Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson

Susan Meiselas
Nicaragua, History, Memory

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Martine Franck
Images, Press and Feminist Struggles

Press release

October 21, 2026 – March 7, 2027

Press opening of the exhibitions

Tuesday, October 20, 2026
2 PM – 4 PM

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From Tuesday to Sunday: 11 AM – 7 PM
Full rate 10 € / Reduced rate 6 €

Images live their own lives, independent of those who create them. It was in Nicaragua that Susan Meiselas came to understand this. In 1978, the photographer, just 30 years old, traveled there for the first time. She had previously studied visual education at Harvard University, published a highly acclaimed first book on striptease shows, and joined the Magnum Photos agency. In this Central American country, a popular uprising was transforming into a revolutionary war pitting the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) against the National Guard of the dictatorial regime of President Anastasio Somoza Debayle, backed by the United States. Over the course of several stays, she photographed daily life, street fighting, and the victory of the Revolution. In 1981, a first selection of these historically significant documents was published in a book simply titled *Nicaragua, June 1978 – July 1979.*

Following this publication, Susan Meiselas felt compelled to return to Nicaragua to speak with those who appeared in her images. Over the past four decades, she has returned there frequently, documenting how her photographs were being used — reproduced on various objects (T-shirts, stamps, matchboxes, etc.) or as murals, most often in celebration of the Revolution, but sometimes also to criticize or oppose it. She came to realize that her photographs had acquired a life of their own. Over time, a significant gap had emerged between what they documented and what they had come to symbolize in the collective imagination. Susan Meiselas's images thus became the very site of a tension between History and Memory.

It is precisely this dialectic that the exhibition at the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson, along with its accompanying publication by Atelier EXB, sets out to explore, through more than a hundred works, documents, and film clips.

Curator of the exhibition

Clément Chéroux
Director of the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson

THE EXHIBITION

This exhibition is the first to approach the *Nicaragua* series from the original angle of the life of images — their circulation, their transformation, and their collective appropriation. It brings together more than a hundred works and objects, including previously unseen photographs, never before exhibited or published. To extend this reflection on the perception of historical fact through the image, four contemporary artists – Alfredo Jaar, Arno Fischer & Peter Voigt, Joy Garnett and Gabriel Pérez-Setright – will present works in dialogue with Meiselas's oeuvre.

Susan Meiselas is the 2025 laureate of the Henri Cartier-Bresson Lifetime Achievement Award.

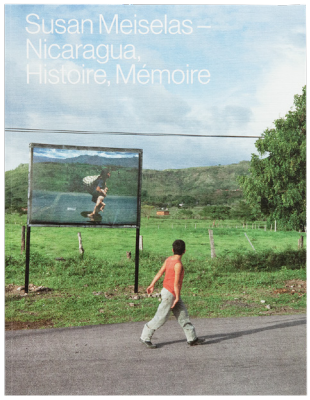
SUSAN MEISELAS

Born in 1948 in Baltimore, United States, Susan Meiselas lives and works in New York. In 1976, she was amongst the very few women invited to join the Magnum Photos agency — her series *Carnival Strippers* (1972–1975), devoted to striptease at state fairs, having already revealed the singular nature of her approach. This founding project laid the groundwork for a body of work built over time and collaboration: Susan Meiselas brings her subjects' voices to the fore, working across sound, text, film, and photography.

It was her work in Central American conflict zones (1978–1983), and particularly in Nicaragua, that brought her international recognition. Her work has since spanned a vast geographical and thematic scope, from human rights to cultural identity, from war to the sex industry. She has received some of the most prestigious awards in photography, including the MacArthur Fellowship (1992), the Hasselblad Foundation Award (1994), the Guggenheim Fellowship (2015), the Women in Motion Prize awarded by Kering in partnership with the Rencontres d'Arles (2019), the Lifetime Achievement Award from the International Center of Photography (2025), and the Henri Cartier-Bresson Lifetime Achievement Award (2025).

