

Photo London 2019, a manifesto for women photographers and Europe

REPORT - Women, artists, curators, gallery owners were in the spotlight of this eclectic vintage which attracted a chic and London audience, until Sunday evening, at Somerset House. Tour of the track with these Amazons whose eyes, sensitive and unbridled, enrich a landscape that is too often masculine.

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Posted the 05/19/2019 at 8:38 PM, updated the 05/20/2019 at 4:26 pm



On the central pavilion, the very large photos of Mary Mc Cartney, taken backstage at the Royal Ballet in London. Sam Wright / Photo London 2019

Special envoy to London

Women were in the spotlight at this 5th edition of [Photo London](#) which took place from May 16 to 19 in the historic walls of Somerset House, between the Thames and The Strand, a busy and intensely active avenue in London (42,500 visitors against 40,000 in 2018). This time, the radiant sun was at the opening, Wednesday, and made shine the charm of this young British fair which intends to make the photo at ease as at home, between the living room with the well bricked fireplace and the maze of galleries arranged as many rooms. We go from one to another, as we go through a suite. And this fluidity, if it adds to the confusion of spaces, gives a certain softness to the practice of the amateur.

As soon as they entered the closed enclosure of Somerset House, three women photographers, Mary Mc Cartney, Rachel Louise Brown and Susan Meiselas, lined the exterior walls of the central pavilion, dedicated to *Women in Photography*, with their decided visions. German photographer Wolfgang Tillmans inaugurated in 2016 these 100 meters of white chair rails in the open air.

"Paul McCartney in Jamaica" in 1972 by Linda

Mary Mc Cartney, 49 years old, is a true "royal" of the English scene because the first biological child of the rock couple, the photographer Linda Eastman McCartney and Paul McCartney, the charmer of the Beatles. His appearance at the press conference, in a chic jumpsuit of blue jeans gas station attendant and immaculate sneakers with bright red laces, electrified the audience at least as much as the presence of Stephen Shore, 77, legend of American photography and pioneer of photography. color and contemplator of its eloquent banality (more than 25 published books including *Uncommon Places*, 1982, *American Surfaces*, 1999, from his "road trips" in the 1970s). An exhibition hailed, at the bottom of Somerset House, at the level of the Thames, the journey of this "master of photography", with a series of large formats never before seen in the United Kingdom and a historic series from 1969, *Los Angeles*, unfortunately. not vintage.

Straight as a dancer, **Mary Mc Cartney**, a rider since childhood, presented her backstage work at the Royal Ballet in London (*Off Pointe* from *A Photographic Study of the Royal Ballet After Hours*). In the privacy of ballerinas, dancers and little rats, she composes bittersweet images, a bouquet of flowers placed trivially in an ugly sink, when it is not the micro dancer herself who soaks her bruised feet in it. , nudity assumed like an athlete from Antiquity concerned about effort and the perfect body, hieratic scene and childish laughter in the boxes. Her beloved mother, Linda Mc Cartney, was well represented at James Hyman Photography in London, of his *Self-portrait in the studio of Francis Bacon*, London, in 1997 (platinum print, 49.4 x 40 cm, edition of 25, £ 5,500 excluding VAT) at the portrait of *Paul McCartney in Jamaica* in 1972 (platinum print, 40.6 x 60.4cm, edition of £ 25.5,500 excluding VAT).

The young Rachel Louise Brown, born in 1985, graduated from the Royal College of Art in London in 2011. She has already won several awards which have earned her exhibitions and residencies abroad. The one at the Palm Beach Photographic Center in Florida inspired him this *Simulations* series, a work carried out over four years where mermaids have masks to breathe underwater, where girls dress up as red lobsters, where cakes are oddly colored. and the night always padded like a chromo dream. This is the first time that this sagacious and humorous research has been shown in Great

Britain on environments created for the amusement of the consumer society. Based on a speech by Jean Baudrillard in 1981 on *Simulacra and Stimulation*, this photographer ventured into the American night and brought back completely supernatural visions of it, from the threatening clown to the *Kissing Booth* (curated by Maggie O'Regan, a project championed by Sea Containers London which exhibits it at the same time in its gallery). With ruffled cheeks and peroxidized blond hair, she spontaneously posed in front of her XXL photos.

