

Press Release

Jean GAUMY *D'après Nature*

Exhibition from February 2 to April 13, 2024

Opening in the presence of the artist on Thursday, February 1, 2024, from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm

For the opening of the 2024 season, Sit Down Gallery is pleased to present the series 'D'après Nature' by the photographer Jean Gaumy. This photographic project, produced during solitary journeys in the Piedmont mountains, is largely imbued with the unique aesthetic of its author. Through his intimate perspective, Jean Gaumy captures the raw beauty and complexity of nature, revealing the invisible presence of humanity while inviting us to immerse ourselves in the wild and mystical beauty of these inhospitable territories.



Vers le col de la Cavale, via Val Stura, 2006, Piémont,
© Jean Gaumy / Magnum Photos courtesy galerie Sit Down

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D'après Nature

Jean Gaumy is a "true shy person," but to take a picture, he often needs to get within three meters or less. A variation of Robert Capa's precept, "If your photography isn't good enough, it's because you weren't close enough" - which might make you smile. Yet it has shaped his style. And his way of seeing our world, in the intimacy of people through candid scenes and complex compositions, has become a kind of second nature. Jean Gaumy speaks of a pursuit of concomitances: "It's the dog coming from the left, the two guys about to shake hands, the old lady coming up in the background, and a car about to pass..."

This time, for "D'après Nature" (a project begun in 2003), the photographer turned his lens to mountain landscapes where, at first glance, nothing seems to be happening. As if to blur the tracks. He followed the paths leading to the summits of the Alps massif. "Four or five parallel valleys running from east to west, ascending up to 2000 meters, and rarely frequented." Walking for days on end, moving from one refuge to another, occasionally descending to the village to meet friends, Jean Gaumy has created images that reveal shapes, lines and silhouettes in nature... In medium format. "To have a slower rhythm. These are days when suddenly, things impose themselves, reveal themselves to you. You 'recognize' them."

In these black and white photographs, which are at once extremely graphic, sometimes on the verge of abstraction, and at the same time intimate, we can often discern what we want. This is also the power of this photography—to appeal to the viewer's imagination, compelling them to look more closely, in a world that often encourages mere glimpses. In these images, we can appreciate the photographer's personal history, his culture, his past, and the human connections he has created.

For Gaumy, these images are, above all, the result of an impregnation, a heterogeneous blend of elements that "signal" to him. Jean Gaumy knows the mountains well, especially the Alp's little sister in the southwest of the country. "My childhood was in the Pyrenees. My family lived in Toulouse. We were often in Ariège, the land of my great-grandparents." All of this, the beauty of these images, seems like a déjà vu that he couldn't have photographed before. Until this project and the book published in 2010 by Xavier Barral. "These are all the images that come back to me from before. But not only that. They are also unconscious references that emerge—paintings, for example... Some paintings by Andrew Wyeth, 'Down Hill' or 'Winter Monhegan,' discovered a few years earlier thanks to Michelle, my wife. Those from the Renaissance, with interiors where, at the back, there are windows, doors, openings that lead to tiny landscapes. Those are the ones that interest me most often. With Pollock, I think of the interlacing of trees and branches. Cinema (naturally in black and white!): Carl Dreyer, Arne Sucksdorff, Andrei Tarkovsky. Literature too: Jean Giono, Julien Gracq, Charles-Ferdinand Ramuz..."

Jean Gaumy refers to his book 'D'après Nature' as a "decisive memory". The man, who has been a member of the Académie des beaux-arts since 2016, is witty, and like his elders, has a real sense of formula. A mental exercise sustained by enlightened encounters and discussions. When a member of the Academy of Sciences approaches him and asks, "Why, during its evolution, is the human being always attracted to beauty?" he responds: "There are certainly avenues for reflection in sociology, in art history, but it may also have something to do with biology, of which you are a specialist: a necessity for survival."

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Les formes du chaos by Alain Bergala (excerpts)

[...] He, who is more of a man who tends to return to the same motif, to the same landscapes over and over again, he never believed that a change of motif gave the photographer any new freshness. Quite the contrary, in fact. Seeking out new motifs can be akin to a headlong rush, where all you end up with are your certainties and habits. He has always known that you have to look at the same thing long and often for it to regain its innocence and truth. This is his salutary concern: will he ever be able to photograph "innocently" the things he has always seen, as if they had never been seen before by an anthropocentric gaze, necessarily limited by all the blinkers with which most photographers protect themselves and which constitute their brand image?

