

# JEAN MARQUIS

A Luminous  
Vision

Solar oven, Mont-Louis (Pyrénées-Orientales), 1958 © Jean Marquis / Roger-Viollet

**SALON**  
de la  
**PHOTO**

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**PARIS 2016**



## Simon Edwards

Artistic Director of the Salon de la Photo

**For several years now the Salon de la Photo has placed the fascinating world of black and white analogue photography at the forefront through the work of great photographers. Exhibitions by Sabine Weiss, Raymond Cauchetier, Elliott Erwitt and Gianni Berengo Gardin allowed visitors to rediscover masterpieces of 20<sup>th</sup> century photography.**

In 2016 another photographer of the same generation as Sabine Weiss is celebrating his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. Very early on in his career **Jean Marquis** began working for the prestigious Magnum Agency. He was born in Armentières in the North and during the 1950s and 1960s he travelled extensively around France. Following at first the humanistic photographic tradition he decided to adapt his work according to social changes and began to move towards a more contemplative style while bringing a new vision to industrial photography and the working world.

Jean Marquis owes his first steps as a professional to an important international figure in the world of photography of the 1950s: Robert Capa, cousin of his young wife Susie. Capa suggested that Marquis should first of all learn as much as he could about photography in a laboratory. He started work at Pictorial Service in Paris run by Pierre Gassman and perfected the art of printing and developing in the darkroom. He was also able to study the contact sheets of photographers such as Henri Cartier-Bresson and George Rodger enabling him to learn first hand how each approached his subject matter.

His photographic study of the river Deûle produced while cycling his way along the canals of the North was very much appreciated by Capa and as a result he was accepted into the prestigious Magnum family.



Dockers. Liverpool (England), 1955  
© Jean Marquis / Roger-Viollet

Using a Leica bought second-hand from Cartier-Bresson, Marquis began his career as a photoreporter but continued to seek out subjects for more personal work. Later he worked for *Time Life* and *The New York Times*. Marquis was passionate about night light and showed very rapidly showed his mastery of long shutter speeds and the grain in black and white images. In 1955, while spending two nights in Liverpool on his way to the isle of Man, he produced images of stunning force – portside scenes in the shadow of the docks. Numerous visits to the Corrèze region allowed him to produce scenes of rural life that now no longer exist. Rural areas where bread is baked, clogs are sculpted and the fields are laboured in the same manner as in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The quasi cinematographic eye of Marquis caresses the landscapes with the eloquence of perfect composition learned alongside mentors Capa and Cartier-Bresson.

Jean Marquis photographed Paris extensively. He loved to walk night and day through what he calls the theatre of the streets. High Fashion, politicians, demonstrations, the old market of Les Halles, prominent writers and artists, horse racing, cinema, every subject was covered by Marquis with a tender eye and a passion for natural light. Theatre and literature were always a great influence in Marquis' work. He was very much at ease while retracing in images the places frequented by Louis Aragon and Elsa Triolet in Paris in the book *"Il ne m'est Paris que d'Elsa"* (Paris is only Elsa for me) that they produced together in 1964 and which was published by Laffont.

**Whatever the subject, Jean Marquis allows his emotions and empathy to shine through with simplicity and reserve.**

# INTERVIEW & BIOGRAPHY\*



Jean Marquis © Philippe Baudoin

Born in Armentières in the North region in 1926, the photographer Jean Marquis worked firstly with the Magnum Agency from 1953 to 1957, followed by *L'Express*, *Time-Life*, *Science et Vie*.

He photographed important artists, politicians, street life and cinema.

His photographs are humanistic in vein, they shine both by their treatment of light, their totally modern framing and a refined approach to black and white.

Jean Marquis reveals a sensitive vision of man and his epoch : *"it is people's lives that interest me. I was an outdoor photographer not a studio photographer."*

Jean Marquis is represented by the Roger-Viollet Agency since 2011.

**1926** - Birth of Jean Marquis in Armetières (North).

**1943** - Jean Marquis joins the Clairjoie theatre group at the Diderot Institute in Lille. The following year he goes on tour.

**1948** - Jean Marquis becomes assistant to Jean Rouvet, teacher of dramatic art during a workshop in Phalempin where he meets Susie Fischer.

