

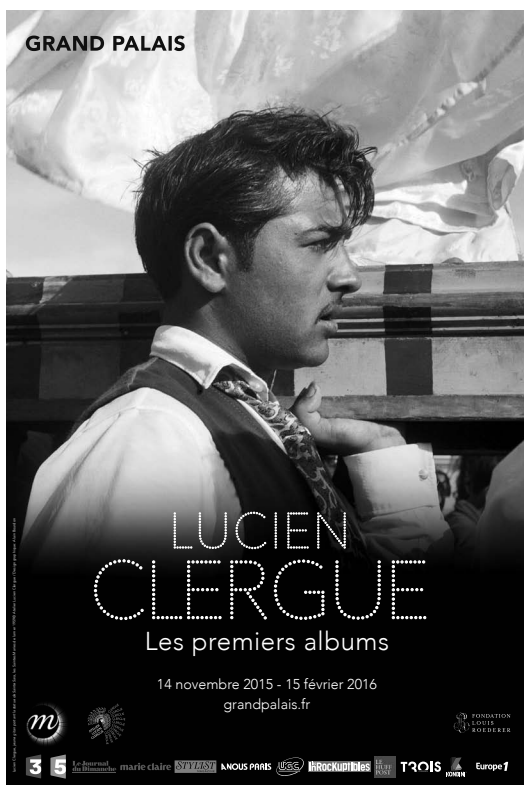


Grand Palais, Galeries nationales  
Entrance H

# LUCIEN CLERGUE

## The first albums

14 November 2015 - 15 February 2016



**#lucienclergue**

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audio-guides, etc.



## Lucien Clergue, the first albums

In 1953, Lucien Clergue (1934-2014) was not yet twenty when, after leaving a bullfight in Arles, he presented his first photos to Pablo Picasso. This was the start of a friendship that lasted twenty years. Thanks to the photographer's albums, discovered after he died, we can understand the brilliance and dark poetry that so impressed Picasso and later Jean Cocteau. The seven catalogues were originally advertising materials containing samples of fabrics but Lucien Clergue had replaced these with contact sheets presenting his most radical themes: rotting carcasses, ruins, saltimbanques, melancholic Pierrots, his series on bulls depicting bullfights in an original way and his first nudes. Brought up by his mother, who encouraged him to become a violinist, Lucien Clergue was ten when the August 1944 bombings destroyed their house. His mother became ill and died soon afterwards. From the outset, his photography was conceptual and very different from the French humanist photography of the time. The difficult teenage years and omnipresence of death show through in his first studies. Later on, to keep hold of his friends who thought he was too dramatic, he shyly started to do nudes. The joy and vitality of women's bodies surging out of the water on the beaches of Camargue had never been conveyed in photography before. There are no faces - instead we see well-rounded figures that are sensuous and free. These photos, prefiguring the sexual revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, made him very famous. People soon started to collect his photos and he was one of rare French artists to have his works exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1961. When he returned, he was convinced that a photograph collection should be set up. In 1965, he and his childhood friend, Jean-Maurice Rouquette, an Arles heritage conservator, wrote to forty photographers who gave them their prints. The basis of the first French collection of contemporary photographs was installed at the Réattu Museum in Arles. In 1969, in partnership with Goncourt award winner, Michel Tournier, the same two friends created *Rencontres Internationales de la Photographie*. Then in 1982, with the help of Maryse and Antoine Cordesse, the École Nationale Supérieure de la Photographie was created in Arles and inaugurated by the President of the Republic François Mitterrand. Lucien Clergue's insatiable thirst for culture and his desire to meet artists pushed him to the forefront. In the 1950s, he discovered the Gypsy guitarist Manitas de Plata. In 1979, he defended a thesis before Roland Barthes by solely submitting photos. In *Langage des Sables* the jury acknowledged an assembly which made as much sense as words. This exhibition tells us as much about Lucien as it does about Clergue through a new ordering of his works, from the first albums to the *Langage des Sables*. The fact that he was good at telling stories contributed to his success and a recording of his voice, made a few months before his death, accompanies visitors. The Grand Palais gives a rightful place to this world-famous artist and first photographer to be elected as a member of the Académie des Beaux-Arts in 2006.