But observing the same motifs, the same landscapes, can be done with different tools that change perception. Perhaps a change of glasses is more decisive than a change of landscape for a new and profound experience of the world.

[...] What confusingly beckons the photographer, faced with the infinite and vertiginous proposition offered by nature, is from time to time a mental image, a "background" image, of which he is not necessarily clearly aware, but whose tropism intimately supports the decision to frame this piece of reality and not another, in this angle and not another, in this precise light.

[...] What is the deeper meaning of this reversal, which is at the same time a change of horizon in his photographic gesture? Or more precisely, a deliberate forgetting of the horizon and perspective that constitute the abscissa and ordinate of common photography, and to which he has turned his back.

For some time now, in his "Landscapes and Full Matter" period, Jean Gaumy has been confessing his propensity to point his camera downwards, in order to eliminate from his images the sky, the horizon line, everything that underpins the recognition of a reassuring image, where the viewer rediscovers the worn and unquestioned landmarks of his banal perception of the world.

Gaumy destabilizes the viewer of his images, asking them to experience the attraction, anxiety and joy of contemplation that they once felt in front of the landscape or mineral matter he gives us to see, not to recognize. The viewer no longer has much that is familiar or reassuring to identify with in the images on offer, but it is imperative to experience the wonder and abysses that have been those of the man who today has this personal relationship, which involves him entirely, with our world.

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La Tentation du Paysage

This photographic series is the result of several stays in the "Occitan" mountains and valleys of Piedmont. There I made meaningful encounters and forged some friendships.

I did not want to make these encounters the priority of my photographic approach, as I had initially planned. Gradually, the initial project transformed. I chose to be fully contemplative. The only tools: the frame of the viewfinder, listening, observation, and a few notes in a notebook. Often, solitude in front of the void. The silence.

Time allowed me to assess the limits of photography, my own limits. I had to let go of some preconceptions. I faced the difficulties of the genre.

During this period, with the help of world events, I was well aware, like so many others, of the irresistible acceleration of the rupture that was taking place between the human species and its original environment; between civilization and nature.

Instinctively, I wanted to see, as I had already done at sea, what might be beckoning me in these mountains; to see which cultural representation had been nourishing me since childhood whenever it came to nature, origins. What would I bring back that is not conventional, that is not just "clichés"?

I understood a little better my share of fantasy, my share of lucidity.
Imagination and reality.

These photographs have since given rise to the book "D'après Nature."
They mark the beginning of the long essay I am pursuing: "Nature under Influence."
With this series, the goal here is, in contrast, the very subjective representation of a "Nature without Influence."

Jean Gaumy

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Col de Tende, 2008, Piémont,
© Jean Gaumy / Magnum Photos courtesy galerie Sit Down

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Autour du col de Tende, 2008, Piémont,
© Jean Gaumy / Magnum Photos courtesy galerie Sit Down



Val de Susa vers le Mont Ceni. Vue à partir du val Cenischia, 2009, Piémont,
© Jean Gaumy / Magnum Photos courtesy galerie Sit Down

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Autour du Val de Oncino via le val Pô, 2008, Piémont,
© Jean Gaumy / Magnum Photos courtesy galerie Sit Down

BIOGRAPHY

Jean Gaumy was born in 1948 in Royan Pontailac (Charente-Maritime).

In 1975, he undertook two in-depth projects on subjects never before addressed in France: the first, "The Hospital," published in 1976; the second, "The Incarcerated," on French prisons, published in 1983 with excerpts from his personal journal written in the first person.

In 1977, Jean Gaumy joined the Magnum agency.

In 1984, he made his first film, "La Boucane," nominated for the César Awards in 1986 for Best Documentary. That same year, he began a cycle of winter travels aboard so-called "classic" trawlers, which continued until 1998 and resulted in the publication of "Pleine Mer" in 2001. He made numerous trips to Iran during the war with Iraq from 1986 to 1997.

In 1987, he directed the film "Jean-Jacques," two years of reporting on the town of Octeville-sur-Mer, where he lived, through the eyes of Jean-Jacques, wrongly considered the "village idiot."

In 1994, he made his third film, "Marcel, prêtre," shot in Raulhac, Cantal, and Auvergne over several years.

Jean Gaumy received the Nadar Prize in 2001 and 2010.