**1949** - Paris, Jean Marquis is hired by the UFOLEA as a theatre instructor, Susie Fischer, his fiancée and cousin of Robert Capa starts working for Magnum in January.

**1950** - Marriage of Jean and Susie on October 7.

**1951** - Robert Capa suggests that Jean learn photographic technique. He becomes an apprentice printer and takes his first photographs. Son Frédéric is born on September 28.



Chet Baker (1929-1988),  
American Jazz Musician,  
at the Chat qui Pêche.  
Paris, April-May 1963  
© Jean Marquis / Roger-Viollet

## Jean Marquis

*Capa told me "if you want to be a photographer you have to work in a laboratory so that you know what a negative is, a print..." all the business involved in making photography. So I went to Pictorial Service run by Pierre Gassman. He was a great technician and he trained me. When you develop and print photos, you look at them, you project them and you have a vision of the light and composition involved. I have to admit that the compositions of Henri Cartier-Bresson were perfect.*



Along the Deûle. Geese.  
Lille, 1953.  
© Jean Marquis / Roger-Viollet

**1953** - He leaves Pictorial Service and at the end of the summer prepares his portfolio to enter Magnum. He follows the course of the Deûle that he used to watch from his bedroom window as an adolescent. Photographs of factories, slag heaps, terraced houses, boatmen... Sponsored by Capa he becomes a contributing photographer to Magnum and produces his first photo stories distributed by the agency: the Trône Fair (Paris), tugs on the Seine, Bruges, Sidney Bechet concert, the French rail strike...

### Jean Marquis

*The Deûle was one of my first stories. The river passes under the window of my childhood home. It was a café with a large terrace, Le Pavillon Bleu (The Blue Cottage), in the turn-of-the-century style on the Marne river. I decided to start from the spring and go towards the confluence, it wasn't a river that went as far as the sea. I'd always cycled along its banks. I used to take my girlfriend home to Marquette on the frame of my bicycle. I was stricken by the poetry of the Deûle. At school we had learned poems about it. "On the starboard of his boat the boatman accompanies his dwarfish house along the canals." (Emile Verhaeren, the Scow).*

*I found that beautiful... and I went on from there.*

*... When you enter Magnum you become part of a big family. Young photographers were really highly considered. If they were there it meant they had something to say. The founders of the agency looked at the contact sheets to see how we had approached our subject and were able to follow our work. For example the project I did with the models Bettina and Suzy Parker was supervised by Capa. He came along with me, but without a camera. You rarely saw him with a camera except out in the field. Henri Cartier-Bresson on the other hand always had his around his neck.*



**1954** - Jean enters the world of Haute-Couture and cinema.

### Jean Marquis

*Bob (Capa) first assigned me to fashion stories, he thought that it was the right thing for me.*

*He suggested doing a shoot about three top models: Bettina, Suzy Parker and Sophie Litvak who were all starting different new careers. I learned a lot on this job even outside the sphere of photography: how to approach people in the fashion world, celebrities (etc.). These three Young women knew how to pose for the camera, I didn't have to tell them what to do.*