Susan Meiselas, *Sandinistas at the walls of the Esteli National Guard headquarters, Esteli, Nicaragua, 1979* © Susan Meiselas / Magnum Photos

PUBLICATION



Susan Meiselas
Nicaragua, History, Memory

Publisher : Atelier EXB
Under the direction of Clément Chéroux
Texts by Gioconda Belli, Carlos Fernando Chamorro, Clément Chéroux, Kristen Lubben, Susan Meiselas, and Ileana L. Selejan
Interview with Lucy Lippard

For the first time, this book will provide a comprehensive overview of the photographic work Susan Meiselas has produced in Nicaragua over the past forty years, featuring numerous previously unpublished images. Correspondence with the Magnum Photos agency, color slides, press reproductions, annotated book pages, filmed interviews, street and museum installations: the various media on which her photographs have been reproduced interrogate the circulation of the image, its reproducibility, and the iconic status of some of them.

Finally, the book is accompanied by a rich body of texts signed by international figures, who recontextualize the singular work of a major photographer of the contemporary scene.

French and English version
Hardback, paperback cover
21,6 x 27,9 cm
240 pages
October 2026
ISBN : 978-2-36511-491-2
55 €

LABEL

This project has been awarded the "Bicentennial of Photography" label by the French Ministry of Culture and is part of the official Bicentennial programme running from September 1st, 2026, to September 30, 2027.

MINISTÈRE DE LA CULTURE
Liberté
Égalité
Fraternité

BICENTENAIRE de la PHOTOGRAPHIE

2026 . 2027
1826 . 1827

EVENTS

- **Feuilletage #23: Conversation with Susan Meiselas about her book *Nicaragua***
  Thursday, November 5, 2026 at 7 pm
  At the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson

- **Symposium: Nicaragua – Perspectives on a Revolution**
  A series of round tables and lectures on the Nicaraguan revolution and its representations. The event will bring together historians and journalists, as well as Susan Meiselas herself and the director of the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson, Clément Chéroux.
  Friday, November 6, 2026 from 9 am to 5.30 pm
  At the Maison de l'Amérique Latine
  Event in English, French, and Spanish

Susan Meiselas
Nicaragua, History, Memory

Press Images

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01
Susan Meiselas, *Youth with contact bomb, San Marcos, Nicaragua, June 1978*
© Susan Meiselas / Magnum Photos

02
Susan Meiselas, *Muchachos await the counterattack by the National Guard, Matagalpa, Nicaragua, 1978*
© Susan Meiselas / Magnum Photos

03
Susan Meiselas, *Near the central plaza, Managua, Nicaragua, 1979*
© Susan Meiselas / Magnum Photos

04
Susan Meiselas, *Teenagers armed with pistols and rifles, barricaded behind sandbags, fight against the National Guard, Matagalpa, Nicaragua, August 1978*
© Susan Meiselas / Magnum Photos

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05
Susan Meiselas, *Sandinistas at the walls of the Esteli National Guard headquarters, Esteli, Nicaragua, 1979*
© Susan Meiselas / Magnum Photos

06
Susan Meiselas, *Wall stencil mobilizing popular militia to fight against the contra, based on 'Molotov Man', Esteli, Nicaragua, 1982*
© Susan Meiselas / Magnum Photos

07
Susan Meiselas, *Youths practice throwing contact bombs in forest surrounding Monimbo, Nicaragua, June 1978*
© Susan Meiselas / Magnum Photos

08
Cover of the "New York Times Magazine", July 30, 1978, with Meiselas's image of *Youths practice throwing contact bombs in forest surrounding Monimbo, Nicaragua, June 1978*

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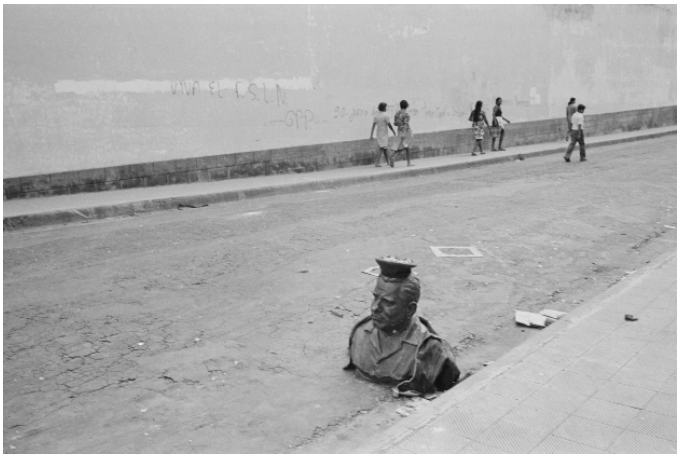


