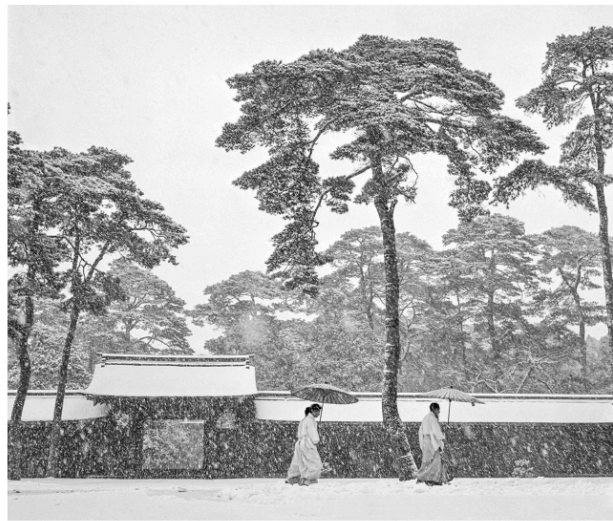


THE EYE OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Richard Taittinger Gallery : 70 Years of Correspondences : Magnum Photos and Picto 1950-2020



JAPAN. Tokyo. Courtyard of the Meiji shrine. 1951. ©Werner Bischof / Magnum Photos



PICTO and **RICHARD TAITTINGER GALLERY** present the exhibition **70 YEARS OF CORRESPONDENCES: MAGNUM PHOTOS AND PICTO 1950-2020**, curated by Photography historian **Carole Naggar**. A collaborative partnership with **MAGNUM PHOTOS** and **PICTO**, this exhibition is a celebration of the seventy year partnership between two powerhouse institutions in the photography world. Conceived in three parts – **YESTERDAY**, **TODAY** and **TOMORROW** – this exhibition is a survey of this continuous collaboration since 1950 and will be presented through the work of twenty-one photographers, and more than 120 prints (vintage and modern).

Through more than a hundred prints by 20 photographers, this exhibition retraces the strong links of a 70 years collaboration between **Magnum Photos** and **Picto** labs that continues to this day.

Magnum Photos was founded in April, 1947 and the lab Pictorial Services opened on January 12, 1950. However, their common story had begun much before.

Hans Peter Gassmann was born in Breslau (now Wroclaw). As a boy, he was fascinated by his mother's radiology shots that came out of her lab and discovered that images could be made to appear in the development tank. He received a Voigtlander Klapp 6×9 as a gift for his thirteenth birthday. He studied law, but with Hitler's rise had to leave Germany in 1933. In Paris, at Le Dôme brasserie, he met Gisèle Freund, Chim, Capa and Cartier-Bresson. As Hervé Le Goff writes in his biography of Gassmann, "he discovered that the print, or rather the multiple ways of enlarging the same negative, is a matter of interpretation, in the same way as the pathologies radiographed at Breslau inspired a poetic vision."

Capa and Chim's photographs of the Spanish Civil War may be the first examples of Pierre Gassmann's collaboration with future founding members of **Magnum Photos**. At the Paris *Exposition Internationale: Arts et techniques dans la vie moderne* (May 25-November 25, 1937), the Spanish Pavilion was conceived as a way to show the world the country's identity but also to mobilize the public by informing them about Spain's tragical and unfair situation, and maybe convince some of them to join the Republican cause. In that context, Gassmann and François Duffort, a printer he had just hired, made giant prints of Capa and Chim's Spanish Civil War images which were shown in the Spanish Pavilion. Some were incorporated in Spanish artist's Josep Renau photomontages.

In 1948, Gassmann and his small team printed Cartier-Bresson nine sets of images from his first trip in China before they were sent to LIFE, and 25 sets of Chim's UNESCO-UNICEF series on *Children of Europe*. Producing these more than 1,000 prints kept Gassmann and his printers fully occupied for a year.

With a mounting list of clients and a growing amount of work, the rue de la Comète's kitchen where Gassmann had initially worked became inadequate and he opened a new lab in Montparnasse, rue Delambre. The original set up was modest: six enlargers arranged around a long tank tray. In the early 1950s, Duffort and Fouhéty left, and the team included Victor Volkoff, Jean Huet, Jean Marquis (who would leave to join Magnum Photos in 1953) Gilbert Champenoy, Josef Philippovitch, Jacov Van Oeveren, Jules Steinmetz, to be joined in 1953 by Georges Fèvre.

Gassmann's first clients were the founding members of **Magnum Photos** – Henri Cartier-Bresson, Robert Capa, Chim and George Rodger. Rodger was a fine printer, but his constant travels in faraway places, especially Africa, precluded developing and printing and he sent his undeveloped batches of film to Magnum's Paris office with copious captions... of images he had not yet seen. Other early clients were friends such as William Klein, Willy Ronis, Robert Doisneau and Edouard Boubat.