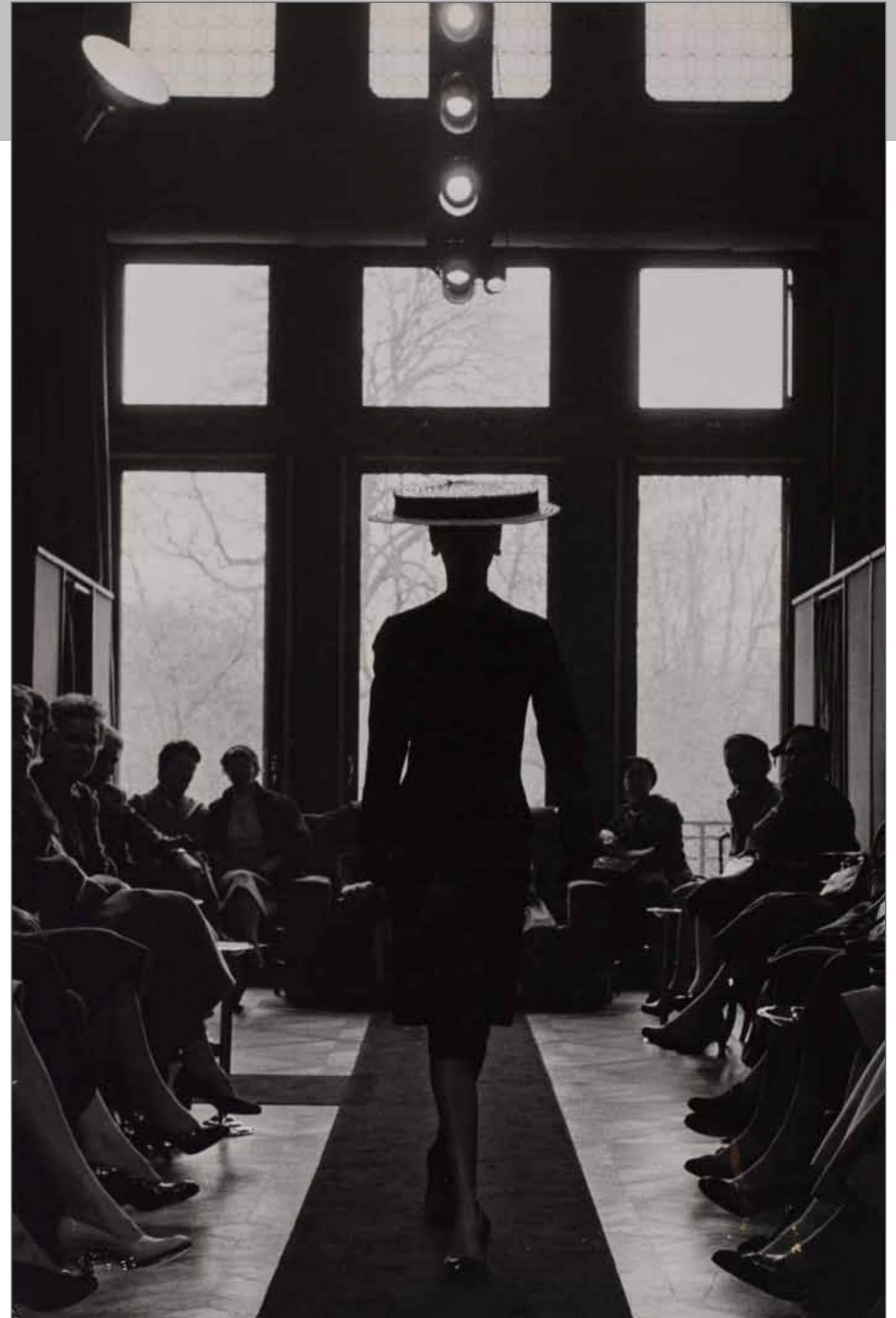
*Bettina was a model working for Givenchy and that's where I photographed her. A photographer has his eyes everywhere, not only in the back of his head but on the sides as well. Suzy Parker was at Chanel and Sophie had been working for Dior before marrying film director Anatole Litvak. Bob also had me work for cinema. He was great friends with Gina Lollobrigida who was a big star at the time, she was making the film "Le Grand Jeu" (Card of Fate). The pictures I took for this film weren't studio stills - they already had someone for that - they were for the press. My job was to concentrate on Gina and of course the other actors like Jean-Claude Pascal, Raymond Pellegrin and Arletty.*

**Robert Capa is killed in Indochina, Werner Bischof is killed in Peru, a very tragic year for Magnum. Susie leaves the agency at the end of the year.**

### MAGNUM

The double disappearance of Robert Capa in Indochina and Werner Bischof in South America prompted the English review Photography to change in extremis its contents page in the July 1955 issue in order to include a posthumous homage at the very same time that it was hailing the appearance of a new talent, Jean Marquis, "a passing of vision", the continuing Magnum ideal beyond the death of its founder. "Much of the spirit of Capa will survive in the work of Young Marquis as he develops and there is a lot of that lovely picture-sense which belonged to Werner Bischof."

Excerpt from the text by Christophe Berthoud in the book Jean Marquis published by the CRP Nord Pas de Calais 2001.





Lovers on the dock.  
Liverpool (England), 1955  
© Jean Marquis / Roger-Viollet

**1955** - Jean Marquis covers the British elections for *The New York Times* and goes to Liverpool where the dockers are on strike.

