



# **VIVIAN MAIER**

## MUSÉE DU LUXEMBOURG

FROM 15 SEPTEMBER 2021 TO 16 JANUARY 2022





#### FROM 15 SEPTEMBER 2021 TO 16 JANUARY 2022 AT THE MUSÉE DU LUXEMBOURG, 19 RUE DE VAUGIRARD 75006 PARIS

# OPEN EVERY DAY FROM 10:30 AM TO 7 PM EVENING OPENING EVERY MONDAY UNTIL 10 PM

Open on 15 September, 24 and 31 December from 10:30 am to 6 pm Open on all public holidays except 25 December

Booking recommended

In accordance with the French government directives, all visitors aged 12 and over (18 and over until 29 September inclusive) will be required to show a health pass at the exhibition entrance.

#### Find out more:

- conditions for obtaining the Health Pass
- health and safety measures at the Musée du Luxembourg

#### Places aux jeunes!

Free access for young people aged under 26 from Monday to Friday Number of tickets limited by date, booking online mandatory on museeduluxembourg.fr

This exhibition is organized with the support of *Women In Motion*, a Kering program that shines a light on the talent of women in the fields of arts and culture.





Our partners



















Try the Mademoiselle Angelina tearoom concept and enjoy an exclusive patisserie and the new "Vivian" salad inspired by the exhibition.

Opening: enjoy the terraces and tearoom every day at the same times as the Museum in compliance with health requirements.



# THE EXHIBITION

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The story of Vivian Maier (New York, 1926 - Chicago, 2009), though unusual, is that of one of the greatest photographers of the 20th century. This unprecedented exhibition tackles her work as a whole, through the major themes that structured her oeuvre between 1950 and the late 1980s.

Her photographic language sits at the intersection of humanist photography - a sensibility likely owed to her French roots - and the American street photography that formed her visual culture. Maier used street scenes, pavement chronicles, portraits, self-portraits, gestures and details in a precise framing of her time.

At the heart of American society, whether in New York from 1951 or Chicago from 1956, she meticulously observed the urban fabric that was already beginning to reflect the major socio-political shift-changes in its history. This was the age of the American dream and of modernity writ large, yet the very essence of Maier's work was everything found on the other side of this coin. This she portrayed through photography and film, creating an incredibly rich visual language.

Her entire body of work was carried along on the current of the century, right to its end. This exhibition shines a new light on the dense and singular production that earned this "amateur" photographer a place in the history of photography alongside such towering figures as Robert Frank, Diane Arbus, Robert Doisneau and Henri Cartier-Bresson.

## 1. SELF-PORTRAITS

I am out with lanterns, looking for myself.

**Emily Dickinson** 

Vivian Maier's self-portraits are milestones on her photographic journey, bisecting her body of work. Maier used different visual forms and typologies to signify her presence in the image. These multiple typologies, such as her play on shadows, the projected silhouette, reflection in both senses of the word or image within the image, combine to create a rich and singular photographic language.

She then deployed this vocabulary according to the situations in which she found herself, playing with the

various elements to assert her presence in a precise time and place. These hints vary greatly: some go unnoticed, no more than a subtle allusion, a nod to anyone able to detect them; others are a clear and undeniable assertion of self-portraiture as the subject of the image, a confrontation between Maier and herself.

In one way or another, through self-presentation or selfportrait, allusion or statement of intent, Maier invites viewers of her images on a treasure hunt, the end point of which will always remain a mystery.

# 2. STREET

But how should we take account of, question, describe what happens everyday and recurs everyday: the banal, the quotidian, the obvious, the common, the ordinary, the infraordinary, the background noise, the habitual?

Georges Perec, The Infra-Ordinary (1989)



The street is a place ripe for observation, because it is where everything happens. Maier had a predilection for the working-class neighbourhoods of the cities in which she

lived: first New York, between 1951 and 1956, then Chicago, where she died in 2009.