Finally, the great Susan Meiselas, 70 years old, American photojournalist and member of the Magnum agency since 1976, presented *A Room of Their Own*, multimedia work, from testimony to images, which gave shape to the lives of the women who survived domestic violence (published by Multistory and Here Press). "Each room, like each life, is unique. The image of a space is a memory and also a kind of mirror. The woman is absent, and yet present", explained in 2017 Susan Meiselas whose *Jeu de Paume* and its director, the Catalan Marta Gili, exposed the harsh *Mediations* in spring 2018 in Paris.

Beautiful sex and strong sex

Fariba Farshad and Michael Benson, the founders of Photo London, were delighted to see this place of honor given to women in photography. "Photo London has always had a strong commitment to women, artists, curators and gallery owners. This year, more than 40% of the participants are women. Compare this with the 24% which is the norm for art fairs, "underlined Michael Benson, prototype of the great English guy, smiling but determined to win (*Paris Photo*, with historical legitimacy and the profusion of vintages, is its great rival). Once the questions left unanswered by a Brexit out of "deal" have been addressed, it asserted itself as voluntary and European, "since the number of European galleries has grown out of our total of 114 galleries in 2019, since more than 70% of exhibitors have been with us for many years, since others have joined us this year". We could therefore follow them. And without pain! Because the artists of the fair sex are also those of the stronger sex.



Nothing beats the natural eccentricity of the English scene. Sam Wright / Photo London 2019

Witness Flor Garduño, born in 1957 in Mexico City, land of the great **Manuel Álvarez Bravo** (1902-2002) and his wife Lola Álvarez Bravo (1903-1993) who made beautiful portraits of **Frida Kahlo**, in the days of splendor as well as of that of the wheelchair. Her splendid compositions in black and white argentic irrigated the fair with her poetry anchored in life, like this young indigenous woman whose basket of white lilies becomes a headdress (*Canasta de Luz, Guatemala*, 1989, £ 5,200 at Huxley-Parlor in Mayfair in London at the beautifully designed stand). Her silver prints were found at Peter Fetterman Gallery in Santa Monica in Los Angeles, alongside the refined and sculptural compositions of the Hungarian Noell Oszvald, born in 1990, who lives and works in Budapest (large silver prints of 2013, edition of 12, \$ 10,000 unframed). The famous *Mujer Angel, Sonoran Desert*, 1979, by Mexican **Graciela Iturbide**, 77, recalled the power and sensuality of this Latin America and so feminine (signed photoengraving, edition of 30, \$ 10,000).

As evidenced by Czech photographer Markéta Luskačová, born in 1944 in Prague, whose photographs taken in Slovakia, as in Great Britain, are anything but cutesy. Surrealist wind, between admiration and suspicion of unease in *Edward with clock*, 1989, a grotesque theatrical and vintage film portrait at Augusta Edwards Fine Arts in London, among the rare vintages of this fair, rather focused on modern prints and large more decorative formats.

This is further evidenced by the Iranian artist from New York, [Shirin Neshat](#), and her images from *Women Without Men*, 2008 (*Faezeh*, 2018 edition, digital C-Print, edition of 20 + 5 EA, signed and numbered by the artist, \$ 3,000 at Aperture of New York).

Witness Claire Aho, daughter of a Finnish dynasty of photographers, pioneer of color, whose images of the 1950s intrigued the public of Photo London, as well as the photos of a rural naturism of her father Heikki Aho with Björn Soldan (Claire Aho's son represents the Aho & Soldan Photo and Film Foundation, which reserves vintages for museums; the Center Pompidou has already bought ten, years ago, thanks to its curator of the photo department at the time, Clément Chéroux).

