

GALERIE CATHERINE PUTMAN

Rajak Ohanian

Portraits

8 - 21 November 2018

Vernissage

Thursday 8 November

6 p.m to 8:30 pm



Rajak Ohanian, planche du portfolio «Bram van Velde», 2016
inkjet print on Hahnemuhle paper | 40 x 30 cm | 15 ex. | © Rajak Ohanian

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The Gallerie Catherine Putman is pleased to present—as part of the Paris Photographic Week and for the first time—an exhibition of ‘Portraits’ by the photographer Rajak Ohanian.

The exhibition originates from a portfolio, published in 2016, entitled ‘Bram van Velde’, containing nine photographs by Rajak Ohanian taken at the end of the painter’s life.

Charles Juliet, the author of *Rencontres avec Bram van Velde*, which enabled the photographer to meet the painter he admired, wrote the preface for the album, in which he mentioned the series of photographs by Rajak Ohanian:

‘Rajak visited him on two occasions at a time when no one visited him. This series of photos is invaluable, because, to my knowledge, it is unique. They show him in a serious and meditative mood, with the suggestion of a smile One of them is particularly significant. He is sitting next to an olive tree and on the other side of the trunk there is an empty chair.’

The quality of the shots and their insightful portrayal of the painter inspired us to organise the exhibition and add a selection of portraits that he has taken over the years.

Whatever the theme tackled, Rajak Ohanian’s work is a long-term process, and revolves around an encounter with a place, a person, a company, a town or a village. The portraits he has taken over the last sixty years are the fruit of encounters, friendships, and artistic or intellectual affinities.

They are writers, musicians, artists, philosophers, and theatre and cinema people. The photographs have nothing to do with a portrait gallery of outstanding individuals, but are about encounters, the essential question of testimony, and traces of reality that are integral to photography.

The photographs, which were taken in a context of mutual trust, were generally taken in the people’s home environment. They are not strictly speaking a series but a long-term process—an ongoing activity in which the desire to take photographs arises spontaneously through encounters and is never dictated by a commission.

The photographic portraits—a selection of which will be presented in the exhibition—paint a portrait of the author, revealing his environment and his affinities; and his very relation with photography, which is deep, unaffected, and respectful, like a relationship with earth and man.

Rajak Ohanian

Born in Lyon in 1933, of immigrant Armenian parents, who had fled the genocide of 1915.

He lives and works in Lyon.

Selective biography:

He began practising photography in the 1950s and took his first theatre photographs in 1955 in collaboration with Roger Planchon.

In 1958, he discovered the gypsy festivities in Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, where he returned for ten consecutive years to shoot the series 'Les Fils du vent' ('The sons of the wind'). In the same year he began to take portraits of figures in the world of art and culture, with whom he maintained friendly relations.

Between 1960 and 1977, Rajak Ohanian photographed theatre plays by Roger Planchon, Jacques Rosner, Patrice Chéreau, and Marcel Maréchal, and plays by Louis Erlo and Humbert Camerlino at the Opéra. He joined the Rapho agency. He exhibited his photographs in Lyon, and travelled to New York and Algeria.

In 1979–1980, he spent two years living in a disused school in a village of forty-four inhabitants in Côte-d'Or and produced a series of forty-four portraits, entitled 'Portrait d'un village – Sainte-Colombe-en-Auxois' ('Portrait of a village—Sainte-Colombe-en-Auxois'), which was exhibited in Lyon (1983), Dijon (1984), and in Paris during the 'Month of Photography'.

After a trip to Italy, where he produced the series 'Untitled' and 'À Venise' ('In Venice') in 1984, he spent two years living in Chicago (1987–1988), and worked on the follow-up 'À Chicago – portrait d'une ville' ('In Chicago—portrait of a city'). In 1989 and 1990, the Portraits were exhibited in Brême, Mayence, Munich, Düsseldorf, Karlsruhe, and Essen.

He took up a residency in Brittany, between 1991 and 1992, and produced a series of photographs based on minerals and water, inspired by Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: he produced 'Métamorphoses I', a series composed of sixteen photographs, exhibited at Brest and Rennes in 1993, the year in which he also produced the series 'Portrait de l'esprit de la forêt' ('Portrait of the spirit of the forest').

In 1995 and 1996, 'À Chicago – portrait d'une ville' was exhibited at Fort Saint-Jean in Marseille, the Galerie Les Lumières in Nanterre, and the Théâtre de la Commune in Aubervilliers.

In 1999, to produce the 'Portrait d'une P.M.E.' ('Portrait of a small company'), Rajak Ohanian photographed thirty-two employees of a textile printing company in a suburb of Lyon. In the same year he exhibited 'Métamorphoses I' and 'À Chicago' at the Galerie l'Entracte in Lausanne.

In 2002, the Musée Nicéphore Niepce in Chalon-sur-Saône presented a retrospective exhibition of his work entitled 'Sur la route' ('On the road').