She tirelessly explored these neighbourhoods and streets from every angle, venturing into this constant flow of human geography, its fabric transformed by anonymous individuals who simply follow one another or cross paths left and right. In this theatre of the ordinary, everyone unknowingly plays a role, becoming the protagonist if only for a fraction of a second.

Vivian Maier watched life happen. She observed it, followed it, even hunted it, leaving nothing to chance. The scenes she photographed are often anecdotes that go unnoticed, coincidences, lapses of the real, "residual" moments of social life to which no one pays attention but which nevertheless became the subject of her narratives. Each of her images is situated in the very place where the ordinary wavers, where the real sheds its skin to become extraordinary.

# 3. PORTRAITS

The body appears before the eyes and every gaze comes to rest in the eyes of the other.

Pascal Quignard, Vie secrète

Wandering through the city, Maier would sometimes be stopped by a face. She would draw closer and photograph it. She might exchange a few words with the person, but would not linger. The majority of the faces that punctuate her photographic meanderings belong to people like her.

They speak of poverty, grinding work, misfortune and dark futures. Maier photographed those whom others do not look at, those who feature nowhere, relegated as they are to the margins of a world in which they will never take part, in the shadows of that great utopia so in vogue at the time, the American dream and its blinding light.

Dispassionate and austere, these portraits are all taken from the front and in the moment, before the face could be masked by a countenance that would turn the image into no more than a staging. At times, she would deviate from



the rule with a certain irony, photographing ladies of high society by accosting them suddenly and playing on their offended reactions.

# 4. GESTURES

The hand touches there the earth shifts the shadow dissipates

Bernard Noël, La Chute des temps, La moitié du geste

Having maintained a semblance of distance in her portraits, Maier began to draw closer and look in more detail at what made up the urban fabric that unfurled before her eyes.

She focused on individuals situated in a suspended spacetime, between brackets, those who escaped the constant fluctuation of the streets; individuals withdrawn, waiting, looking, pacing or nodding off, sitting in the shadow of nowhere.

Maier put together an inventory of their attitudes, their postures, their gestures, picking up on these signs as if



indications of something about to happen, something imminent.

Hands are often the protagonists of these images, speaking to us and telling us, unknowingly, the life stories of their owners. Sometimes, Maier photographed a furtive, barely visible gesture, automatic reflexes that happen without the individual even realising, yet which betray a thought or intention that centres entirely on their identity. Every gesture identified is the opening line of a story in the making.

# 5. KINETICISM

In the early 1960s, when Maier was living with the Gensburg family on the shores of Lake Michigan, a change came over her photographic language. Its relationship with time shifted and film began to filter in, supplanting photography.

Movement entered the image. Maier played with temporalities by creating kinetic sequences, as if transposing the specificities of cinematographic language into that of the photographic image. She used fragmentation and repetition to simulate motion and

simultaneity to indicate movement and duration. She created real film sequences with the twelve shots of her Rolleiflex camera, thereby generating the idea of linear development in "space-time" unique to cinema.

This would be a fundamental period in the evolution of her work, marking a transition between two languages which, from then on, would create constant connections and be in constant dialogue in her visual writing.

# 6. FILM

Your film is not made for a stroll with the eyes, but for going right into, for being totally absorbed in.

Robert Bresson, Notes on the Cinematographer

After this kinetic interval, Maier tackled cinematographic language head-on from the mid-1960s. She filmed what was happening before her and what escaped the naked eye. She shot the reality that presented itself to her, face-on, without any artifice or editing. Film in itself did not simply reproduce what she saw, but also informed her way of looking; as such, it materialised and made

visible her own vision, the movement of her gaze and its progression through space, taking the form of experimental documentary. Film therefore became a viewing tool that preceded the photographic image. At the time, Maier would take her Super 8 and Rolleiflex cameras with her on her urban roams. She began by filming, in a kind of exercise for the eyes on a quest for the photographic image, and as soon as this appeared, she would swap cameras and take the picture. In this exhibition, we have made several such connections that illustrate this dual purpose that film had in Maier's work.

