Martine Franck

A photograph isn't necessarily a lie, but nor is it the truth. It's more of a fleeting, subjective impression. What I most like about photography is the moment that you can't anticipate: you have to be constantly watching for it, ready to welcome the unexpected.

BIOGRAPHY

April 2, 1938: Martine Franck was born in Antwerp, Belgium. Since the early years of her childhood, she was accustomed to distant horizons. Her family lived in London. In 1939, Martine’s father, Louis Franck, joined the British army. With her mother and brother, Martine left England for the United States during the war, before returning in 1944. Martine accomplished part of her studies there, as well as in Switzerland where she met Ariane Mnouchkine, who was to become an iconic figure of French theatre.

1956: Began studying Art History at the Madrid University, before being accepted to the Ecole du Louvre in Paris in 1958. She was 20 years old and learned to read French from Robert Escarpit’s humourous column in the newspaper Le Monde. She submitted her thesis on “Sculpture and Cubism: 1907-1915.”

1963: During an initiatory journey in the Far East with Ariane Mnouchkine, Martine Franck began to photograph the charms and splendors of other civilizations such as China, Japan, India, Cambodia, Nepal, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran. She published her travel pieces in Eastern Horizon in Hong Kong. “Photography appeared randomly in my life. I obtained a visa for China and my cousin lent me a Leica telling me I was lucky and that I had to bring back pictures,” confided Martine Franck in a 2007 interview to Roland Quilici.

1964: Returning to France, she worked in Paris for Time-Life where she “truly meets Photography” and became Eliot Elssofon and Gjon Mili’s assistant before becoming an independent photographer. Working with famous American magazines, her photo-coverages and her portraits of artists and writers were published in Life, Fortune, Sports Illustrated, The New York Times and Vogue. Pierre Alechinsky, Balthus, Pierre Boulez, Marc Chagall, Michel Foucault, Michel Leiris, Sam Szafran and Paul Strand are some of the many figures who became her friends. At the same time, she became a founding member of the Théâtre du Soleil and was the official photographer for Ariane Mnouchkine’s theater company, who she would never leave, capturing the shows, productions and the Cartoucherie’s everyday life.

1966: Met Henri Cartier-Bresson, “L’Oeil du Siècle” (The Eye of the Century), who was thirty years older than her, and married him in 1970: “My father told me I was taking a big risk. I have been very happy. Henri always encouraged me to work. (...) He never put me on the side. Because of him, I met a lot of people.”

1980: After being an associate, she became a member of the agency Magnum Photos in 1983. She then started a large-scale work on women’s rights. Increasingly committed to her art, Martine Franck showed an interest in socially-concerned subjects, seeking to provide evidence of reality: “My main desire is to present images creating reflection.” She published Le Temps de Vieillir, in which she writes: “Everything cannot be photographed. There are times when suffering or human decay touch you so much that you have to stop. Other situations, interesting in terms of sociology, will visually say nothing. Photography shows more than it demonstrates, it doesn’t explain the reasons for things.”

1985: Directed many photo-coverages supporting humanitarian projects and worked with the petits frères des Pauvres’ association, helping people suffering from loneliness, poverty, exclusion or serious illness.

Between 1993 and 1997, Martine Franck traveled numerous times to Tory Island (North-West of Ireland). There she captured the everyday life of a traditional Gaelic community living on the margin of the continent. Tory, Ile aux confins de l’Europe was to be published in 1998.


1996: Traveled to Asia where she photographed the Tulkus, Tibetan monk children living in Bodnath, Nepal and in Northern India. Tibetan Tulkus: Images of Continuity was published four years later.

2000: Participated in the making of the documentary Retour en Irlande avec Martine Franck, photographie directed by Fabienne Strouvé-Beckers. From her many traveling experiences, Martine Franck brought back unique images, some of which became icons.

2002: Exhibition at the Musée de la Vie Romantique. Created, with Henri Cartier-Bresson and their daughter Mélanie, the Henri Cartier-Bresson Foundation in Paris, where she becomes President in 2004.

Between 2003 and 2004, Martine Franck followed Robert Wilson, the Comédie Française’s scenographer, and photographed his production of Fables de La Fontaine. “Fables” was published on this occasion (Actes Sud Editions).


