



JOHN COPLANS
LA VIE DES FORMES

FONDATION HCB
OCTOBER 5 2021 - JANUARY 16 2022

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PRESS OPENING

DATE TO BE CONFIRMED

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OPENING HOURS

Tuesday - Sunday : 11am – 7pm

RATES

Full rate 9€ / Concessions 5€

SOCIAL NETWORKS



Cover:
Back with Arms Above, 1984
© The John Coplans Trust



FOREWORD

Coming out of a long and difficult period of closure, we cannot hide our joy at seeing the public's desire for cultural venues ever since May's reopening. Fondation HCB has had exceptional numbers of visitors, with a relatively young public attending the exhibition Eugène Atget - *Voir Paris*, and even greater numbers attending Henri Cartier-Bresson - *Paris Revisited* at Musée Carnavalet – Histoire de Paris.

Delays caused by Covid led to these two shows coinciding with the exhibition *Le Grand Jeu* at the Bibliothèque nationale de France - François Mitterrand, following its success at Palazzo Grassi in Venice. More of a retrospective on Henri Cartier-Bresson, this exhibition is a look at the Master Collection by five curators, with one series acquired by François Pinault.

In early October, the new exhibition on John Coplans will open at Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson, curated by Jean-François Chevrier and Élia Pijollet. It stands out through its selection and conversations with artists that Coplans admired, such as Brancusi, Weegee, Walker Evans, Lee Friedlander, Philip Guston and Jan Groover.

A formal and fearless photographer, Coplans uses his naked body as the sole material for his sensual, disconcerting, radical and personal compositions. Comprised of original works on loan from numerous French institutions and private lenders, this exhibition breaks new ground for the Fondation HCB, with a rare bird from the history of photography.

The work of Fondation HCB does not stop at Rue des Archives, Paris. For the first time, in Rabat, Morocco, we are pleased to be showing the exhibition *Henri Cartier-Bresson Photographe* at Mohammed VI Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art from November 23, 2021 to January 31, 2022.

François Hébel
Director



JOHN COPLANS LA VIE DES FORMES

OCTOBER 5 2021
JANUARY 16 2022

EXHIBITION

Fondation HCB is presenting a remarkable exhibition on the œuvre of John Coplans (1920-2003), in collaboration with Le Point du Jour, Centre d'Art Éditeur in Cherbourg-en-Cotentin. Works on show here, on loan from French collections, testify to the audacity of this British artist, known for uncompromising representations of his body.

Coplans, who emigrated to the United States at the start of the 1960s, was at first painter, art critic, museum director and curator before devoting himself fully to photography in the early 1980s. At sixty years old, after twenty years of promoting the work of other artists, he retired to take up a life in art. He then developed a photography practice in which he represented himself nude, in black and white and often fragmented, his head always out of frame. To all these images, produced between 1984 and 2001, he attributed the generic title *Self Portrait*; descriptive titles and subtitles specify the body part depicted or the posture.



Body Parts, No. 8, 2001
© The John Coplans Trust

As a primary, unique and impersonal object, the body is a medium for jubilant, ever-renewed explorations of the life of form. Coplans' work, often reductively seen as a representation of the aging body, has lighter, more universal ambitions and inscribes in a long history of art forms through its metaphorical

connections to nature, sculpture, and architecture. His œuvre redefines the meaning of age, no longer a progression towards the end of life, instead, an opportunity for a long-term record of humankind and an initiative for recollecting primitive forms.

The absence of the face, and the choice of the fragment as plastic element released a flood of inventions and formal analogies that seemed inexhaustible, only stopping with the artist's passing. Coplans' images are by turns subdued and explosive, funny, provocative and always carefully considered. They answer to a demand for clarity that transfigures expressionist pathos.

The exhibition *La Vie des Formes* is structured in three sets presented chronologically. First, small prints made at the start of Coplans' career in photography (*Torso, Back, Hands, Feet...*); followed by, in 1988, large formats and montage combining several body fragments to create a single but disjointed image; and finally, as a great connoisseur of art history, Coplans integrated research on artists he studied, exhibited and knew into his own work, and a selection of works by these artists (Brancusi, Walker Evans, Lee Friedlander, Jan Groover, Philip Guston, Weegee...) is presented.

CURATION

Jean-François Chevrier and Élia Pijollet

COPRODUCTION

The exhibition is coproduced with Le Point du Jour in Cherbourg-en-Cotentin. It will be shown from January 29 to May 15, 2022.



BIOGRAPHY

John Coplans was born in London in 1920. The son of a doctor in medicine and art amateur, he spent most of his childhood between London and South Africa. During the Second World War, he served the British army in the Royal Air Force before having to give up after injuring himself during a rugby match. He then enlisted in the Cameroonians before joining the King's African Rifles in East Africa and being assigned in India and Burma.

