing about photography, although our world that has turned that art into the tool of illusion *par excellence*.

An exposure was, for him, the transition from imagination to reality; a 'nervous' transition, in the sense of a lucid, rapid move influenced by the mastery with which one works, without allowing oneself to be either overwhelmed or misinterpreted.

"Taking a photo is holding your breath the moment all your faculties of perception converge onto fleeting reality. In that instant, capturing the image brings enormous physical and intellectual pleasure".

His exposures capture the contemporaneity of things and life; they testify to the clarity and precision of his perception and sharpness of shapes. In his composition, he transferred perceptions as he grabbed them, without analysing them. His composition was geometrical but only in the fleeting instant between the moment of surprise is captured and the click; it was reflection to allow him to fully grasp what existing things provided for, given that only free eyes can spot what reality has to offer, and he could.

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"Taking a photo is recognising a fact at once, in a fraction of a second, and rigorously organising the forms visually perceived that express that fact and imbue it with meaning. It's putting your mind, your gaze and your heart on the same wavelength all at once".

As Denis Curti, the curator of the Palermo exhibition, explains, when talking about Henri Cartier-Bresson, we need to keep his biography firmly in mind. His experience in the field of photography merges totally with his private life. Two events speak volumes about his character. In 1946, he found out that the MOMA in New York was planning to organise a 'posthumous' exhibition of his work, as he was thought to have been killed in war. After he got in touch with the curators to clarify the situation, with supreme irony he devoted over a year to preparing the exhibition, which eventually opened in 1947. That same year, together with Robert Capa, George Rodger, David Seymour and William Vandivert, he founded the celebrated Magnum Photos company. In brief, Cartier-Bresson is a photographer bound to live forever, a man who was capable of rewriting the vocabulary of modern photography and influencing entire generations of photographers-to-come. Speaking of the creation of the Magnum Photos agency, which is still a hub for current photo-reporting, Ferdinando Scianna, who was for many years Italy's only member, wrote: *"Magnum continues to survive in accordance with its founders' egalitarian utopia. It has mysteriously managed so far to get the most glaring inconsistencies to cohabit within it. That is the thing that excites me the most. Being extremely 'Sicilian' and a die-hard individualist, I find it hard to feel part of any group, yet I know that if I do have to refer to some kind of cultural belonging, then that's the tradition I identify with."*

The exhibition, entitled *Henri Cartier-Bresson Fotografo*, showcases photos originally selected by his friend and publisher Robert Delpire and has been organised in cooperation with the Henri Cartier-Bresson Foundation. It was opened in 2003 with his wife Martine Franck and his daughter Mélanie and its main purpose was to collect his works and create an exhibition space open to other artists. The current set-up of the exhibition was curated by Denis Curti and Andrea Holzherr on behalf of Magnum Photos.

The aim of this retrospective is to publicise and explore Henri Cartier-Bresson's working method, his seeking contact with other people in the most diverse places and situations, his seeking surprises to break into our habits. He looked for that wonder, which can free our minds through the camera, which helps us to be ready to capture and immortalise its content.

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General Information about the Exhibition

HENRI CARTIER-BRESSON FOTOGRAFO

Curator Denis Curti
Palermo, Galleria d'arte moderna
Via Sant'Anna 21
21 October 2017 > 25 February 2018

Press Preview

20 October 2017, 11:30 am

Opening Hours:

Tuesday to Sunday, 9:30 am to 6:30pm
On Friday, open until 10:30 pm
Closed on Monday
Ticket office closes one hour earlier.

Tickets

Visitors can buy a single ticket for just the temporary exhibition or a combined one to also visit the permanent collection.

Full price €10.00.

Reduced €7.00 for groups (minimum 15 people), visitors aged 19 to 25, and senior citizens (65 and older); holders of special discount cards (valid in Italy).

Free Admission for visitors under the age of 18, school groups plus 1 escort, differently-abled people and their escort, students of the Palermo School of Fine Arts, accredited journalists, ICOM members, tour guides.

Ticket Exhibition + Museum € 12.00.

Info and Booking

www.mostracartierbresson.it

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