Since 2005, he has been conducting surveys and filming for the film "Sous Marin," spending four months underwater aboard a nuclear attack submarine. He has been an official painter of the Navy since 2008 and a member of the Institute of France - Academy of Fine Arts since 2016.

His numerous works on human confinement are associated with a more contemplative photographic approach in recent years. In 2008, he began a photographic recognition project that took him from the Arctic seas to the contaminated lands of Chernobyl in Ukraine. In parallel, as part of the same project, he started the "D'après Nature" series dedicated to mountain landscapes. Between 2010 and 2011, he embarked again on French nuclear submarines dedicated to nuclear deterrence.

Jean Gaumy has been living in Fécamp, Normandy, France, since 1995.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS (SELECTION)

- 2020 *Arctique*, Château Palmer, France
- 2019 *Pleine Mer*, Le Kiosque, Vannes, France
- 2016 *Les Formes du Chaos (Arctique et Falaises)*, Centre d'Art Contemporain Matmut, Château de Saint Pierre de Varengueville, Normandie, France
- 2014 *La Tentation du Paysage et La Fabrique des Images*, Abbaye de Jumièges, Normandie, France
- 2010 *La tentazione del paesaggio*, Filature de Caraglio, Italie
- 2010 *La tentation du paysage*, Magnum Gallery, Paris, France
- 2009 *Jean Gaumy, Royan- Le Havre, 1955*, installation photographique dans l'appartement d'Auguste Perret, Le Havre, France
- 2006 *Pleine Mer*, Le Quartz, Brest, France
- 2005 *Pleine Mer*, Manoir du Tourp, France
- 2004 *Pleine Mer*, Fondation Caixa, La Corogne, Espagne
- 2003 *Pleine Mer*, Musée national de la Marine, Amsterdam, Pays-Bas
- 2002 *Pleine Mer*, Musée national de la Marine, Palais de Chaillot, Paris, France
- 1993 *Le Pont de Normandie*, Paris, Rouen, Caen.
- 1983 *Les Incarcérés*, galerie Magnum, Paris, France
- 1976 *Galerie de l'instant*, Paris, France
- 1973 *Les Travailleurs de la mer*, Maison de la culture du Havre, France
- 1972 *Ici ou ailleurs*, Théâtre Maxime Gorki, Le Grand-Quevilly, France

GROUP EXHIBITIONS (SELECTION)

- 2023 *La mer au cœur*, La Cité de la Mer, Cherbourg, France
- 2016 *Derrière les apparences / Les formes du chaos*, Centre d'Art Contemporain de la Matmut, Saint-Pierre-de-Varengueville, France
- 2006 *Compagnons de route (Depardon)*, Rencontres d'Arles, Arles, France
- 2002 *Jours de fret*, Rencontres d'Arles, Arles, France
- 2000 *Magnum*, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, France
(puis Londres, Tokyo, New York, Rome et Berlin)
- 1996 *Magnum Paysages*, Le Bon Marché, Paris, France
- 1994 *Portraits en Altitude*, Centre Georges-Pompidou, Paris, France
- 1994 *Magnum Cinéma*, Couvent des Cordeliers, Paris, France
- 1987 *Reportages, 1985-1987*, photographies d'Amérique Centrale et d'Iran, Lorient, France
- 1986 *Men's Lives: The Surfmén and Baymen of the Southfork*, Library of Congress, Washington, États-Unis
- 1985 *Exposition collective Magnum*, Musée d'histoire et d'art de Fribourg, Allemagne
- 1983 *Visions*, exposition du groupe Photographies and Caux, Maison de la culture du Havre, Le Havre, France
- 1980 *Fondation nationale des arts plastiques et graphiques* de Paris, France
- 1975 *Féminin quotidien*, Maison de la culture du Havre, Le Havre France

PUBLICATION

- 2010 Jean Gaumy, *Photo Poche no 128*, Éditions Actes Sud, Paris, France
2010 Jean Gaumy, *D'après Nature*, Éditions Xavier Barral, Paris, France
Prix Nadar 2010
2001 Jean Gaumy, *Pleine Mer*, Éditions La Martinière, Paris, France
2001 Jean Gaumy, *Le Livre des Tempêtes à bord de l'Abeille Flandre*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris, France
Prix Nadar 2002
1995 Jean Gaumy, *Le Pont de Normandie*, Éditions Le Cherche-Midi, France
1983 Jean Gaumy, *Les Incarcérés*, Éditions de L'Etoile / Cahiers du Cinéma, France
1976 Jean Gaumy, *L'Hôpital*, Éditions Contrejour, Paris, France