In 2004, he exhibited his work at the Institut d'Art Contemporain in Villeurbanne and at the Rectangle in Lyon. In the same year around a hundred photographs were presented at the Montreal Biennale of Contemporary Art.

In 2005, Rajak Ohanian travelled to Syria in search of traces of his father, who was placed in an orphanage in Aleppo following the massacre of the Armenian people.

The trip to Syria resulted in 'Alep 1915 ... Témoignages' ('Aleppo 1915—testimonies').

Between 2009 and 2014, he exhibited his latest series in Paris, at the Galerie Laurent Godin, the Centre Régional d'Art Contemporain in Sète, and the Galerie Artaé in Lyon.

Two solo exhibitions were devoted to his work in 2014 at the French National Superior School for Library and Information Science (ENSSIB) and the Galerie Domus in Villeurbanne.

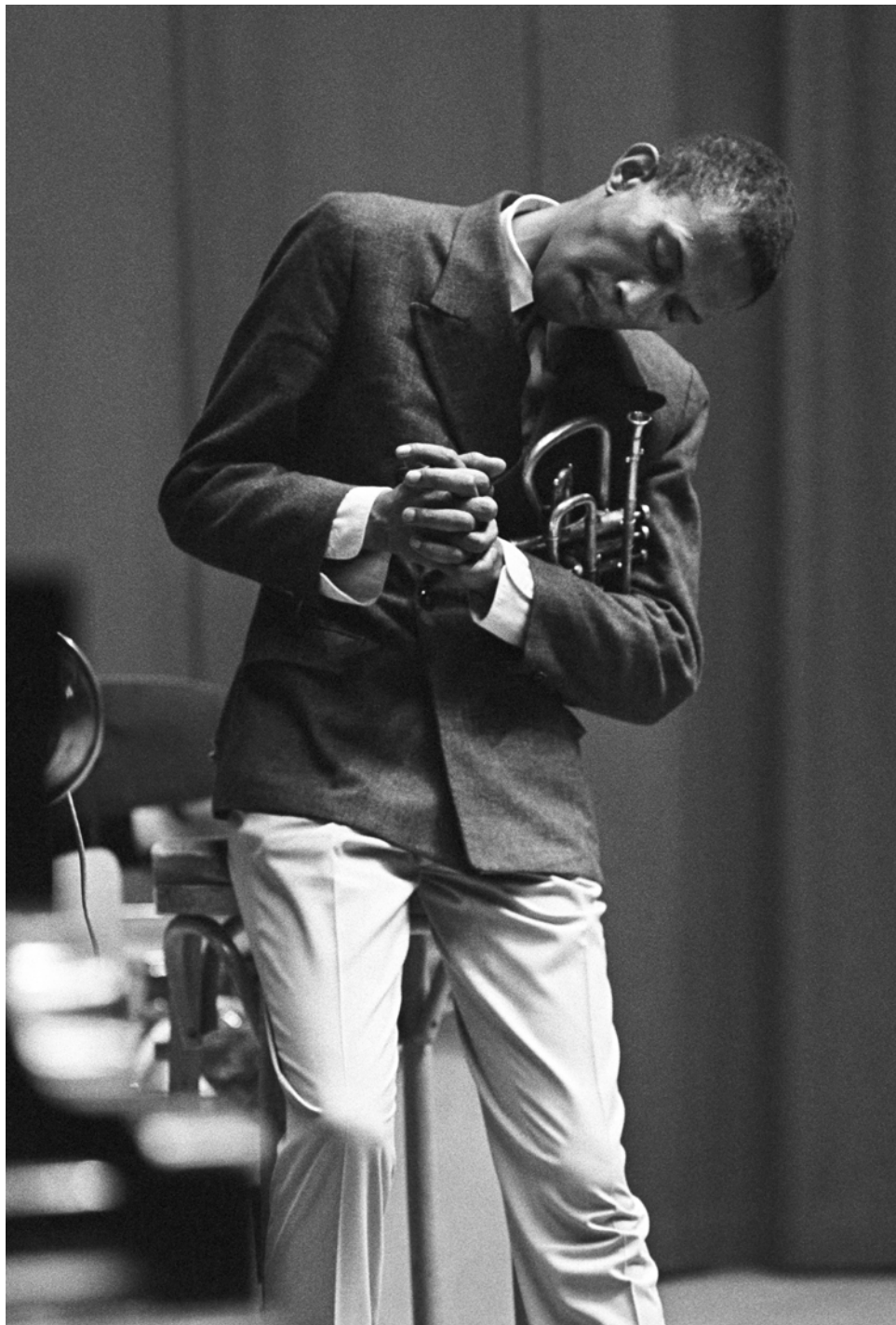
In 2015, the Fondation Bullukian exhibited 'Alep 1915 ... Témoignages' in partnership with the Municipal Library in Lyon.

