Street Photography

By Eric Metcalf

The editors of Une Moment are thrilled to be publishing a series of photographs taken by the Peruvian master, Martin Chambi; his grandson, Theo Allan Chambi; and his great-grandson, Andres Fernando Allan Zamalloa. To our knowledge this is the first time the works of all three generations of this family have been published together in one place.

Our cover — photographed by Angel Amy Moreno — signals where this issue will take you: into the streets. From a historical standpoint, photographing outdoors was transformed by the technical advances that bypassed the lighting needs and shutter speeds of the studio. Stepping outside meant that the prior standards of positioning or arrangement no longer held sway. The ideals of painting and portraiture gave way to something different. Disorder, motion, and irregular exposures gained an acceptance. You can witness this new freedom, the lure of the distant outdoors, in the archway of Andreas Stelter’s photograph published in this issue.

With innovative means and methods came new subject matter; what counted as worthy of documentation or presentation rapidly expanded. Sarah Rubio offers candid details elided in a formal group photograph. The pair of haunting, atmospheric pictures taken by Markus Hartel glimpse regions beyond the ordinary — whether they lie behind dark glasses, or past the wreaths of steam hovering over the sidewalk. The photographers of the street have traveled farther than the doorway. This is often territory unbounded, unsanctioned, and unconstrained.

The remarkable career of Henri Cartier-Bresson encompassed the profound transitions in photographic technology. Within his lifetime (1908 – 2004) the cumbersome weight and size of the camera gave way to compactness and mobility. Barbara Cunin aptly describes the street photography that has subsequently flourished as “a photography of walking.” Her essay on this pivotal figure in 20th century photography (published in this issue of Une Moment) was prompted by the retrospective now on exhibit at the Modern Museum of Art in New York.

However, some photographers have not lost track of the importance of the prosenium arch, the framed painting, or the greenscreens. They have just relocated (or rediscovered) these elements in the streets. In Ronny Kuenziger’s photographs the street is a stage; advertisements substitute as the canvas backdrops in the studio. Chris Zedano choreographs theatrical tableaux in an alley. Guido Steenkamp documents an ad hoc dance floor.

Taking to the streets is a rallying cry for political action. Philippe Barnoud has photographed guerrilla theater. In this issue there is a startling illustration of Disney’s Snow White using ideological warfare. He has also shot local laborers staging a strike outside their factory. The streets of our cities and towns are among the most important sites in our public sphere, that space where we interact with friends and strangers. Many thanks to Claudia Danant, Juan Bravo, Oswaldo Macedo, Jose Gaytan, Mario Guevara, Omar Paredes, Carlos Gayoso and the rest of the contributors to this issue, all of whom have been prowling the streets, this vital passage through our contemporary urban life.

Special thanks to Forrest Tellis whose cocktail-hour apparatus added a unique and relaxed sidewalk setting for his wonderful stories about the first computer cataloguing in libraries – the MARC project.
The Lubavitcher Project

The photographs were taken by Sarah Rubio who worked together with the

Sarah Rubio
“From the Archives of American Homelessness:
Interview with Forrest Tellis”

By Vicente Revilla

V. How and when did you get acquainted with MARC (Machine-Readable Cataloging)?
F. Oh it was in 1963 or 64. I was working at MIT under some grants that eventually expired, so I had no choice but walk up the road to look for a job.
V. And you got a job at Harvard?
F. Yes, Harvard had the job for me. They had a project in their hands to transfer the information found in the card catalog into a machine readable form...today’s online catalogs. Yes, I had to transfer the analog records, codify them and enter the data into the system that was being developed at the time.
V. Data from the card catalog?
F. Not necessarily. Since there were errors in the card catalog, we had to go to the original records which were quite old. I am sure you worked with interesting people.
F. I worked with the Slavic cataloguers. Charles Gredler was one, so was Foster Palmer who was the head of the MARC project. And of course I shouldn’t forget Susan Martin, who was the actual computer person, the one who oversaw the minor details and was responsible for the MARC project. Now, eventually we worked under Richard De Genaro who was a forward progressive person. We all called him affectionately Dickie D.

V. Did you see him again?
F. Yes, I went to visit him in Pennsylvania where he was the head of the library. The college was Bryn Mawr. Then I believe he was at the NYPL and eventually went back to Harvard, where he may still be working today.
V. It must have been fascinating to work at Harvard?
F. Oh yes. You met people you saw on television...people like Adam Ulam...They came to our center looking for books that either we had (because of the MARC project) or they were being repaired. We worked next to the section of the library that repaired books.
V. Any anecdotes?
F. Oh yes, Since I came to Harvard from MIT I had my latest gadgets. I had this tiny small radio that really annoyed my colleagues who didn’t have one so they decided to buy a radio so we could all share. We sold the (scrap) punched cards and bought a radio. Dickie D. was the force behind it.
V. Thanks Forrest
F. You are welcome and see you tomorrow.
V. Yes, see you tomorrow.
PS: This one of a series of interviews with Forrest on the streets of Tribeca, New York City.
Martín Chambi

Autorretrato en el Estudio, Cusco 1923
Chicano Power

Vintage 1972 images

José Gaytan
Combattantes

Snow # 3

Snow white # 4

workers

Philippe Barnoud
Niño jugando

Ojo

Barranco

Abuelita en Paucartambo

Oswaldo Macedo
Henri Cartier-Bresson

By Barbara Confino

High strung and hyper aware, with the patience and cunning of a predator, Henri Cartier-Bresson did not take photographs, he took lives. From the moment he first saw a Martin Munkacsi photograph of African boys running on the beach, Cartier-Bresson understood the camera’s potential to capture the flow of movement. But it was his innate ability to put himself in synch with life that fulfilled the camera’s promise.