2007: Publication of the book Martine Franck in the Photo Poche collection – #111 (Actes Sud Editions) – with a text by Annick Cojean. The same year Martine Franck, with a text by Louise Baring, was published by Phaidon Editions.

2010: Chanel Nexus Hall in Tokyo presented the “Women” exhibition. In October 2011, the exhibition “Venus d’ailleurs” (“From other lands”), at the Maison Européenne de la Photographie in Paris, presented a vision of 62 portraits of artists, taken between 1965 and 2010 in their Parisian studios (Michel Barcelo, Marc Chagall, Fernando Botero, Léonor Fini, Ousmane Sow, Zao Wou Ki...).

Martine Franck was promoted to Officer in the French National Order of Merit and was the laureate of the Montblanc Cultural Prize, awarded for her work at the Henri Cartier-Bresson Foundation.
Nearly one hundred portraits of artists taken by Martine Franck were also exhibited at the Claude Bernard Gallery in Paris in March/April 2012. In June 2012, the “Peregrinations” exhibition was presented at the Howard Greenberg Gallery in New York.

Martine Franck passed away on August 16, 2012, leaving the unique mark of a great artist.

Her art is a reflection of a personal touch symbolized by geometry, curves and lines, in search of the beauty of the human soul and the depth of hearts and minds, all captured in an instant. This artistic expression made her an artist with an exceptionally sensitive eye.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1970: *Etienne-Martin*. Text by Michel Ragon. La Connaissance, Brussels

1971: *La Sculpture de Cardenas*. Text by José Pierre, La Connaissance, Brussels


1986: *La BPI en toute liberté*. Centre Pompidou / BPI, Paris


*Portraits*. Text by Yves Bonnefoy. Trois-Cailloux, Amiens


*Tory, Ille aux confins de l’Europe*. Benteli, Berne

*Martine Franck, Tory Island Images*. Introduction by Elizabeth Healy. Wolfhound Press, Dublin


*Tibetan Tulkus: Images of Continuity, photographs by Martine Franck*. Preface by Anna Maria Rossi and Fabio Rossi, text by David Seyfort Ruegg. Anna Maria Rossi & Fabio Rossi Publications, London

2004: Fables; d’après le spectacle de Robert Wilson à la Comédie-Française. Actes Sud, Arles

2005: I Grandi Fotografi Magnum Photos, Testimonianze e visioni del nostro tempo, Martine Franck. Text by Alessandra Mauro, Hachette Fascicoli, Milan


EXHIBITIONS

Personal Exhibitions

1971: Le Théâtre du Soleil, Photogalerie Rencontre, Paris

La sculpture de Cardenas, Galerie Loeb, Paris

1974: La Paroisse de Saint-Pierre de Chaillot, Centre Galliera, Paris

1976: Marchés et Foires, Les Amis des Arts, Reillanne

1977: Quartier Beaubourg, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris

