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2001

ÉMILE SAVITRY

UN PHOTOGRAPHE DE MONTPARNASSE | UN FOTÓGRAFO
DE MONTPARNASSE

Sophie Malexis

The first monographic catalogue devoted to this humanist photographer who was familiar with the whole artistic and intellectual world of Paris, from the 1930s to the 1960s.

A painter before becoming a photographer, Émile Savitry rubbed shoulders with all the artists, writers, and intellectuals of all kinds who came to live in Paris in the 1930s from around the world.

The stunning success of his first exhibition of surrealist paintings, introduced by Aragon in 1929, led this shy man to run away to Tahiti with Georges Malkine. On his return, he discovered Django Reinhardt in the port of Toulon and brought him to Paris, where he introduced him to the French jazz scene. He enjoyed his greatest moments at the Café Dôme, la Cupole, and Vavin, which were to become his home from home and the place where he met the Prévert brothers, Paul Grimault, Alberto Giacometti, Anton Prinner, Victor Brauner, and Oscar Dominguez.

With Brassai and later Robert Doisneau, he pursued his career as a photographer at the Rapho agency. He worked as a reporter, immortalising Republican refugees from the Spanish Civil War and the common people living around Place Pigalle, as a stills photographer for Marcel Carné on *Les Portes de la Nuit* and *La Fleur de l'Age* and as a fashion photographer for *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*, before returning to his first love: painting. His portraits of artists reveal an astonishing intimacy, and his photos of nudes, particularly well received in Japan, testify to his profound sensibility.

In 1967, Émile Savitry died suddenly, while still at the height of his success, and this monographic catalogue is the first to be devoted to him. The work of this prolific and unjustly neglected humanist photographer deserves to be brought back into the limelight today.

Sophie Malexis was a journalist for *Le Monde* from 1986 to 2009, creating and developing the daily's photo service and its supplement. She then collaborated on the magazine *Le Monde 2*. She is the author of numerous articles on photography and has mounted photographic exhibitions within the newspaper and organized screenings at *Rencontres de la Photographie*, in Arles, as well as chairing debates at *Maison Européenne de la Photo*, in Paris. She currently designs exhibitions combining photography and literature and tries to rediscover photographers' works that have been forgotten in archives.