Possessing an energy that could not be contained, certainly not in the studio, the young Cartier-Bresson needed the world. And so, despite an early interest in painting, into the world he went, armed by great good fortune with the Leica. It was a brilliant solution to the conflict within him between Art and Life. Whatever he did, he said to someone when he was young, it would be “special and superb”.

Unlike more introverted photographers, he loathed the darkroom and had no interest in making prints or experimenting with the medium. From the get-go, he was a hunter. A relentless stalker of ‘life’ whose aim was to catch it in ‘the moment of being lived’, his images proof that moment existed and that he was there. In the postwar era of decolonization he seemed to be ‘there’ everywhere, criss-crossing continents and oceans, arriving just in time for the latest crisis to conveniently unfold.

Yet Cartier-Bresson, the photojournalist, was less a historian than a commentator, an essayist in the tradition of Montaigne and les philosophes. If his genius was all his own, his education was European. Building on the French intellectual tradition that formed the bedrock of that education, an early exposure to the Surrealists helped shaped his intellect, exposure to the Cubists helped shape his vision.

Very possibly it was Louis Aragon in his book Paris Peasant who initiated the surrealist practice of taking long, aimless strolls through the city in search of the marvelous, a practice the young Henri Cartier-Bresson adopted as
his modus operandi for the rest of his life. And of course it can be argued that walking is the photographer’s favorite form of locomotion, that all street photography is a photography of walking.

His brand of photojournalism fell out of critical and curatorial favor in the 1970’s and 80’s and Cartier-Bresson had to be reinvented as a Surrealist photographer, placing undue emphasis on his early work and its relation to Andre Breton and his circle.

Now, in MOMA’s exhibit, Henri Cartier-Bresson, The Modern Century, the circle comes full round and the 30 odd years he spent witnessing the great events of his time take center stage once more, restoring him to his rightful place as the undisputed Master of 20th century photojournalism.

No other medium is so precise about time. No other photographer so caught up in it. Aside from his much vaunted ‘geometry’, the painterly eye for form he seemed to prize above all else, he possessed the reflexes of a world class athlete. It was this combination of peerless timing and sophisticated form that set him apart from his contemporaries. Only Kertesz, who preceded him, was as formally brilliant, but Kertesz’s career was sidetracked. American photographers, who always had strong anti formalist tendencies, were much less sophisticated, and his European counterparts were simply not as good.

His style surfaced almost instantly, along with an ability to take photos in the middle of a riot, on the run and practically in the dark while constructing bravura foreground-background compositions in which significant activity occurs simultaneously on several planes.

In between the great images, famous now for decades, there is the lesser work. These second rank photos form the connective tissue holding together his photo essays, many of which are on view at MOMA; in them we see not Cartier-Bresson the artist, so much as Cartier-Bresson the working professional—a category he detested but which nonetheless applies.

Perhaps most profoundly, this work bears witness to the sheer intelligence that lay behind the lens, the astute critical eye commenting upon the social and cultural context it was recording.

We see that critical mind operating in one image after another. In the Banker’s Trust Story—one of the most revealing explorations of corporate culture ever made, in an image taken at a changing station in Japan where the woman changes her baby but the man changes his film, or in another taken of a black boy, uneasily loitering outside an American circus, his white counterpart standing there full of confidence. Again and again key details are juxtaposed to reveal underlying social realities.

In the later years his work displayed somewhat looser compositions (influenced perhaps by Garry Winogrand and the American School, who were in turn influenced by Robert Frank, who was, of course, influenced by Cartier-Bresson,) but by the 1970’s he was “repeating himself” as Andre Kertesz once said to me. He must have known it, since he turned to drawing for the last twenty odd years of his life. Even so, the first thing that strikes you upon entering this exhibit is the sheer quantity of the work done, the massiveness of his legacy.

MOMA does a superb job of displaying an excellent cross-section of that legacy. The prints vary from the vintage to the contemporary, the older ones considerably flatter in tone than the more recent, especially in the original magazine spreads.

Yet if you look closely at these prints you see how few have the absolute technical sharpness and high polish demanded by American photo editors of the time. Although he was published in Life and Holiday, he was a profoundly European photographer possessing their more sophisticated formal sense and taste for complexity.