The Galerie Albert Baronian presented a solo exhibition of the artist's work in 2016.

The following year, the series 'Portrait de l'esprit de la forêt' was exhibited in the library in Fleury-la-Montagne and the series 'Métamorphoses I & II' were exhibited at the Galerie Michel Descours in Lyon.

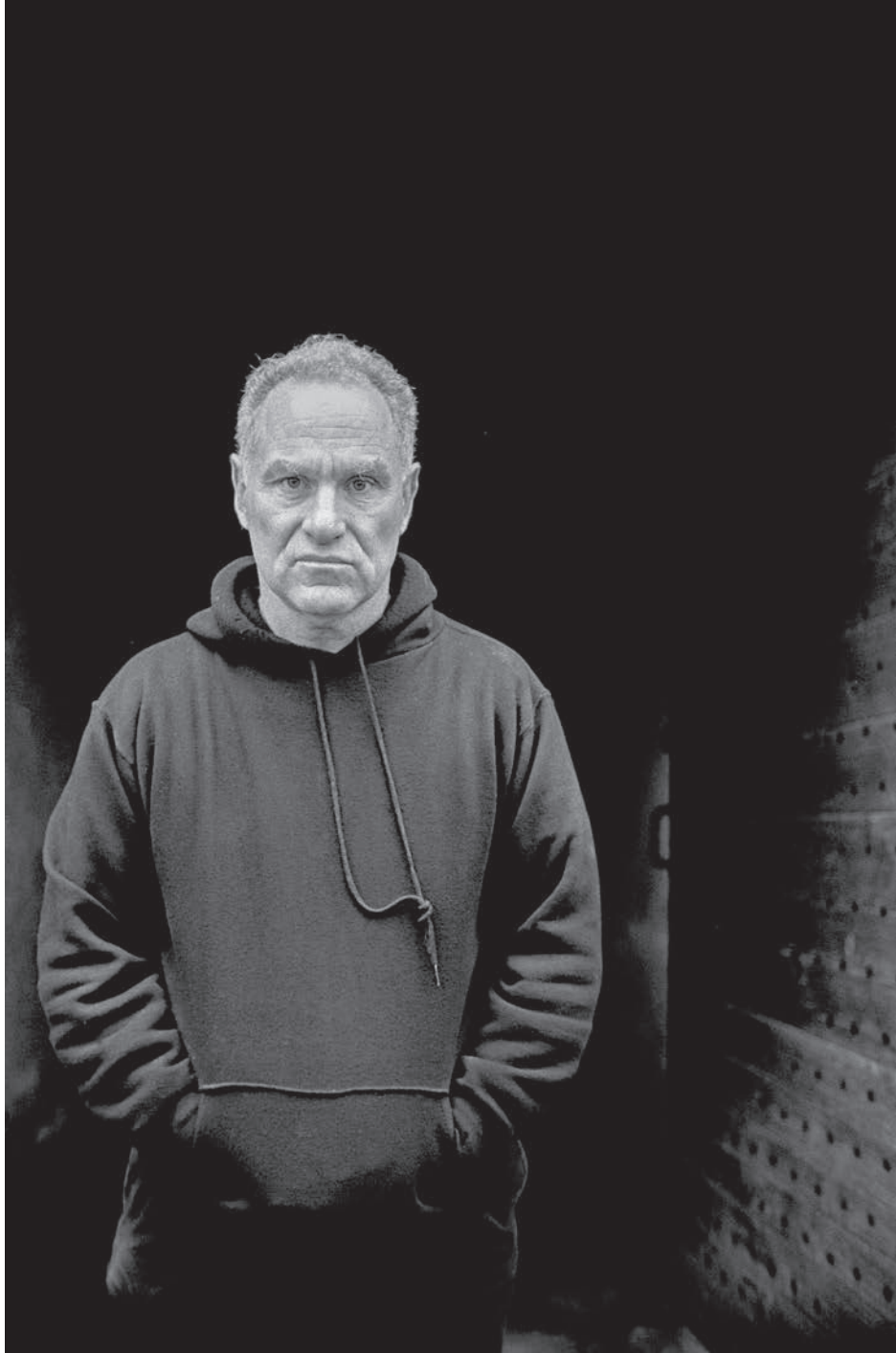
In the summer of 2018 Rajak Ohanian exhibited 'Ce que racontent les arbres d'Alep' ('The secrets of the trees in Aleppo') at the Galerie Albert Baronian in Brussels.

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Rajak Ohanian «Don Cherry»
inkjet print on Hahnemuhle paper | 40 x 30 cm | © Rajak Ohanian

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Rajak Ohanian «Richard Serra»
inkjet print on Hahnemuhle paper | 40 x 30 cm | © Rajak Ohanian



Rajak Ohanian «Patrice Chéreau»
inkjet print on Hahnemuhle paper | 30 x 40 cm | © Rajak Ohanian