## Arles after the bombs

On 15 August 1944, the allied Air Force destroyed bridges across the Rhône and part of the surrounding districts. Lucien Clergue had turned ten on 14 August, the day before. Photos taken at almost one second intervals by the US Air Force showing the impact of the bombs have a disturbing accuracy and a certain magnetism. At the end of the Second World War, Arles was a small town in ruins. Although it was multicultural, the communities did not mix. There were old local families, Gypsies, (most of whom had been grouped together at the Saliers internment camp in Camargue from 1942 to 1944), Spanish refugees fleeing the Civil War, Italian and Greek immigrants who had come to work in the saltworks and Vietnamese people working in rice growing. Young people were filled with a very provincial feeling of isolation and when the "artistic", cultivated and very wealthy Britons and Americans returned to the Riviera in the 1950s, it was considered a renaissance. The prestigious image of bullrings returned, as did the great bullfighters (Ordóñez and Domínguez, married to Lucia Bosè) and the famous aficionados. The town was reborn and Lucien Clergue was "born" to himself. Although artists had regularly photographed Arles since the nineteenth century, photography was absent from Arles, except at the Museon Arlaten, founded by Frédéric Mistral, and to which Arles photographer Dominique Roman (Arles, 1824-1911), who had been inspired by Édouard Baldus, bequeathed about fifty photos between 1898 and 1905. A gallery in the museum was dedicated to them and Lucien Clergue often came to examine these mineral images sculpted in black and white.

## The albums

Brilliance. This is what is revealed in the seven albums of contact sheets, that were forgotten and then rediscovered in Lucien Clergue's studio after his death. Lucien Clergue's soul was tormented by his painful youth but he had the self-assurance that his mother, who believed he would become an artist, had instilled in him and he soon found a way to express his melancholy through photography which he had just started to practice. He recovered fabric catalogues from his family's shop or from a nearby supplier, tore out the fabric samples and replaced them with his contact sheets. As the albums were the manufacturers' seasonal collections, they were dated and this makes them historical documents. The albums are like tools that allow the best images to be found (the large negatives enable great legibility) and they show, page after page, image after image, the progress in Lucien Clergue's work, his hesitations, intuitions, certainties, and how he advances towards what would be the quintessence of his work. Today, photographers no longer use this technique because digital photography has done away with paper contact sheets. Utmost care is taken by traditional film enthusiasts when they handle recent and old contact sheets, with their annotations, and soft pencil selection marks.

The series of albums stops in 1956. Indeed, Lucien Clergue gradually abandoned this method as he took full control of his profession, aware of the direction he wanted to take in his work and his place among photographers. These albums, covering a short period of time and showing the main themes of his work at a very early stage, together with the great intuition he showed right from start of his career, are quite naturally the guiding principle behind the first major exhibition of his work, one year after his death.

### **Ruins, cemeteries, saltimbanques, rotting carcasses**

Lucien Clergue's mother, who brought him up on her own, dreamt of him becoming an artist. When she became ill, the young Lucien Clergue looked after her every day but she soon died. When we realise the difficulties he experienced in his youth, we understand the dark images portrayed in his first photographs. He regularly showed the progress of his work to his friends Jean-Marie Magnan and Jean-Maurice Rouquette. These were the photos he showed Pablo Picasso after a bullfight and that impressed the artist. Feeling encouraged, he quickly followed on with a series of Pierrots and harlequins - over a period of several afternoons, he disguised children and asked them to pose in the ruins of the bombarded town, directing them in such a way as to create melancholic scenes. Lucien Clergue said that the little boy holding the violin was a representation of himself.

### **Picasso, Cocteau, Saint-John Perse**

Lucien Clergue's photography was intuitive right from the start and when he was hardly twenty, he was encouraged by the opinions and decisive support of the masters of his choice - just after a bullfight, he went to show his work to Pablo Picasso who considered it favourably and advised him to meet Jean Cocteau. After this encounter in 1956, he developed an ongoing relationship with these two men who he met regularly in Arles, Paris, Mougins and Cannes and to whom he introduced Manitas de Plata. Picasso designed the covers of his first books and Jean Cocteau advised him on the titles of his works and wrote the texts that accompanied his photos. Cocteau asked Lucien Clergue to take part in the filming of *Testament d'Orphée* in the quarries of Baux-de-Provence. Jean-Maurice Rouquette told Lucien Clergue that the poem *Amers* (1957) written by Saint-John Perse reminded him of his photographs. Soon afterwards, a combination of circumstances led to the photographer meeting the poet-diplomat with whom he made friends and for whom he illustrated a reissue of the famous poem.