The final irony of The Modern Century is that Cartier-Bresson was not especially interested in modernity; like Rimbaud and Gauguin before him, he was interested in the Other: the exotic and far away and fast disappearing peoples of the world. And unlike Robert Frank who revealed the bleakness of American life, or even Walker Evans who photographed the detritus of the modern world, Cartier-Bresson was a secret romantic with none of the sneering contempt of Winogrand and his generation. In Henri Cartier-Bresson predation was transformed into mystic union and there was a kind of love in him that has all but gone out of photography.
Scènes de Paris sur l’œil d’un Pruvien

Carlos Gayoso
Zampoñero de los Andes

Juan Bravo
Una mujer en la puerta / Claudia Danant

lianes de brumes dansent se tressant
au moment éternel indécible
musique qui se dégage de ton corps
voilà ce qui s’appelle l’offrande ton offrande

Carlos Henderson
LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Andrés Fernando Allain Zamalloa (1977). Fotógrafo cusqueño, es la cuarta generación de la saga Chambi, su trabajo es amplio en el formato digital y en su obra personal el 6 x 6 cm. en B&N. En la actualidad se especializa en fotografía de Conciertos de Rock peruano e internacional con el objetivo de publicar un libro con su trabajo en este tema.

Teo Allain Chambi (1949). Fotógrafo cusqueño inspirado en la obra de su abuelo Martín Chambi, trabaja inicialmente en B&N para luego experimentar con película en color y actualmente en formato digital. Es el Director del Archivo Fotográfico Martín Chambi en la ciudad del Cusco y posiblemente de la obra.

Philipp Barnoud: Photographer, born in France in 1966, travelled in New York and San Francisco, he exhibited in California since 2006. phb.transversal@club-internet.fr


Martín Chambi Jiménez (Puno, 1891 – 1973). Fotógrafo peruano que logró magistralmente el manejo de la luz natural y capta rostros, paisajes, costumbres y un sinfín de temas con una sensibilidad social y artística que plasma en su numeroso Archivo fotográfico conservando 30,000 imágenes aproximadamente, entre los años 1917 – 1970.

Barbara Confino: Writer and photographer whose work has been published internationally and is housed in such collections as The Bibliothèque Nationale de France and the National Film Board of Canada. You can visit her website at www.thegeeneticwars.com

Claudia Danant est née à Paris, a voyagé très jeune aux quatre coins du monde, son appareil de photo en bandoulière. A l’âge de 24 ans, Claudia s’installe à Londres, et suit pendant trois ans les cours de la prestigieuse école Saint Martin’s School of Art. Claudia est passionnée par l’instant, la vie, les photos de rue. Email: claudiadanant@qq.com

Jean-Jacques Decoster, a native of France, has lived for nearly 20 years in the Andes, most of them in Cusco where he settled in 1997

José Gaytan: As faculty member at the International Center of Photography for 15 years, Jose considers himself a student of life who keeps learning with every photo he takes. http://www.josegaytan.com/index.html


Mario Guevara: Born in Cusco, Peru. Writer and director of the journal of Andean Culture “Sietecuébras”.

Markus Hartel: Inspired by Robert Frank’s “The Americans” I always wanted to travel across the USA and document the country’s state and its people in our -tough- times. The summer of 2010 has been my projected date ever since, and I’m planning my street photography trip as I write this blurb. (www.markushartel.com)


Ronny Kuenniger: Born in 1980 in Dessau and lives since 2002 in Augsburg, Germany. “Nothing is more boring than perfect”.


Eric Metcalf has worked for Photo Services, Discovery Communications and teaches in the Performing & Fine Arts Department, York College.

Angel Amy Moreno was born in San Juan, Puerto Rico in 1945. He is a fine art photographer and historian. He received his training at the University of Puerto Rico in Rio Piedras and Boston University.

Omar Paredes (Cusco, 1981). Fotógrafo, diseñador gráfico y comunicador social. Actualmente radica en las ciudades de Cusco y Lima donde, bajo el sello MANAWANA, trabaja una propuesta visual andina que combina el grabado textil y la fotografía y el idioma. http://omarpareds.blogspot.com


Paul Robinson has been a photographer for 18 years (all formats). He is Vice President of Trump Village Camera Club, and President of New York Color Camera Club.


Andreas Stelter: Born in 1964, is a photographer based in Germany. He is a member of the International Street Photographer collective seconds2real. Andreas.stelter@keiphoto.com

Guido Steenkamp: http://www.guidosteenkamp.com/guido_steenkamp.zip

Leo Theinert has been a photographer since 1970. Leo is from Wisconsin and attended the University of Wisconsin at Madison, 1965 – 1973.

Christopher Zedano: Born in Lima, Peru, and resides in NYC since 2002. His interest in photography emerges when he was processing negatives at a photographic studio. Nowadays he documents different New York City subjects. http://www.chriszedano.com
OSSIFRAGA
La mémoire a sa chambre noire / Où coule ton corps sur l'image / Comme une goutte tremblante / L'œil s'attarde sur les traits
Que la lampe rouge dévoile / Avant d'avaler la vérité / Dans le miroir sans trace / L'instant laisse s'échapper / le cri du corps

David Gondar