1978: Martine Franck, Photographs, La Grange, Château-d’Oex, Switzerland

1979: Martine Franck, Pentax Gallery, Tokyo

Essai sur le Nord de l’Angleterre, Side Gallery, Newcastle-on-Tyne, England

Martine Franck, Photogalerie Portfolio, Lausanne, Switzerland

1980: Martine Franck, Photographies, Galerie AMC, Mulhouse

Martine Franck, Galerie Agathe Gaillard, Paris

1981: Le temps de vieillir, Musée Nicéphore Niépce, Chalon-sur-Saône

1983: Martine Franck, Photographies, Les amis des Arts de Reillanne, Reillanne

Six Femmes et la Création, Maison de la culture du Havre, Le Havre

1984: Martine Franck, Maison Descartes, Amsterdam
Vingt Contemporains vus par Martine Franck, Espace photo de la BPI, Centre Pompidou, Paris
1987: Martine Franck, 80 photographs, Centre d'Art contemporain, Forcalquier
Martine Franck, Centre Culturel Pier Paolo Pasolini, Agrigento, Sicily
1988: Portraits, Photographies de Martine Franck, La Chambre Claire, Paris
Le Théâtre du Soleil, Tip-Galerie, Centre Culturel Français, Berlin
1989: De temps en temps, Centre National de la Photographie, Palais de Tokyo, Paris
Portraits de spectacles révolutionnaires, Alliance Française, New York
1991: Des métiers et des femmes, Fnac Forum, Paris
Martine Franck, Photos de la Suisse et du pays de Saanen, Saanen Galerie, Saanen, Switzerland
Martine Franck Photographie, Mannheimer Kunstverein, Mannheim, Germany
1992: Martine Franck, Retrospective, Museo d’Arte Contemporaneo, Santiago
1993: Le Théâtre du Soleil, Bradford, England
1995: Collège de France, Fnac Montparnasse, Paris
La Photographie de Théâtre, Le Théâtre du Soleil d’Ariane Mnouchkine par Martine Franck, Le Crac, scène nationale, Valence
1998: D’un jour, l’autre, Maison Européenne de la Photographie, Paris
Tony Island Images, Gallery of Photography, Temple Bar, Dublin
Henri Cartier-Bresson photographié par Martine Franck, Fnac Etoile, Paris
2000: One day to the next, Howard Greenberg Gallery, New York
Tory, une île sans trésor, Galerie Fait & Cause, Paris
Martine Franck, SK Josefsberg Studio, Portland, Oregon, United States
Martine Franck, Galerie Claude Bernard, Paris
Tambours sur la digue, Théâtre du Soleil, Université de Rennes
Tibetan Tulkus, Images of Continuity, Gallery Rossi & Rossi, London
2002: Martine Franck, Photographe, Musée de la Vie Romantique, Paris
2004: Fables, Le Capitole, Arles
Martine Franck, Photographe-Film, Maison Européenne de la Photographie, Paris
2005: Martine Franck, Fotografa, Aula de Cultura BBK-Bilbao Bizkaia Kutxa, Bilbao, Spain
I Tulkus del Tibet, Sala Santa Rita, Rome
2006: Regard sur l’insertion, Siège du Groupe Vinci, Rueil-Malmaison
Martine Franck, Portraits, Galleria dell’Incisione, Brescia, Italy
2008: Martine Franck, A Rich Meaningful Eye, Kahitsukan Kyoto Museum of Contemporary Art, Kyoto, Japan
2010: In Celebration of Women, Chanel Nexus Hall, Tokyo

2011: Martine Franck, Venus d'ailleurs, Peintres et sculpteurs à Paris depuis 1945, Maison Européenne de la Photographie, Paris

2012: Martine Franck, Galerie Claude Bernard, Paris

Martine Franck, Pérégrinations, Howard Greenberg Gallery, New York

Posthumous Exhibitions

2013: Martine Franck, Photographe, Musée de l'Hôtel Dieu, Mantes la Jolie


FILMOGRAPHY

Films by Martine Franck

1970: What has happened to the American Indians. Produced by Martine Franck. 17 minutes

1972: Music at Aspen. Produced by Viva Films. 17 minutes

1982: En compagnie du Soleil. Produced by Paris AudioVisuel / AFFA. 17 minutes

1991: Ecrire Contre l’oubli : Mamadou Bâ, Mauritanie. Directed by Martine Franck and Henri Cartier-Bresson for Amnesty International. 3 minutes


1996: Tory Island, No treasure Island. Produced by Les petits frères des Pauvres. 4 minutes

1997: Mille enfants vers l’an 2000. Produced by Marion Aldighieri. 2 minutes

2005: Famille Farova, Trois générations de femmes de la République Tchèque. Directed by Olivier Koechlin and Martine Franck. Produced by Alcatel, for the Eurovisions exhibition. 17 minutes

Films about Martine Franck


1990: Martine Franck, entretien avec Franck Horvat. Directed by Bruno Trompier and Franck Horvat. Produced by Paris Audiovisuel, Jean Luc Monterosso. 13 minutes

Regards de femme – Ailleurs Photo. (13 photographs by Martine Franck with commentary by the photographer). Produced by FR3 Lorraine-Champagne-Ardennes. 19 minutes

2000: Retour en Irlande avec Martine Franck, photographe. Directed by Fabienne Strouvé-Beckers. Produced by Ariane Le Couteur and Olivier Morel/L’Envol with the participation of France 3 and of Planète. 56 minutes

2005: I Tulkus del Tibet, la reincarnazione dei grandi Lama. Directed by Enrico Datti. Produced by Contrasto. 6 minutes