# 7. COLOUR

While Maier's black and white body of work is profoundly silent, she approached colour photography like a space filled with sound, a place where one must first hear in order to see. This musical concept of colour seems to echo the tempo of the urban space, the blues that course through the streets of Chicago and transcribe the very sonic dimension that represents it, particularly the working-class neighbourhoods that Maier frequented.

She brought the various tones to life through simple juxtaposition, using her light, fluid touch to create a tempo and rhythm that rings out from the image. Behind this extremely accomplished play on colour, reality appears to dissolve, as if the true protagonist of the image were no more than colour itself.

When Maier photographed in colour, she used a Leica 35 mm, which differed literally from the square shape of the Rolleiflex with which she produced the majority of her black and white images. This rectangular format instantly injected a dynamism into the composition of the image, in a similar way to film, which she approached alongside colour.

# 8. CHILDHOOD

Childhood is the realm of all imagination and all illusion; it is the place where the real slips away, is transformed, plays tricks and tells tales. No doubt due to her close proximity to children for so many years, Maier too was able to see the world with their unique ability discover rather than observe.

It is as though the visible in itself was a constantly novel discovery, a game without rules where everything is

possible. As a governess for nearly forty years, Maier took part in the lives of the children in her charge.

Aware that the smallest of details can speak volumes, she documented every component: their faces as the site of all emotion, their expressions, their face-pulling, the looks in their eyes, as well as games, make-believe and everything else that inhabits the life of a child.

# 9. INDICES

There is something in the human spirit that will survive and prevail, there is a tiny and brilliant light burning in the heart of man that will not go out no matter how dark the world becomes.

Leo Tolstoy

The images in this final chapter are situated at the very edge of narration, and at times even devoid of it. The link that connects the image to its referent can be so tenuous that it amounts to abstraction. Maier created close-ups of objects and details within reach, looking at them so closely and with such intensity that they sometimes lost



their identity. This same keen, acute quality of observation can be found in children, who look at the world through its minutiae, a place where their imagination can run wild.

These photographs, reminiscent of documentary records, are transformed into stories when juxtaposed and set within a sequence. This is probably how Maier's entire archive should be approached, as links to be woven together, an endless story that can be seen from multiple angles, just like a thought that we hold in the palm of our hand, turning it in on itself in order to then unfold it.

#### Curator

Anne Morin, photography historian, director of diChroma

#### **Exhibition design**

Emmanuelle Garcia and Etienne Lefrançois

## **Graphic design**

Emmanuelle Garcia

#### **Audiovisual**

Jean-Marie Verdi, Médiapolis

Exhibition organised by the Réunion des musées nationaux – Grand Palais and diChroma photography, in collaboration with the John Maloof Collection, Chicago and the Howard Greenberg Gallery, New York.



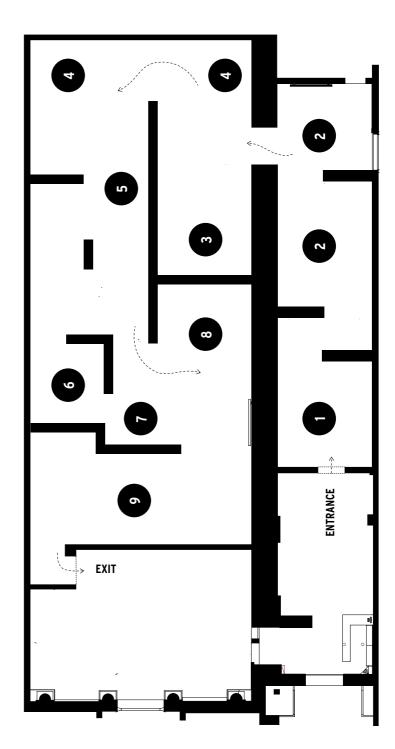






# **EXHIBITION MAP**

- SELF-PORTRAITS STREETS PORTRAITS GESTURES KINETICISM FILM COLOUR CHILDHOOD INDICES



#### **AROUND THE EXHIBITION**

# Cultural programme

#### **MUSEUM LECTURES**

at the Les 3 Luxembourg cinema 67, rue Monsieur Le Prince, Paris 6° booking required on museeduluxembourg.fr, free admission

#### PRESENTATION LECTURE

Thursday 23 September at 6.30 pm with Anne Morin, exhibition curator and director of diChroma photography

The photographic work of Vivian Maier was first discovered in 2007, and is surprising through its extent as by the consistency and authenticity of the research she shows. During this conference the exhibition curator will present the project developed for the Musée du Luxembourg, which includes many previously unseen images and archives.