The Vivian Maier mystery

[Vivian Maier](#) (1926-2009), American of French descent, nurse, sometimes terribly surly, by profession and photographer unknown until its discovery almost by accident, was the great heroine of this vintage, thanks to the almost museum exhibition of the Howard Greenberg Gallery (rain of red dots on his portraits and self-portraits, in the wake of the caps created by *The Color Work*, his color photographs revealed at the Douches La Galerie in Paris, from January 19 to March 30, 2019). Editor and patron [Vera Michalski-Hoffmann](#) began her visit to Photo London with this exhibition of striking images taken on the sly, from *Street Scenes* which tell of America and self-portraits, alternately frontal and without complacency, or sketched like the shadow of a cloud. The writer Gaëlle Josse recounts this life of an invisible, an erased, died at 83 years in the greatest anonymity, a "magnificent loser", she says, in *A woman in cons-day* which has just come out at Notabilia.

The French gallerists were there and there indeed. For her first participation in Photo London, Sophie Scheidecker had hung a set of fabulous vintages, all sensuality and eroticism, from Erwin Blumenfeld to Hans Bellmer, and a whole wall on edge of the American photographer Stephanie Pfriender Stylander (*The Untamed eye*). This time in the heart of the central pavilion and its chic passage, Esther Woerdehoff had dared to hang the disturbing studies, black horse and white arm, of the great Spanish photographer [Isabel Muñoz](#), an adventurer who practices photography like a follower of El Rocio, the most important Spanish pilgrimage to Pentecost in Andalusia.

Nathalie Obadia, a newcomer to Photo London, had thought big both in terms of surface and formats (Valérie Belin, Luc Delahaye, Seydou Keita) and reserved a more intimate space for the late [Agnès Varda](#) (*Ulysse (VINTAGE2)*, 1954), woman in original version to which Olga Sviblova and her MAMM (Multimedia Art Museum) are dedicating a major exhibition in Moscow until May 22. Miranda Salt, the Australian from Paris who defended the formal eroticism of Californian Jo Ann Callis at *Paris Photo* 2018, exhibited the experimental work of American photographer Ellen Carey, revered in the United States for her abstract photographs, made without a camera, by placing objects directly on photographic paper and crumpling it to bring out color, but still unknown. UK.



All the charm of the Big Island in its boaters and spring hats. Sam Wright / Photo London 2019

"Dystopian" landscapes

Present in all the major photography events, Martin Parr, pillar of Magnum, master of the acid shot celebrated until May 27 at the National Portrait Gallery in London (*Only Human: Photographs by Martin Parr*) and guest-star at the new photographic season of the Trianon at the [Palace of Versailles](#), immediately headed for the Crane Kalman Gallery in Brighton, "in search of new trends". He is also a great collector. The young Frenchwoman of the New York scene, Karine Laval, exhibited her "dystopian" landscapes, fruits of her manipulation of color and light in the wake of the poet of the Old South, [William Eggleston](#) (*Heterotopia* series, 2019, edition of £ 5.4850 excluding VAT). Briton Ellie Davies, born in 1976, lives and works in Dorset: in her series *Fires*, she confronts the fire of man and the forest that preceded it (large format 120 x 80 cm, edition of 7 + 2 EA, £ 1,750 excluding VAT).

And then there are all the women photographed by the men, naiads rolled in the sand by Edward Weston (*Nude on the Dune (Back) or (Front)*, 1936, vintage film, £ 10,000, Danzinger Gallery), black workers with beautiful hands worn by the late [David Goldblatt](#) (*Woman at home Coffee Bay, Transkei*, 1975, 50 x 50 cm, print of 10, Goodman Gallery, Cape Town), melee devil by Yoshihiro Tatsuki (*Eves 4*, 1970, gelatin silver print 1980, 35 x 35 cm, £ 5325 framed at Ibasho in Antwerp). Again, women are not fragile little things.