09
Susan Meiselas, *After the taking of Leon, Nicaragua, July 1979*
© Susan Meiselas / Magnum Photos

10
Susan Meiselas, *A funeral procession for assassinated student leaders. Demonstrators carry a photograph of Arlen Siu, an FSLN guerrilla fighter killed in the mountains three years earlier, Jinotepe, Nicaragua, June 1978*
© Susan Meiselas / Magnum Photos

11
Susan Meiselas, *Blocking roads by burning tires, San Marcos, Nicaragua, June 1978*. Original color chrome in slide mount.
© Susan Meiselas / Magnum Photos

12
Susan Meiselas, *Installation of Fleeing the bombing to seek refuge outside of Esteli. The Nicaraguan National Guard captured the city of Esteli which was held by Sandinista rebels, September 20, 1978*. From the series "Reframing History", outside Esteli, Nicaragua, 2004.
© Susan Meiselas / Magnum Photos

In the 1970s, Martine Franck (1938-2012) photographed feminist struggles, primarily in Paris. As a woman photographer, the attention she paid to the mobilizations of the Mouvement de libération des femmes (MLF) shaped her outlook on the social world and would durably orient her body of work.

The question of images became central to feminist struggles in reaction to media representations within a dominant visual culture, one that objectified women's bodies and could distort or discredit their demands. As a founding member of the Viva agency (1972), Martine Franck shared this vigilance toward images. Viva was conceived as a "refuge for photographers who understand the reach of the image, know its informative power, refuse the uses that could be made of it, and do not want to escape their social reality."

This exhibition presents largely unpublished photographs that highlight the collective dimension of a feminist visual culture in the 1970s. This is expressed through the depiction of mobilizations, but also through the rise of the feminist press, which became a laboratory for these struggles. Periodicals also served as a privileged medium for the circulation of images.

From the 1980s onward, feminism became institutionalized, and Martine Franck produced the series "Des femmes et la création" [Women and Creation] and later "Des métiers et des femmes" [Jobs and Women] as part of public commissions. Her relationship to feminism gradually became more individual, but remained a defining force in her work.

Curator of the exhibition

Angèle Ferrere
PhD in History and Aesthetics of Photography
Recipient of the 2025 Martine Franck Curatorial Research Grant

THE EXHIBITION

The first major exhibition dedicated to Martine Franck's photographs of feminist struggles, this project approaches a previously unexamined aspect of her work in France from a new angle. It brings together prints, some of which have never been shown or published outside of the feminist press of the 1970s.

MARTINE FRANCK (1938-2012)

Martine Franck was born in Antwerp, Belgium, on April 2, 1938; she studied art history at the University of Madrid and then at the Ecole du Louvre in Paris, presenting a thesis on the influence of cubism on sculpture.

Prompted by Ariane Mnouchkine, and largely driven by her own interest in Asian theater, Martine Franck undertook a long journey through Asia in 1963. This trip marked a decisive turning point in her life, as it was there that she discovered a new mode of expression: photography.

In 1965, she was hired by Hugh Moffett, editor-in-chief of Time Life in Paris, as an intern in the lab, and then worked as an assistant to photographers Eliot Elisofon, Gjon Mili, and Mark Kaufman. Encouraged by Hugh Moffett, she became a freelancer for magazines such as *Life*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Fortune*, *Vogue*, and *The New York Times*, among others.

Her friendship with Ariane Mnouchkine led her to follow the Théâtre du Soleil company from its founding on May 29, 1964, until her death in 2012.

Martine Franck joined the Vu agency in 1970. On February 15, 1972, she co-founded the Viva agency alongside Hervé Gloaguen, Guy Le Querrec, François Hers, Jean Lattès, and Richard Kalvar. Initially a freelancer, she became a salaried member from 1974 to 1979. In 1980, she joined Magnum Photos as an associate member, becoming a full member in 1983.

In 2002, she founded the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson together with Henri Cartier-Bresson and their daughter Mélanie, serving as its president until her death on August 16, 2012.

ANGÈLE FERRERE

Angèle Ferrere holds a PhD in history and aesthetics of photography. Following a dissertation on construction site photography, she was awarded the Louis Roederer Foundation Research Grant for Photography in 2021, followed by a postdoctoral fellowship at Université Paris 8 for a project focused on urban and peri-urban spaces through the lens of women photographers in France during the 1970s–1990s. Her research also explores photographs published in the French feminist press during the same period and visual lesbian archives. She has published several articles in the journals *Marges*, *Transbordeur* and *Focales*.