### **Gypsies**

There is a large community of Gypsies in Arles and many of them have settled there. Every year, in May, they are joined by nomadic peoples from all over Europe who are on a pilgrimage to the town of Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer to worship their patron Saint Sara. For a long time, this community lived in a closed circle, preserving its traditions and rituals and it had a festive spirit that did not fail to attract Lucien Clergue. He made a fine collection of photographs recording their everyday lives, their festivities and fairground activities which contrasted with the more poetic studies he placed at the centre of his work. Through his association with the Gypsy community, he met Manitas de Plata and his friend José Reyes, also a musician, who he helped gain world renown as he did later with the Gipsy Kings, in which José Reyes' son played. Before becoming famous themselves, the Gipsy Kings used to play regularly to the guests that Lucien Clergue invited to the Rencontres Internationales de la Photographie.

### **Toros**

Being born in Arles, especially at that time, meant being born into the world of "afición", tauromachy, "toros". Throughout his life, Lucien Clergue photographed bullfights from the callejón in Arles, Nîmes, Béziers, Seville and Madrid. One of his very first works brought him distinction - a bull in agony photographed at ground level under the fence. In the photo, he is showing that after the fight the animal remains the king of the arena and should be celebrated just like the bullfighter. He based his first film on this theme *Le Drame du Taureau* (1965, Louis Lumière Award 1966), which was selected for the 1968 Cannes Film Festival. Unfortunately, the festival was interrupted by student demonstrations before the winners were announced.

### **The first nudes**

The medium close-shots, taken on the beaches and in the waves of Camargue, show the bodies of well-rounded women surging out of the waves with infinite joy and vitality. Such freshness had never been portrayed in photographs of nude women before. By keeping the faces out of the picture, Lucien Clergue gives a universal dimension to these bodies.

Scarcely one year after its invention, the art of photography sought recognition and for many this involved adopting the style used in drawings and female nudes were still often rather academic. Lucien Clergue's nudes clearly broke away from the prevailing style. These nudes were an instant success, partly due to the books of poems by Paul Éluard and Saint-John Perse that he illustrated and partly due to the mid-twentieth century sexual liberation. The *Née de la Vague* series gained notoriety even outside the world of photography and became both famous and popular.

## Kinetic panorama

On the occasion of the Grand Palais exhibition, it seemed interesting to show a large selection of pictures created by Lucien Clergue in the 1960s and early 1970s. The current trend was kinetics and psychedelic art. Lucien Clergue continued to explore Provence and the Camargue but he chose more radical lighting. These graphic, abstract images with strong back-lighting, reflections, and the contrasting prints have a new energy and a powerful intensity that seem worlds away from the young melancholic Clergue. Lucien Clergue decided to make large prints for this series (most of them are 40x60 cm) and we have a large number of originals. One hundred and ninety eight of them are exhibited here. This series represents an important stage in Lucien Clergue's work and it has not been exhibited very much recently so it now deserves to be shown.

## Langage des Sables

After the discussions he had with American photographers and his discovery of workshops (training courses) in the United States, and which he set up in Arles, Lucien Clergue felt the need to obtain a university qualification to validate his creative intuition. He had been obliged to work at a very young age to provide for his family and pay his mother's debts, so he had left school before he was able to obtain any diplomas. He returned to the beaches of Camargue where he made his first studies and presented a doctorate in photography entitled *Langage des Sables* which he defended before Roland Barthes, among others, in 1979. Based on abstract ephemeral shapes and drawings left on the sand, the structure of this exclusively graphical work impressed the academics so much that they validated the doctorate despite the absence of any theoretical text.