#### Jean Marquis

*It's a boat leaving the port in the photo of the Young lovers of Liverpool. It was only when I looked into the camera that I saw the couple standing there. As I used a long exposure you can see the trail of lights on the departing boat. I spent the whole night taking photographs of Liverpool before heading off for the isle of Man. Liverpool at night at that time was absolutely extraordinary. The next morning I was lucky enough to run into a big meeting of dockers on strike, most of them were Irish. I was coming from London where I had photographed both sides of the elections, the Conservative and the Labour parties for The New York Times. It was in 1955.*

He follows Pierre Mendès France on campaign and the radical-socialist congress for the *L'Express Quotidien*. The following year he continues this project on the legislative elections.

#### Jean Marquis

*I had just done a report on the radical party – my father was a radical socialist in Lambersart. I photographed this important congress with Daladier, Herriot, the old boys of the III<sup>rd</sup> Republic, and of course Mendès France, who had completely bluffed me. The intelligence of this man left me wide-eyed with admiration. There was no question of my saying anything, he was so brilliant, he was known as "The President". Philippe Grumbach published two pages in *L'Express* plus the cover with Mendès. After that I was in high demand, Philippe Grumbach kindly offered to take me on to fill a newly available position, but it wasn't my way of working, I liked to be free and wanted to stay that way. I refused the job but he accepted to hire me on freelance basis.*





Rue du Petit Musc, Paris, 1951.  
© Jean Marquis / BHVP / Roger-Viollet

#### L'EXPRESS, TIME-LIFE, SCIENCE & VIE

His first contributions to *L'Express* were centered around the figure of Mendès France. Jean Marquis had at a very early period been witness, through his militant radical socialist father, to the debates which divided French society, he knew the stakes and who were the players. He was able even to capture the impressive attitude of an orator at the tribune, the eloquence of a particular stare, the symbolic nature of an aside, rendering perceptible all the political dramaturgy involved. Beginning autumn 1955 in the *Express Quotidien* (the Daily Express) from autumn 1955 his photographic coverage follows the Mendesian gesture from his visits to the radical-socialist unions up to the extraordinary congress at the Salle Wagram in December...

Excerpt from the text by Christophe Berthoud in the book *Jean Marquis* published by the CRP Nord Pas de Calais 2001.

**1955-56** - Accompanied by 7 other prestigious photographers from the Magnum Agency he takes part in the exhibition "*Magnum Photo; Gesicht der Zeit*" (the Face of Time) presented in five cities in Austria. The exhibition was rediscovered in its crates in 2006 and has been on tour since 2008 under the title of "Magnum's First".

**1956** - The photograph *Rue du Petit Musc* is selected and exhibited in the exhibition *The Family of Man* at the MOMA in New York. He travels to Lapland, reports on the actor Eddie Constantine on the set of "*Folies-Bergère*" by director Henri Decoin. Goes to Yugoslavia for the summit meeting of the non-aligned states with Tito, Nasser and Nehru. Susie begins working for the photo department of *Time Magazine*.

#### Jean Marquis

*What I like is the street, for me it's like a big theatre. It may sound banal to say that, but it's what I feel. I used to love walking, that's how I photographed the little old ladies in the rue du Petit Musc and Les Halles in 1962, Paris was really fascinating at that time.*

**1957** - He leaves Magnum and begins as a freelance photographer working regularly with *Science & Vie*, the American press group *Time Inc.* for which he photographs prominent politicians, writers artists and economists up to 1970.



**1958-61** - He continues to work with *Science & Vie* and *L'Express* covering mostly political rallies and demonstrations, producing portraits of famous people, fashion, major architectural projects, solar energy, the shipbuilding port of La Ciotat and the mine at Merlebach. On May 25, his daughter Isabelle is born.

### Jean Marquis

*As a man from the North, I was very happy to go down the mine. It's not that easy to get access as it's a closed and private world. I was able to go down for Science & Vie. There was absolutely no light down there, it was impossible to go down with a flash or even set up a lighting system. I had only a lamp on my helmet. It was amazing because the miners made the light move while they were working. I didn't want to interfere, so I didn't ask them to pose for me. I used very slow shutter speeds and a large aperture with the Leica I was using in those days. I can still hear the sound of the shutter now. You remember those kinds of things.*

**1961-62** - The Pont Royal/Robert Laffont publishing house hires him to illustrate a book which Léon Zitrone was then writing "*La Vie d'un cheval de Course*" (The Life of a Racehorse) published in 1963. He continues to work on press stories, for example on the clashes between police and anti-OAS demonstrators and the funeral of the victims of the métro Charonne in Paris.