#### ENCOUNTER DISCUSSING "UNE FEMME EN CONTRE-JOUR"

Thursday 14 October at 6:30 pm with Gaëlle Josse, writer, and Manon Frappa, publisher

In "Une femme en contre-jour" (A Woman against the Light),

Gaëlle Josse sets out to follow the footsteps of Vivian Maier, an elusive, multi-facetted woman, with a destiny sketched between France and America, a life of solitude, poverty, heavy family secrets and challenges. During a discussion interspersed with readings, the author shares with the public the story of a free woman, with a complex and occasionally disturbing personality who was an incredible underdog. A woman who chose to live with her eyes wide open, the encounter she missed with glory, and maybe also with her own life.

#### CHICAGO AND ITS ARCHITECTURE

Thursday 18 November at 6.30 pm

with Claude Massu, architecture historian, emeritus professor at Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University

Vivian Maier moved to Chicago in 1956 and set out to constantly photograph the city from its residential suburbs to the skyscrapers in the city centre, via the banks of lake Michigan, This conference will look over the city's exceptional architectural history.

#### **VIVIAN MAIER, FROM ONE MOMENT TO ANOTHER**

Thursday 25 November at 6.30 pm

with Arnaud Claass, photographer and photography theoretician

This conference will provide a meditation on the stylistic singularity of Vivian Maier's work. It will address her unique way of creating, by wandering the streets, a "theatre of the world"

#### FILM CLUB

at the Les 3 Luxembourg cinema

67, rue Monsieur Le Prince, 75006 Paris

Booking and useful information on lestroisluxembourg.com

#### FINDING VIVIAN MAIER

Thursday 30 September at 7:35 pm

Charlie Siskel and John Maloof made this investigation-style documentary in 2013. It tells the story of how Vivian Maier's photographs were discovered and provides elements about the photographer's life, thanks to patient research as well as accounts from people who knew her well.

#### **EVENTS AND EVENINGS**

booking required online on museeduluxembourg.fr

#### **NUIT BLANCHE (ALL-NIGHT ART SHOW)**

Saturday 2 October, from 7.30 pm to 1 am, last entry 12.30 am

Celine Walter will read the poems she has written for the exhibition alongside the works to convey the unique atmosphere of Vivian Maier's photographs, which are full of humour, feeling and mystery, while jazz music sets inspired by the glory days of the Chicago clubs will intersperse the evening.

#### SKETCHBOOK EVENING

Tuesday 5 October from 7 pm to 9 pm

free for young people under the age of 26, €10 for all other visitors

Enjoy the opportunity to sketch Vivian Maier's street scenes in black and white or colour, or gain inspiration from the images she elaborated in a very graphic way: during this evening open to all, everyone comes along with their materials and sets out to encounter the photographer's work in an active way, through drawing.

#### **ME AND MY NANNY**

for ages 3-9, tour duration: 30 min, plus photography time at 2:30 pm and 3:30 pm on Wednesdays 13 October and 8 December

Vivian Maier took care to introduce the world that surrounded the children she was responsible for to awaken their curiosity. In this sense, the Musée du Luxembourg wishes to give the youngest visitors the opportunity to enjoy a unique moment with someone who looks after them: after the child and person accompanying them have taken a short specifically adapted tour, they will pose together to have their photo taken by a photographer and then leave with their souvenir portrait.

# Guided tours booking advised

#### **GENERAL GUIDED TOUR**

for ages 13 and above; duration: 1 hour 15 minutes at 12:15 pm from Tuesday to Sunday, at 5 pm from Friday to Monday at 8 pm every Monday

Vivian Maier's photographs retain an element of mystery, with images of a certain American dream but also its limits, often found with no date or the place where it was taken being indicated. Through analysis of a selection of images in the exhibition, this visit lead by a tour guide lifts the veil on the work of a lifetime.