When Edward Steichen, the director of MoMa's Photo Department and his assistant, Wayne Miller (who would later on become a *Magnum Photos* member) came to Paris to choose photos for the massive exhibition *Family of Man* (January 24 – May 8, 1955), **Magnum Photos** sent them directly to **Picto**: it would be easier, they thought, for the curators to make their choice at the lab. Steichen and Miller chose work by several **Magnum Photos** photographers, from the first and second generation of members: Eve Arnold, Robert Capa, George Rodger, Werner Bischof, Henri Cartier-

Bresson, Elliott Erwitt, Burt Glinn, Ernst Haas, Jean Marquis, and W. Eugene Smith, who was briefly a member.

Magnum's first group exhibition, *Face of Time (Gesicht der Zeit)* included 83 photos by eight **Magnum Photos** photographers: Werner Bischof, Robert Capa, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Ernst Haas, Erich Lessing, Jean Marquis, Inge Morath and Marc Riboud. The lost exhibition was rediscovered in 2006. **Picto** was responsible for printing the images in the show. Gilles Peress in a conversation with Raymond Depardon offered an interpretation of this evolution of the print through history that could be applied to many Magnum photographers: "When you look at Henri's prints all through the years, you see an evolution between these "blond" prints of the fifties and the prints as of the years 1968-1970. As of that period, the prints have higher contrasts with another interpretation of light, and the question is, to know whether he [HCB] is the one responsible, or if the times are. I think that in the fifties there was an interpretation of light and rendition that fulfilled another function, that of creating a certain harmony, a peace after the war, but that with the mounting of [societal] contradictions in the sixties, the tonality of prints- not only of Henri's, but of others too- undergoes a radical change."

But by the time *Gesicht der Zeit* opened, two Magnum members had died tragically: Robert Capa and Werner Bischof, both in 1954. Only three founding members remained: Henri Cartier-Bresson, George Rodger and Chim- who would die at Suez in November 1956.

The 1956 Photokina included a **Magnum Photos** exhibition showcasing Werner Bischof, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Robert Capa, Ernst Haas, George Rodger, and W. Eugene Smith, all printed by **Picto**.

Asserting that reportage was also an art and presenting the photographers' works in exhibitions, not only in magazines, was to become a fundamental aspect of **Magnum Photos'** history: in 1955, Cartier-Bresson had his first European retrospective at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, and by 1959, five Magnum group exhibitions were already circulating worldwide; this trend, as evidenced with this exhibition and too many others to list, continues to the present day.

In the following decades, **Magnum Photos** and **Picto** continued to work in collaboration. Pierre Gassmann's life was for many years that of a business manager who saw his business prosper, follow the evolution of techniques, turn to color, as *Picto* grew together with the rapidly developing fields of press, fashion and advertising photography

Gassmann passed the business on to his son Edy, who in 1963 opened *Picto Montparnasse* dedicated to color photography at a time when Magnum photographers such as Brian Brake, Bruno Barbey, Marc Riboud and others were beginning to produce an increasing number of reportages in color. With the help of Paulette Gassmann, his wife, he ultimately created multiple *Picto* sites dedicated to specific services. In parallel to Magnum's development and photography's growing popularity as well as the rise of photography magazines, *Picto Front de Seine* opened in 1969 followed in 1984 by a high-end print workshop in Rue de Rennes. In 1985,

Edy opened PICTO Defense, one of the first European labs handling digital technology. In 1989, *Picto Bastille*, dedicated to black and white and Fine Art photography, opened.

Magnum Photos and **Picto's** history lines were moving on parallel lines, the printer's *savoir-faire* slowly became a profession instead of a craft; and then attained an art status, as several *Picto* printers became renown and sought by photographers who established a privileged relationship with one or several of them.

In an interview I made with Pierre Gassmann, he explained what he saw as the role of the printer, and his intimate relationship with a photographer from the editing phase until to printing. In 1990, he had looked through and reedited George Rodger's pictures for a fiftieth anniversary exhibition on the Blitz and a book. While examining these images in a new context, Gassmann discovered the true quality and scope of Rodger's photographs. "In the 1940s," Gassmann explained, "George had been the victim of editors who chose 'what the public wanted to see' ; only a small portion of his work had been used by magazines. In his own editing, he was also a victim of his desire to be useful.(...)" Photographers are burdened with too much memory. They forget. To print means releasing their memory back to them, giving them back the details that they have not seen consciously, but that their eyes and brain have captured."

