French Twist: Masterworks of Photography from Atget to Man Ray

Main sections in the exhibition:

Eugène Atget

The exhibition opens with one of the most significant figures in the history of photography, Eugène Atget, whose work influenced a range of artists from Surrealists to documentary photographers. This selection encompasses pictures of city streets, architectural details, and the gardens at Versailles and includes one of his most famous photographs, Boulevard de Strasbourg, Corsets (1912).

La vie de la rue (Life of the Street)

This section includes images of the streets and buildings of Paris—of the bustling Champ-de-Mars and the deserted Avenue du Maine—and features a large selection of photographs by Ilse Bing. In her modernist views of urban architecture, Bing provides a modern take on the old city through unexpected angles and dramatic cropping.

Divertissement (Diversions)

Divertissement focuses on the myriad amusements available in the City of Lights. Lartigue provides an insider’s view of upper-class life in the Belle Epoque, while Bing and Brassaï chronicle the attractions of the dance hall, the theater, and the street.

Henri Cartier-Bresson

The master of the “decisive moment” and one of the most significant photojournalists of the 20th century, Henri Cartier-Bresson is featured along with 17 famous photographs from his travels around the world. This section includes his stellar images of the Spanish Second Republic and his iconic view of the coronation of George VI in London.

Les basses classes (The Lower Classes)

Between the wars, photographers from Ilse Bing to Andre Kertész to Brassaï chronicled lives of poor Parisians, often bringing a Modernist sensibility, rather than a reformer’s eye, to scenes of urban poverty.
Paris de nuit (Paris by Night)

In 1933 Brassaï released his photo book *Paris by Night*, which chronicled the city’s streets and amusements after dark. The book became an immediate success and Brassaï became famous as the foremost photographer of the city’s bars and brothels, performers, and prostitutes.

L’art pour l’art (Art for Art’s Sake)

This section focuses on the technical experimentation and virtuoso technique of photographers including Pierre Dubreuil, Edward Steichen, and Pal Funk Angelo. It features examples of unusual techniques like *cliché-verre*, solarization, and oil printing.

Andre Kertész, Dora Maar, Man Ray

These three important photographers—all immigrants to Paris between the Wars and all involved in Surrealist movement—are featured in individual sections that highlight their most famous works. Kertész is represented by his photographs of the painter Piet Mondrian’s studio. Maar’s Surrealist street photographs capture her dark humor, and a full complement of Man Ray’s experimental and psychologically charged images summarize his photographic interests.

La figure (Portraits and Nudes)

La Figure showcases experimental approaches to the classic subject of the female nude, including a cameraless photograph and a solarization by Man Ray and a distortion created with fun-house-type mirrors by Kertész.