#### "VIVIAN MAIER'S EYE FOR FASHION" GUIDED TOUR

by Catherine Örmen, fashion historian for ages 13 and above; duration: 1 hour 15 minutes at 12:15 pm on Thursdays 21 October and 6 January at 8 pm on Mondays 15 November and 6 December

Although Vivian Maier was not a fashion photographer, she showed a particular interest in street fashion. She built up an eye for fashion, nourished by analysing the incredible piles of magazines she accumulated. The cheeky Vivian Maier could unfailingly spot the elegance of an outfit, and also focus on a detail, the one that stands out or floors it all... The tour of

,

these photos, which are not staged or do not compromise on anything, will introduce you to a rare view of what is called streetstyle today.

#### **FAMILY TOUR**

for ages 6 and above; duration: 1 hour

at 2:30 pm every Sunday

in English at 2:30 pm every other Saturday: Saturdays 2, 16 and 30 October, 13 and 27 November, 18 December and 1 January

extra sessions during the school holidays

The subjects as much as points of view of Vivian Maier's images bear the mark of a childish eye, showing feet coming out of a swimming pool, a man whose head has been replaced by a ball, a little girl with a face covered in chocolate... A lecturer from the Museum will introduce you and your family to the view that discovers hundreds of surprising patterns in reality.

#### **KIDS TOUR**

for ages 3-5, duration: 30 minutes

at 9:30 am on Saturdays 9 October, 6 November, 4 December, 8 January

Vivian Maier sets out to meet the youngest visitors and their families: a lecturer helps them discover the photographer's work through a commented tour full of surprises and games, just like what this very special nanny wanted to pass on.

# CHILDREN'S TOUR-WORKSHOPS: "THE LITTLE WORLD OF VIVIAN MAIER"

from 6 years; duration: 2hrs (tour 45 mins, workshop 75 mins) at 2:15 pm on 1 and 4 November, on 20, 23 and 30 December

Children first follow a tour that will introduce them to Vivian Maier's unique view of the world that surrounded her. They then move on to the workshop to rebuild the photographer's world in miniature. They take home the small versions they recreate of the spirit of these American city decors, full of shadows and reflections, but also surprising figures.

#### **SCHOOL TOURS**

from nursery to higher education, duration: from 45 mins to 75 mins, depending on year level

at 10:30 am on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays and at 2:30 pm from Monday to Saturday

Bring your classes to meet the one that tirelessly photographed life in the big American cities in the second half of the 20th century. According to pupils' age, a lecturer accompanies them to discover these unforgettable images!

#### **RESSOURCES**

#### **AUDIO-GUIDE**

French, English and children's version in French

Enjoy commentary on some twenty major works from the exhibition.

full price: €5

Sésame Escales exhibition pass price: €4

#### CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY BOOKLET

To help your children aged 7 and over to explore the exhibition, ask for the activity booklet, which is available for free from the museum reception or download it on museeduluxembourg.fr



# **←**

# Multimedia

# THE MUSÉE DU LUXEMBOURG'S MOBILE APP!

The Musée du Luxembourg has created a mobile app, available for free on Google Play and the AppStore. It is an essential tool for keeping up-to-date with the latest news, planning your visit and making the most of the museum's exhibitions and events.

The app provides a free circuit to discover the exhibition, *alone* or together, and certain contents of the exhibition: visuals, room texts, as well as a musical circuit. It allows you to keep a souvenir of your favourite works, finest photographs and high points of the visit.

The audioguides can be downloaded directly into it, with in-app purchases for adults (French and English) and children (French) for €3.99 tinyurl.com/luxappli

#### THE EXHIBITION SOUNDSCAPE

Relishing the moment, light, sounds for as long as possible is what Emilie Weibel proposes in her songs with a ghostly voice, as if blurred by the mist shrouding the city, an echo to the unlikely and intriguing worlds of Vivian Maier. Emilie Weibel comes from Lausanne and lives in Brooklyn, and sings, composes and teaches music to pre-school and primary school

Download this soundscape for free on museeduluxembourg.fr and from the Museum's mobile app!

