

**WATCH! WATCH! WATCH! HENRI CARTIER-BRESSON**  
**15 JUNE TO 22 SEPTEMBER 2024**

The Bucerius Kunst Forum is dedicating the first major retrospective in Germany since 20 years ago to the French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson (1908–2004). Divided into several chapters, the exhibition presents Cartier-Bresson's portraits of well-known artists and writers alongside his early, Surrealism-influenced photographs and films, as well as his later observations of everyday human behaviour. With 230 black-and-white photographs as well as articles from magazines and books, the show covers Cartier-Bresson's life work, which spanned almost the entire twentieth century.

A co-founder of the Magnum photo agency, Cartier-Bresson was one of the century's most famous photographers. As a photojournalist, art photographer and portraitist, he created timeless compositions that would shape the style of generations of photographers to come. His expressive art was seminal in particular for the genre of Street Photography. An unerring sense for the "decisive moment" in spontaneous encounters and situations was the hallmark of his works, many of them icons of modern photography.

Cartier-Bresson already acquired his first camera in 1932, a Leica 35mm, and he began to experiment with the medium. The resulting early Surrealist works as well as a selection of his films open the retrospective. They are followed by his well-known photo features and portraits of artists and cultural figures as well as his iconic images capturing spontaneous interpersonal encounters.

Born in 1908, Cartier-Bresson lived nearly to the ripe age of 96, having experienced the entire twentieth century and chronicling what he saw in his photographs. As an eyewitness, he documented a number of major historical and political events. The exhibition presents as examples his photos of the coronation of the British King George VI in London in 1937, the liberation of Paris in 1944, Germany after the end of the war in 1945, the funeral of Gandhi in 1948, the end of Kuomintang rule in China in 1948, Russia after the death of Stalin in 1954, Cuba after the missile crisis in 1963 and the long-term studies he made in France.

Cartier-Bresson cultivated long-standing friendships in the world of art and culture, from which he drew lasting inspiration for his artistic work. His intimate portraits of artists, writers and photographers such as Coco Chanel, Simone de Beauvoir and Henri Matisse form an important part of his oeuvre and are on view in the exhibition.

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In addition, the show also includes a selection of Street Photography depicting everyday personal interactions, both at work and at leisure. These images illustrate the signature element in Cartier-Bresson's photographs: the close observation and simultaneous analysis of human behaviour in spontaneous moments. Camera in hand, he deliberately sought out encounters with his contemporaries, capturing patterns of behaviour and snapping fleeting scenes that would otherwise have been lost in the hustle and bustle of the streets.

Cartier-Bresson was long active in the communist movement, which would have a lasting impact on his political and artistic views. This was the source, for example, of his keen interest in portraying socially marginalised people. Key events in his life, such as his time spent as a German prisoner of war during the Second World War, along with several attempts to escape and his involvement in the resistance movement against the Nazis, motivated his commitment to documentary photography. With the founding of the Magnum photo agency in 1947, together with Robert Capa, Chim Seymour and George Rodger, his photo features took on an increasingly professional look. In the decades that followed, Cartier-Bresson travelled to several continents on behalf of magazines and newspapers including "Life", "Paris Match" and "The New York Times Magazine". His photo features thus made their way around the world in millions of copies. In the exhibition, the original photographs are displayed alongside their reproductions in magazines.

A catalogue is being published by Hirmer-Verlag to accompany the show, with essays by Nadya Bair, Kathrin Baumstark, Clément Chéroux, Ulrich Pohlmann, Valérie Vignaux and Deborah Willis.

An exhibition of the Bucerius Kunst Forum, Hamburg, and the Fundación MAPFRE, Barcelona, in co-operation with the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson, Paris.

The exhibition is under the patronage of His Excellency the French Ambassador François Delattre

The exhibition is sponsored by



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