FILM

- 2006 Jean Gaumy, *Sous-Marin* (vidéo, couleur, 5 × 25 min)
1994 Jean Gaumy, *Marcel, prêtre* (super 16 mm, couleur, 42 min)
1987 Jean Gaumy, *Jean-Jacques* (super 16 mm, couleur, 52 min)
Prix du Film document du Festival de Belfort en 1987
1984 Jean Gaumy, *La Boucane* (16 mm, couleur, 35 min)
Nomination aux Césars du meilleur court-métrage documentaire en 1986
Prix du Premier Film au Festival du film ethnologique

AWARD

- 2010 Prix Nadar pour *D'après Nature*
2002 Prix Nadar pour *Le Livre des Tempêtes à bord de l'Abeille Flandre*
1987 Prix du Film document du Festival de Belfort pour *Jean-Jacques*
1986 Nomination aux Césars du meilleur court-métrage documentaire pour *La Boucane*
1984 Prix du Premier Film au Festival du film ethnologique pour *La Boucane*

LA GALERIE

Située dans Le Marais à Paris, la galerie Sit Down a été fondée par Françoise Bornstein en 2005. Depuis 2013, la galerie est essentiellement consacrée à la photographie contemporaine de la scène française et internationale, avec une attention particulière à la photographie documentaire. La galerie Sit Down présente des artistes émergents comme renommés et s'intéresse également aux artistes qui font dialoguer la photographie avec d'autres médiums ou questionnent les limites de son usage mimétique.

En parallèle des expositions personnelles, Françoise Bornstein invite des commissaires lors de projet d'expositions hors les murs, lors de festivals comme les Rencontres d'Arles. La galerie participe à des foires internationales telles que PARIS PHOTO, ART PARIS Art Fair, PHOTO LONDON, PHOTO LA à Los Angeles, *THE PHOTOGRAPHY SHOW presented by AIPAD* à New York, HAUTE PHOTOGRAPHIE à Amsterdam...

La galerie est membre du Comité Professionnel des Galeries d'Art (CPGA) et de l'Association of International Photography Art Dealers (AIPAD).

ARTISTES

Jean-Michel ANDRÉ (FR, 1976)
Aurore BAGARRY (FR, 1982)
Stéphane BELZÈRE (FR, 1963)
Celine CROZE (FR, 1982)
Pauline FARGUE (FR, 1975)
Tim FRANCO (FR, 1982)
Virginie ISBELL (FR-USA, 1959)
Marco LANZA (IT, 1957)
Antoine LECHARNY (FR, 1995)
Jean-Gabriel LOPEZ (FR, 1962)
Robert McCABE (USA, 1934)

THE GALLERY

Established in Le Marais area in Paris, the Sit Down gallery was founded by Françoise Bornstein in 2005. Since 2013, the gallery has been entirely devoted to photography and its programming consists primarily of documentary and fine-art photography. The gallery aims to showcase young emerging photographers and support renowned international photographers. Sit Down is also interested in artists who bring photography into dialogue with other mediums or question the limits of its mimetic use.

In addition to organizing personal exhibitions, Françoise Bornstein invites curators to participate in exhibition projects during special events such as LES RENCONTRES DE LA PHOTOGRAPHIE in Arles. The gallery takes part in international art fairs like PARIS PHOTO, ART PARIS, PHOTO LA in Los Angeles, *THE PHOTOGRAPHY SHOW presented by AIPAD* in New York, UNSEEN and HAUTE PHOTOGRAPHIE in Amsterdam...

Sit Down gallery is a member of the French "Comité Professionnel des Galeries d'Art" and of the Association of International Photography Art Dealers (AIPAD).

Marie MAUREL DE MAILLÉ (FR, 1978)
Frédérique PETIT (FR, 1949)
Salvatore PUGLIA (IT, 1953)
Jean-Charles REMICOURT-MARIE (FR, 1990)
Simon ROBERTS (UK, 1974)
Florian RUIZ (FR, 1972)
Martine SCHILDGE (FR, 1951)
Laure VASCONI (FR, 1965)
Matt WILSON (UK, 1969)
Tom WOOD (IR, 1951)
Charles XELOT (FR, 1985)

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