[The affair of the metro Charonne is a police violence episode which took place on February 8 1962 at the Charonne metro station opposing police and people demonstrating against the OAS and the Franco-Algerian war. Amongst the demonstrators who had tried to find safe haven in the entrance to the metro eight people were killed from suffocation or from cranial fractures, a ninth died later in hospital.]







Alberto Giacometti. 1965.  
© Jean Marquis / BHVP / Roger-Viollet

**1963** - Works on the book by Louis Aragon "Il ne m'est Paris que d'Elsa" (Paris is only Elsa for me) requested by the Publisher Laffont. Report on Jazzmen and the Monte-Carlo rally.

### Jean Marquis

*Laffont recommended me to Aragon for the book he was publishing "Il ne m'est Paris que d'Elsa" (Paris is only Elsa for me). Laffont was doing a joint series about works by Elsa Triolet and Louis Aragon. I met him and showed him my photographs on Paris and he seemed to like them. He found me extremely modest (laughs). It was an incredible experience. I knew Aragon's poems well so I was very happy to work on this project. Aragon speaks about it in a TV special centered on my work on channel 2, in 1967.*

*Two people have counted immensely in my life and yet I hardly ever took a photo of them: Capa (just once looking at Gina Lollobrigida through his lens) and Aragon in the street in 1968.*

**1964-65** - The opening of the Maeght Foundation at Saint-Paul de Vence, a trip to Sardinia and Ireland with the Aga Khan, the funerals of Churchill and Maurice Thorez. *Time* asks him to take portraits of Giacometti, *Sports Illustrated* send him to Le Mans for the 24 Hrs. He begins a more personal series on the region of Corrèze that he will finish in 1967. A project on men, light and nature.

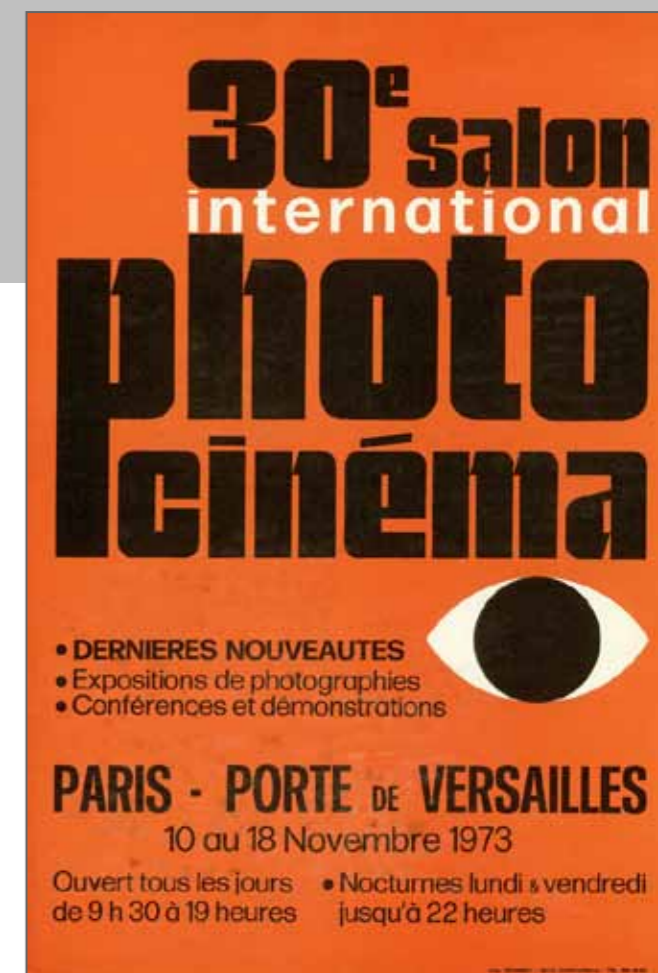
### Jean Marquis

*I have always had a love affair with light, I've always been drawn to it, especially when the sun spreads its rays through an object, like a tree: light and dust. I always connected it to painting. I was born in the North, in Armentières. We adore the light up there because it's quite rare, rarer than you'd imagine. I was also fascinated by Flemish painting. When I lived in Lille I would go to the Palais des Beaux-Arts where there's a big collection of Flemish painting. It really inspired my work as a photographer.*

**1965-2000** - Each summer he works as an actor especially for the festival *les Nuits de l'Enclave* in Valréas interpreting several roles by Shakespeare, Brecht, Musset, Tchekhov, Goldoni, Marivaux, Audiberti, Balzac. He also acts and runs workshops for the international theatre meetings of Upper Corsica founded by Robin Renucci.