Picto produced numerous **Magnum** group shows, but also, with photography becoming an important part of the art market, they have been organizing more and more solo exhibitions, with photographers like Antoine d'Agata, Raymond Depardon, Josef Koudelka and many others: special relationships of friendship and trust were struck between specific photographers and individual printers, for instance Josef Koudelka with printers Georges Fèvre and Voja Mitrovic.

Christophe "Bati" Batifoulier has made Koudelka's exhibition prints since 2005 and also works closely with Antoine d'Agata.

When Henri Cartier-Bresson stopped printing himself, he used **Picto** exclusively. In the 1950s his prints were often made by Georges Colon, then by Pierre Gassmann and Georges Fèvre, who was in charge of either printing or controlling prints made by a number of printers until he retired in 1994. Gassmann was in charge of the prints used for the book *Images à la sauvette (The Decisive Moment, 1952)*, one of the first photographic books to be successful in the publishing market. **Picto** prints from later periods, especially many done in the 1980s for collectors in 30 x 40cm formats, have deeper blacks and greys and veer away from the softer prints of the beginnings.

Magnum Photos, like **Picto**, has mostly been a men's domain, except when it comes to editors bureau chiefs, cultural directors and archivists: many women have worked those jobs over the years. But apart from Ata Kando and Paulette Fouhéty in the lab's early days, I have not been able to trace any woman printer in Picto's 70-year history, where women have mostly been assigned to roles as retouchers (*repiqueuses* in French)— probably considered a "woman's job" because of the delicacy and patience it requires, or administrators, in keeping with the reputation of women as go-betweens and peace-makers.

But in recent years, several young women have joined **Magnum Photos**, which at last count had 89 plus members past and present and offices in Paris, London and Tokyo. Three of them are featured in the exhibition:

Singaporean-born Chim Si Yin is a concerned photographer in the best sense of the word, often using a combination of words and still or moving images to construct ambitious themed stories, such as her recent work, commissioned by the Nobel institution, on the nuclear, for which she traveled extensively in the United States and North Korea.

Carolyn Drake, has worked on California fires after the news trucks had departed and the smoke had cleared. In the scorched landscapes of California timidly coming back to life, or the burnt, twisted metal objects salvaged from the fires she knows how to find a melancholy beauty.

Alessandra Sanguinetti works in depth on subjects close to her heart and often linked to her Argentinian childhood. In her fable-like series *On the Sixth Day*, she portrays the animals as conscious beings experiencing a wide range of emotions, from playfulness to ferocity, tenderness to fear.

With each other's help, both **Magnum Photos** as a cooperative and **Picto** as a lab have profoundly changed what used to be crafts into the real professions of photographer and printer. Printing was not, originally, the job of professionals: photographers either printed their own negatives or let the labs at magazines print them without control on their part. Before **Picto**, photography was a craft rather than a profession, considered a minor aspect of image-making. Similarly, only with **Magnum Photos** did photographers become authors, retaining ownership of their copyrights and a measure of control over their images' integrity, their captioning and their use in publications.

With the transition to digital, the professions of photographers and printers are both being transformed— even if they are often unawares. A different relationship is struck with time and space. Editing is often done on the spot from the field by the photographer and the editor or researcher does not have access to contact sheets that reflect the photographer's way of thinking and working, how a story is constructed step by step, but only to a mass of digital images. The inscriptions on the back of a print, from which a researcher can deduct an image's history, are no longer available. Photographers rarely write their own captions and stories as the four **Magnum Photos** founders did. Terms such as contact sheets, slides, lightbox, become unknown to the younger generation.

Will the parallel professions of photographer and printer survive, or will economic reasons (price of real estate, disappearance of print magazines...) push both towards the better remunerated work of fashion and advertising, while the "Photo d'Art" (art photography) practiced for photographers and artists using photography (in French, *plasticiens*) becomes a niche market?

Julien Alamo, head of **Picto** New York, and Philippe Gassman, President of **Picto** Paris, are of the opinion that the printer's function has remained essentially the same. Says Alamo:

"Pierre Gassmann spoke of the printer as a chameleon, capable of adapting his work to all photographers. In his day the print was chemistry and cooking. Today, all this work is done upstream

on the screen with Photoshop. If necessary, we can go back and make adjustments. The logic, the principle, are the same, but the tools are different.”

Carole Naggar,

Exhibition Curator

An illustrated catalogue featuring a complete list of the works exhibited, an essay by Carole Naggar, and the detailed chronologies of Picto and Magnum Photos will be published and available at the time of the exhibition.

70 Years of Correspondences:

Magnum Photos and Picto 1950-2020

Curated by **Carole Naggar**

Until December 20, 2020

Richard Taittinger Gallery

154 Ludlow Street

New York NY 10002

www.richardtaittinger.com

www.magnumphotos.com

www.PictoNY.com

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