#### AT THE MUSEUM

#### An interactive Super Zoom

A digital installation is available within each exhibition at the Musée du Luxembourg. This interactive programme is accessible via a touch table and interconnected to a large high-definition video screen. It offers different approaches through which to explore a selection of works from the current exhibition.

Discover "Streetstyle before its time!"

Vivian Maier gives us an exceptional view of street fashion in the streets of Chicago and New York in the 1950s and 1960s. Fashion historian Catherine Örmen hones our view with humour through a selection of 21 works.

#### **SOCIAL MEDIA**

The truth about the Vivian Maier affair: a series to find out everything about the mysterious nanny and genius photographer.

Take part in our photo competition on Instagram with the theme of self-portraits.



# Share your visit #VIVIANMAIER

Find us at museeduluxembourg.fr, grandpalais.fr Subscribe to the Le Mag newsletter at grandpalais.fr









# **Publications**

## **EXHIBITION CATALOGUE,**

Vivian Maier.

21.6 x 28.8 cm, 256 pages, 250 illustrations, €40.00

## **EXHIBITION ALBUM,**

Vivian Maier.

30 x 37.7 cm, 24 pages, 40 illustrations, €6.00

# SPECIAL OPERATION

# **KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN IN THE MÉTRO!**

The RATP is showcasing a selection of photos from the exhibition at the Musée du Luxembourg in 7 of its Parisian stations: Hôtel de Ville, La Chapelle, Luxembourg, Saint-Denis Porte de Paris, Gare de Lyon, Madeleine and Pyramides.

From October 6, discover Vivian Maier's world while you're at a station, between self-portraits, *street photography*, and surprising details captured in the streets of New York or Chicago.



#### **GRANDE HALLE DE LA VILLETTE**

## **NAPOLEON**

#### **Until 19 December**

Admired and controversial in equal measure, Napoleon Bonaparte was a complex figure whose life oscillated between heroism and tragedy, victory and defeat, modern progress and regressive measures. To mark the bicentenary of his death, the Rmn - Grand Palais, La Villette and Re Re / Adonis are organising a stunning exhibition, offering an accurate portrait of a fascinating man who shaped modern-day France. Over 150 original pieces, brought together for the first time, follow on from one another in this chronological and educational exhibition. Giant reconstructions and a host of digital devices immerse visitors in these decisive moments for the history of France.



## **GRAND PALAIS ÉPHÉMÈRE**

## **ANSELM KIEFER**

#### FOR PAUL CELAN

#### From 16 December 2021 to 11 January 2022

Fifteen years after having inaugurated the Monumenta series in the Grand Palais, Anselm Kiefer is the first artist to occupy the space in the Grand Palais Éphémère. Kiefer continues his work on the cultural and political memory of Europe through his most recent paintings, conversing with the unappeased poetry of Paul Celan, whose work has long featured in considerations. Kiefer and Celan are fascinated by German history and its contradictions, both exploring the way in which artistic disciplines have captured conflicts in history.





## **ART HAS SURPRISES FOR YOU**

The Sésame pass is changing and opening new doors for you!



Enjoy unlimited priority admission to the Vivian Maier and Pionnières exhibitions for one year, as well as Napoléon and Jean Tinguely at La Villette and Anselm Kiefer at the Grand Palais Ephémère. Enjoy visiting the exhibitions and collections of 15 national museums throughout France.

Get onboard for a year full of surprises with the Sésame **Escales exhibition pass!** Young person €25 / Solo €60 / Duo €80 More info at grandpalais.fr/pass-sesame-escales

#### PLAN YOUR VISIT AT MUSEEDULUXEMBOURG.FR:

Enhance your visit thanks to the online texts, videos and various resources on the Museum's website.

Share your visit!