### Jean Marquis

*At the Pavillon bleu, when I was very young, I dreamed of being an actor but it was the Deûle who won (laughs). I worked for many years in theatre festivals as an actor and from time to time they would ask me to leave my actor's costume and put on my photographer's cap to take photos of the performances.*



**1966** - *Voir Vivre* solo travelling exhibition between Thonon Les Bains, the North and Bourges.

**1967** - Takes part in the group exhibition *Themes of Young Photography*, Michel Tournier makes a TV special about Jean Marquis: *Dark Room*. He leaves for Algiers working on the set of *L'Etranger* by Luchino Visconti.

**1968-69** - Covers the Winter Olympics, May 68 and its barricades, *Time* sets up in his apartment near the Bastille during the events. He leaves for the filming of "La Sirène du Mississippi" (Mississippi Mermaid) by François Truffaut.

**1969-76** - He heads the chronicle *France at the end of the lane* for the *Echo de la Mode*.

**1973** - Several trips for *Science & Vie*. Takes part in the exhibition *The French look at the French* at the Salon International Photo Cinéma at the Porte de Versailles.





Paris, Les Halles,  
demolition of the Baltard pavilions. 1973.  
© Jean Marquis / BHVP / Roger-Viollet

**1974-79** - Works for Messidor Editions as a still life photographer, travels to Senegal on a vaccination mission organised by the OMS, contributes to *Le Nouvel Âge* (The New Age), teaches photography reportage at l'IDHEC (Institute for Higher Education in Cinema).

**1980-88** - When the magazine *Biba* is launched, he covers various columns such as *Women Leaders / A woman: a success story / Unusual professions*.

**1989** - Retires from professional life as a press photographer. Goes to Berlin every year until 1994 to photograph the urban changes after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

**1995-97** - Jean Marquis relates in images the 1995 December demonstrations, the posthumous ceremony for François Mitterrand in January and mingles with the crowds protesting against the Debré immigration laws.

#### **Jean Marquis**

*I loved to cover political events like the strikes in 1995. In May 1968 it wasn't for a newspaper it was for myself. The same year for Time-Life, I photographed the strike at the Renault factories. I had this memory of the strikes in 1936 that had really struck me. '68 had something similar to '36, which by the way I find reminiscent of the "Nuits Debout" (Standing Nights) going on at the moment. In the end I realise that it's not the same thing at all but in the beginning that's the way I felt about it.*



The rigour of construction, the perfection of composition are never imposed ostensibly in Marquis' photographs. Based on the idea of the decisive moment, consubstantial to this structural vision of space and the photographer-organiser on which the Cartier-Bresson school is based we observe a certain detachment. Marquis appears to be a disciple in a liberal sense but even if this detachment could never be imputed to a critical attitude of any sort, it reveals a difference in temperament, a different relationship with the world than that expressed in Henri Cartier-Bresson's vocabulary to describe the photographic act.

...In describing him, the work and the career appear to be indistinctly entwined. Any attempt to separate work of a personal or a professional nature leaves him perplexed in the sense that both are inscribed in a perfect continuity. There was no inner sanctum: the work in the field was almost exclusively the space where he was able to invent a form of freedom. His position as an independent photographer gave him the opportunity and liberty to produce images not necessarily bound by a theme. Marquis did his own editing and was also able to keep his negatives. His contact sheets clearly show that he was rarely limited to taking photographs strictly in relation to an assignment... Throughout his career Jean Marquis achieved much more than capturing the physiognomy and the comings and goings of men on his roll of film. Behind this affable figure hides a subtle observer of their behaviour, their moods and also their idiosyncracies.

Excerpt from the text by Christophe Berthoud in the book Jean Marquis published by the CRP Nord Pas de Calais 2001



Solar oven. Mont-Louis (Pyrénées-Orientales), 1958.  
© Jean Marquis / Roger-Viollet

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PORTE DE VERSAILLES

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