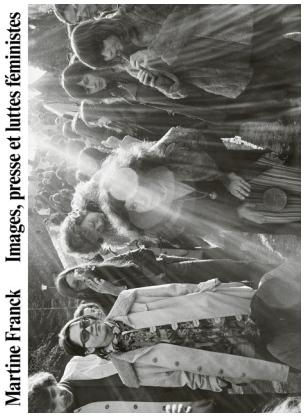
THE MARTINE FRANCK CURATORIAL RESEARCH GRANT

Created in 2025, the Martine Franck Curatorial Research Grant aims to help researchers and curators develop a research and exhibition project on the work of Martine Franck and/or Henri Cartier-Bresson, working from the Foundation's archives. The Grant provides the recipient—selected from a new international generation of scholars—with ideal conditions to carry out their research, and contributes to renewing curatorial approaches on the work of the two photographers by supporting original and contemporary perspectives.

The Martine Franck Curatorial Research Grant is supported by the Linklaters Foundation.

Fondation Linklaters

PUBLICATION



Martine Franck.
Images, presse et luttes féministes.

Publishers : Le Point du Jour and the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson
Texts by Angèle Ferrere

French version
Hardback
22 x 29 cm
128 pages
October 2026
ISBN : 978-2-493674-09-8
35 €

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01
Martine Franck, *États généraux de la femme*, Palais des Congrès de Versailles, November 20-22, 1970
© Martine Franck / Magnum Photos

02
Martine Franck, *Parade on 5th Avenue*, "Women's March for Equality", New York, United States, 1971
© Martine Franck / Magnum Photos

03
Martine Franck, *Producing* Le Torchon brûle, Paris, April 1971
© Martine Franck / Magnum Photos

04
Martine Franck, *May 1st Demonstration*, Paris, 1977
© Martine Franck / Magnum Photos

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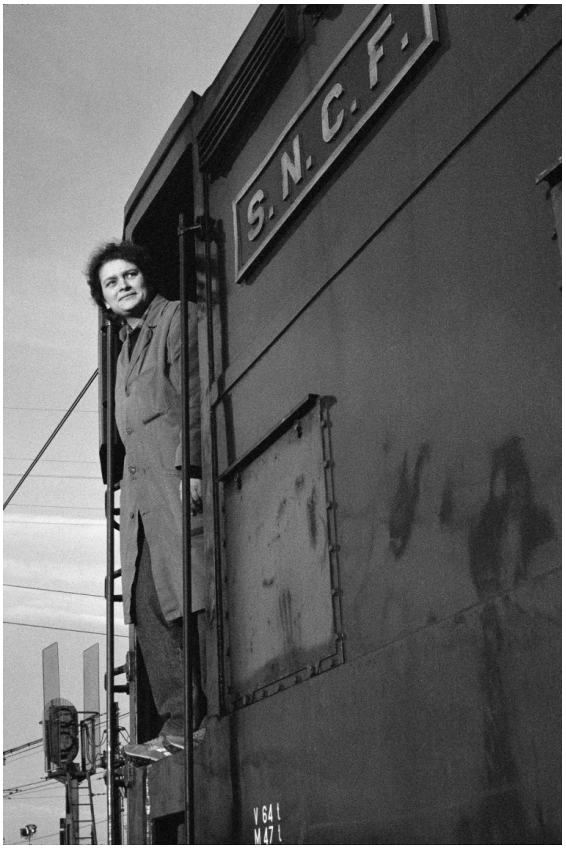
05
Martine Franck, *MLF Gathering for the Commemoration of the Women of the Commune on the Occasion of its Centenary*, square d'Issy-les-Moulineaux, March 28, 1971
© Martine Franck / Magnum Photos

06
Martine Franck, *Carole Roussopoulos, Lip March*, Besançon, September 29, 1973
© Martine Franck / Magnum Photos



07
Martine Franck, "Des métiers et des femmes" [Jobs and Women], *Nadine Ferreira, Locomotive Driver*, Saint-Pierre-des-Corps Marshalling Yard, 1991
© Martine Franck / Magnum Photos