In 1946, John Coplans started an art degree but quickly gave up. For ten years or so, he has painted and witnessed the rise of abstract art. Coplans emigrated to the United States and moved in San Francisco in 1960. After the creation of *Artforum* in New York in 1962 with Philip Leider and John Irwin, he became the editor-in-chief from 1971 to 1978. Specialised in contemporary art, the monthly magazine aims to support the art of the West Coast. Coplans was also a curator, he was head of the Art Gallery of University of California at Irvine (1965-1967) and became Senior Curator of the Pasadena Art Museum in (1967-1971). In 1978, he left *Artforum* and became director of the Akron Art Museum, in Ohio. At this time, he began his first photographic experiments.

In 1980, Coplans presented his first solo exhibition at the Daniel Wolf Gallery in New York. In 1988, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) set up the first major exhibition of the photographer, which was then presented at the MoMA in New York the same year. John Coplans died in New York on August 21, 2003.



Front Hand, Thumb Up, Middle, 1988
© The John Coplans Trust

PUBLICATION

The exhibition will be accompanied by a book of texts published by Le Point du Jour: *John Coplans. Un corps*, under the guidance of Jean-François Chevrier and Élia Pijollet.

Format: 14 x 20,5 cm (bound)

Around 40 illustrations

Around 196 pages

22 euros

ISBN : 978-2-912132-97-0

Publication: October 2021

PRESS VISUALS
JOHN COPLANS
LA VIE DES FORMES

PRESS VISUALS

All visuals must be used with their captions and copyrights. No cropping is permitted.



01
Upside down No.1, 1992
© The John Coplans Trust



03
Torso Front, 1984
© The John Coplans Trust



02
Front Hand, Thumb Up, Middle, 1988
© The John Coplans Trust



04
Body Parts, No. 8, 2002
© The John Coplans Trust

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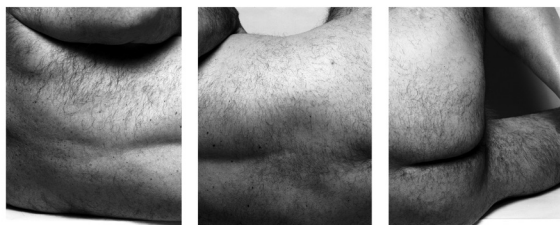
05
Lying Figure, Holding Leg, Four Panels, 1990
© The John Coplans Trust



06
Feet, Frontal, 1984
© The John Coplans Trust



07
Back with Arms Above, 1984
© The John Coplans Trust



08
Reclining Back, Three Panels, Left, 1990
© The John Coplans Trust

EXHIBITIONS PROGRAMME

- **February 2022 / May 2022**

Mathieu Pernot - Le Grand Tour



Beyrouth, 2020
© Mathieu Pernot

Winner of the 2019 HCB Award, Pernot presents a photo series taken over the last two years in Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon on the ruins of geopolitical tensions and the traces of his family history. The Fondation d'entreprise Hermès is the patron of the HCB Award.

- **June 2022 / September 2022**

Jan Groover - Laboratory of Forms



Jan Groover, Sans titre, ca.1978
© Musée de l'Élysée, Lausanne - Fonds Jan Groover

In collaboration with the Musée de l'Élysée in Lausanne, the Fondation is presenting an exhibition dedicated to the American photographer Jan Groover (1943-2012) for the first time in France. Through her constant experimentation with the photographic medium, Jan Groover's work features an exceptional diversity of subjects, format and technical processes.

EVENTS

The Fondation HCB's mission is to become a place of exchange, education and dissemination of knowledge of photography for a variety of audiences. Each exhibition includes conferences, discussions, screenings and signings. Depending on the evolution of the health context, some of these events may be scheduled online. The events for the exhibition John Coplans - *La vie des formes* will be announced at henricartierbresson.org.

TRAVELLING EXHIBITIONS

Beyond its own site, the Fondation will continue to support the works of Henri Cartier-Bresson and Martine Franck being shown in many institutions around the world and promote the work of researchers by giving them the best access to archives. The Magnum Photos agency, created by Henri Cartier-Bresson, at the instigation of Robert Capa, along with George Rodger and David Seymour, continues to handle requests for copyright syndication.

- **April 13 / August 22 2021**

Henri Cartier-Bresson - Le Grand Jeu

Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, France

- **June 15 2021 / October 31 2021**

Henri Cartier-Bresson - Paris Revisited

Musée Carnavalet - Histoire de Paris, Paris, France

- **November 23 2021 / January 31 2022**

Henri Cartier-Bresson Photographe

Mohammed VI Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Rabat, Morocco

PRESS VISUALS 79 RUE DES ARCHIVES



001
Fondation HCB, 79 rue des Archives, November 2018
Reception desk
© Cyrille Weiner



004
Fondation HCB, 79 rue des Archives, November 2018
Exhibition Martine Franck
© Cyrille Weiner



002
Fondation HCB, 79 rue des Archives, November 2018
Pearls of the archives
© Cyrille Weiner



005
Fondation HCB, 79 rue des Archives, October 2020
Exhibition Gregory Halpern
© Hugo Hébrard



003
Fondation HCB, 79 rue des Archives, June 2021
Reception desk and bookshop
© Hugo Hébrard



006
Fondation HCB, 79 rue des Archives, June 2021
Exhibition Eugène Atget
© Hugo Hébrard