

Marlborough

PRESS RELEASE

For press inquiries please contact
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The Directors of Marlborough New York are pleased to present Brassai, an exhibition of seminal photographs by the lauded Franco-Hungarian artist that redefined the collective perception of nocturnal Paris and its underground subcultures during the 1930s. The exhibition will open on Tuesday, December 1, 2020, and will remain on view through Saturday, February 27, 2021. Comprised of 39 photographs printed by the artist, the exhibition culls some of his most iconic images from the series *Paris by Night*, *Secret Paris*, *Paris by Day*, and *The Artists of My Life*.

Brassai (1899–1984) primarily favored living *la vie de noctambule* (the life of a nightwalker) during the years in which he was capturing scenes around Paris for his photographic series: climbing towers and balconies, surveying quiet parks through locked fences, and walking the Seine, the railroad tracks and the boulevards. In 1976, he explained, “I was eager to penetrate this other world, this fringe world, the secret, sinister world of mobsters, outcasts, toughs, pimps, whores, addicts, inverters. Rightly or wrongly, I felt at the time that this underground world represented Paris at its least cosmopolitan, at its most alive, its most authentic.”

Brassai never exposed more than two or three negatives of a subject. Such quick decisions demonstrate his prowess for capturing fleeting moments, a skill which certainly served him well in the crowded cafes and dancehalls as well as in dark alleys where lingering was unwise.

The selection of images from Brassai’s nighttime series form a sort of visual time capsule depicting the many facets of what the colorful Parisian nightlife of the 1930s had to offer. Reminiscing in later years, Brassai recalled that he and the poet Jacques Prévert “reveled in the beauty of” what they believed to be, at the time, “sinister things.” Appearances by notorious figures of the queer scene of Montparnasse like Fat Claude and Madame Bijou serve as formidable foils to the portraits of lionized male artists— Braque, Maillol, Miró, and Picasso, which are also on view. The exhibition articulates the artist’s egalitarian eye, the same dignity afforded to the master artist shown in his prime is given to the so-called “doyen” of the Parisian vagabonds.

This will be the first time in nearly forty years that Marlborough will showcase Brassai’s photography. Anne Wilkes Tucker, author of *Brassai: The Eye of Paris* (Museum of Fine Arts Houston, 1999), has contributed a new essay for a fully illustrated publication that will accompany the exhibition.

Marlborough New York follows New York State’s guidelines for physical distancing amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Appointments are encouraged. To schedule an appointment, please call (212) 541-4900, or write gichan@marlboroughgallery.com. It is essential that visitors wear a face mask and observe the six-foot social distancing rule at all times when interacting with our staff or with other visitors. Contactless temperature checks will be taken upon entry, and information will be gathered at Reception for contact-tracing of all visitors. For further information, contact info@marlboroughgallery.com.

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BRASSAI

1 December 2020 – 27 February 2021
Appointments encouraged, mask required for entry



Brassai, *Fille de joie jouant au billard russe, boulevard Rochechouart, Montmartre, 1932.* © ESTATE BRASSAI – RMN-Grand Palais.