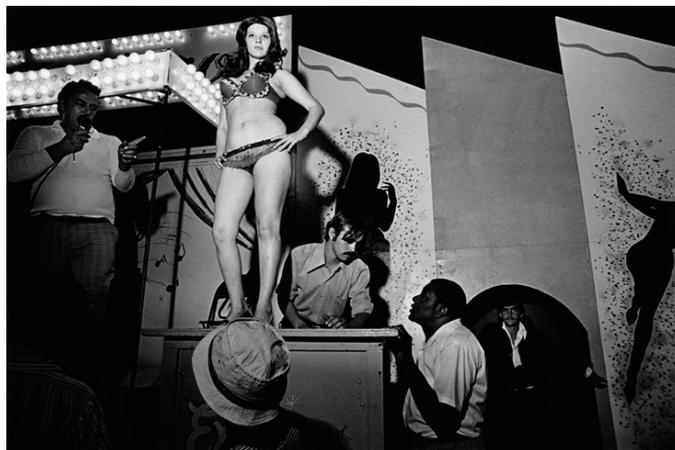


Paris Photo Report



Paris Photo 2017 © Florent Drillon

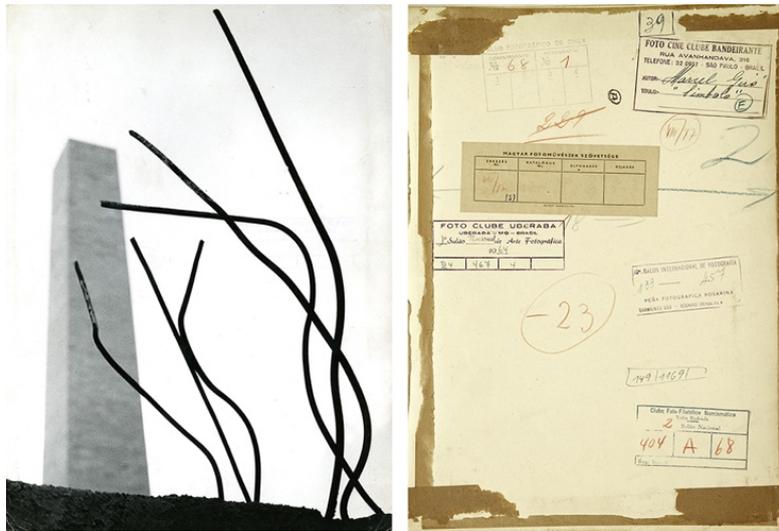
Paris Photo is the world's largest international art fair dedicated to photography. Visiting for the first time is overwhelming. The maze of booths across the Grand Palais display the best that 151 international commercial photography galleries have to offer. It is a little difficult to know where to start. The fair was founded in 1997 when it featured 60 exhibitors in the Carrousel du Louvre. In 2011 it relocated to the Grand Palais – a large historic exhibition hall built for the Universal Exposition of 1900 – where it has continued to flourish. This year there were a record 64,542 visitors to the fair, which now features curated areas, a talk programme, book signings and for the first time a section dedicated to moving image.



Susan Meiselas, *Untitled* from: 'Carnival Strippers' 1972 – 1975, 1972 © Courtesy Danziger Gallery. © Susan Meiselas / Magnum Photos, 40.6 x 50.8 cm, Gelatin silver print

Browsing the booths offers an overview of photography in all its incarnations and applications, from historic prints by Julia Margaret Cameron and William Henry Fox Talbot to classics of twentieth century documentary photography, such as Susan Meiselas' series *Carnival Strippers*. The global selection also offers the chance to discover new, or previously un-encountered photographers pushing the boundaries of the medium and expanding its definition. Discoveries new to me included Marcel Giró's black and white photographs of São Paulo from the 1950s on display at Rocio Santa Cruz, Barcelona, and Po-I Chen's recent images

of abandoned buildings in Taiwan at Beyond, Taipei, which use flash in day light to create surreal set-like images.



Marcel Giró, *simbolo*, 1955, © Marcel Giró, 39 x 29.5 cm, Vintage. Silver gelatin on paper

Prismes, set in the upstairs galleries of the Salon d'Honneur, offers a more composed space to begin exploring the fair. This curated section, now in its third year, invites selected galleries to present the work of one artist in displays dedicated to large-scale works. One highlight was Jungjin Lee's *Unnamed Road*, a series made between 2010-12 as part of This Place a project exploring Israel and the West Bank through the eyes of 12 international photographers. Lee combines analogue and digital techniques to produce tactile black and white prints on Korean mulberry paper. The images are intriguing, showing traces and remnants of life, yet are also uninhabited and contemplative – in one an empty road curves away through the landscape, in another garments on a clothes line are blown by a fierce wind before a desolate landscape.



Jungjin Lee, *Unnamed Road 003*, 2010, ©The artist, Archival pigment print

Flowers Gallery's presentation of Nadav Kandar's most recent series *Dark Line – The Thames Estuary* heightened the material presence of the photographic image. Kandar's photographs of murky estuary seascapes and marshes offer vertical slices of blurred and muted landscapes. The prints were accompanied by plinth-like sculptures that contain objects – such as feathers and a fragment of sea-worn brick wall – submerged in shallow pools further evoking the shifting, mercurial atmosphere of the Thames estuary.



Nadav Kander, *Water I, Shoeburyness towards the Isle of Grain*, 2015, ©Flowers Gallery

Alongside selected prints from galleries Paris Photo also features 30 stands from publishers and sellers of rare photobooks. The Aperture/Paris Photo Photobook Prize also offers a curated selection of the year's best photobooks divided into three categories: Catalogue, Best First Photobook and Photobook of the Year. Across all three the range of approaches to making photobooks is diverse. *Diary of a Leap Year* by Rabih Mroue, which was produced to accompany an exhibition of his work at Kunsthalle Mainz, Germany, was a particularly intriguing example in the catalogue category. It is roughly hand-sized and thick, with over 700 pages. On each spread there is a single image taken from political newspapers of the Arab world, creating poignant collages in protest against violence in the Middle East. Through the thin paper echoes of the images that have already passed are visible as are the shadows of ones to come.



The Paris Photo Book Prize – Aperture Foundation

Two books shortlisted in the Best Photobook of the Year category tackle the European refugee crisis. *La Grieta* by Carlos Spottorno and Guillermo Abril uses an unconventional layout of the graphic novel or photo roman to narrate the story of the refugee crisis across Europe. Whereas *Ville de Calais* by Henk Wildschut documents the appearance, growth and removal of the Jungle camp at Calais. The structure of the book skilfully integrates text with image and uses the turning of the page to hide and reveal content. The winner in this category was Dayanita Singh's *Museum Bhavan*, which explores the idea of the book as museum. Published

by Steidl, it is not really a book but a collection of nine smaller volumes within a box case, conceived to be like a travelling exhibition.

Within the First Photobook category many of the shortlist explore the unique qualities offered by the book. Some are ambitious with the form, using unusual binding or including additional loose-leaf material or smaller booklets that fold out from pages to create densely packed objects with layered material and meanings. Although it was the simplicity of *Entrance to Our Valley* by Jenia Fridlyand that made it one of the more exciting. The black and white images are printed on newsprint using risograph. The white of each image is the off-white of the paper, which is thin, so images leak through leaving a faint aftertaste as the page is turned. The paper is soft, suiting the intimate quality of the rural scenes. Another formerly traditional book is Sam Contis' *Deep Springs*. The book combines Contis' images of an all-male liberal arts college in a remote desert valley east of the Sierra Nevada with images taken by the first students of the college a century ago. The simplicity of the design allows the pacing and sequence of the images to create a narrative exploring representations of the American Midwest and ideas of masculinity. The winner of the First Photobook Award was Mathieu Asselin's *Monsanto: A Photographic Investigation*. The book uses a straightforward format to present a body of impressive research into Monsanto, a controversial and infamous agricultural company, responsible for producing damaging chemicals such as the defoliant Agent Orange.



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Visiting Paris Photo offers an opportunity to experience the multiplicity of contemporary photographic practice, revealing it to be a medium both rooted in the past and interrelated with other mediums and artistic practices. Much of the work on display demonstrates that photography continues to be a form of communication and artistic expression that is used with urgency to explore pressing social and political issues of our time.