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## TIMELINE

- 1934** – Born on 14 August in Arles, Bouches-du-Rhône, to parents who were shopkeepers. Starts to learn the violin at the age of seven.
- 1944** – Deeply affected by the war during which his house was destroyed.
- 1949** – His mother gives him his first camera.
- 1952** – Death of his mother. Leaves secondary school to work at the stores of Lion d'Arles, that he called the "factory".
- 1953** – Meets Picasso in Arles. Travels to Spain. His first photographs were published in *Le Provençal*, a daily newspaper.
- 1954** – His passion for theatre, discovered in Avignon via Jean Vilar, leads him to photograph actors in *Julius Caesar* by Shakespeare, staged by Jean Renoir at the arena in Arles. Starts *Les Saltimbanques*, a series photographed over eight months in the ruins of Arles.
- 1955** – Visits Picasso at his studio in Cannes. Starts series on rotting carcasses. Discovers guitarist Manitas de Plata in Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer.
- 1956** – Meets Jean Cocteau. First nudes on the beaches of Camargue.
- 1957** – Cocteau introduces him to Max Ernst who becomes the first to collect his works when he buys the series called *Dead pink flamingos in sand*.
- 1959** – Leaves "the factory" on 31 December to become a freelance photographer. At Cocteau's invitation, he photographs the shooting of the film *Le Testament d'Orphée*. Creates sets for *Le Jour où la Terre Tremblera* for Ballets Modernes de Paris.
- 1960** – Edward Steichen buys nine prints for the Museum of Modern Art New York (MoMA).
- 1961** – First trip to New York at the invitation of Edward Steichen. "Diogenes With a Camera V" exhibition at the MoMA. Meets Marcel Breuer, who gives him his Rolleiflex, Alexey Brodovitch, W. Eugene Smith, Robert Frank and Grace Mayer.
- 1962** – Oscar Niemeyer invites him to Brasilia. Jean-Marie Drot produces *Journal de Voyage en Pays d'Arles* for the television.
- 1963** – Marries Yolande Wartel. Birth of their daughter, Anne. Travels to India where he photographs the town of Chandigarh designed by Le Corbusier.
- 1965** – Takes photographs in the marshes of Camargue. Meets the poet Saint-John Perse. Becomes creative consultant in the photography department of the Réattu Museum, Arles.
- 1966** – Wins the Louis Lumière Prize for *Le Drame du Taureau*, a short black and white film. Michel Tournier produces two programmes on his work for French television. Birth of Olivia whose godfather would be Picasso.
- 1968** – Directs the film *Picasso, War, Love and Peace* for the series Museum Without Walls, produced by Universal Pictures. His film *Delta de Sel* (1967) is shown at the Cannes Film Festival and is nominated for an Oscar.
- 1969** – Picasso invites him to film his sculpture studio. He stays with him in Mougins for several days. Becomes Art Director at the Arles Festival where he co-founds the Rencontres Internationales de la Photographie with Jean-Maurice Rouquette and Michel Tournier.
- 1970** – First nudes in the woods. First public events of Rencontres Internationales de la Photographie.
- 1971** – Completes his tour of the world in 55 days. Meets Ansel Adams in Carmel, California, where he photographs the Point Lobos Natural Reserve.
- 1972** – Creates the sets for the ballet *Orlando Furioso* staged at La Fenice Theatre in Venice.
- 1973** – He is very much affected by Pablo Picasso's death.
- 1974** – Invites Ansel Adams to Rencontres Internationales de la Photographie d'Arles and takes part in a workshop in the United States as Ansel Adams' guest. Elected a member of the Academy in Arles, becomes a teacher at the University of Provence in Marseilles, and a lecturer in Scandinavia. Travels to Leningrad where he meets Aleksandras Macijauskas and to Warsaw and Prague where he meets Josef Sudek and Jan Saudek.
- 1975** – First nudes in cities of Paris and New York; starts to take an interest in colour photography. The series *Langage des Sables* is acquired by the Centre National d'Art Contemporain (CNAC) for the collections of the future Centre Pompidou, Paris.
- 1976** – Stops working as Director of the Arles Festival to concentrate on developing Rencontres Internationales de la Photographie for which he becomes Artistic Director.
- 1977** – Death of his father.
- 1978** – Invited to teach in the Federal Republic of Germany.

- 1979** – Presents his doctorate in photography, *Langage des Sables*, at the University of Provence, Marseille. The doctorate, exclusively made up of pictures, with no text or words, is presented to a jury in which Roland Barthes sits.
- 1980** – First nudes in the American desert. Presented with the "Chevalier de l'Ordre National du Mérite".
- 1981** – First pictures with a Polaroid camera. Lectures at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, for the centenary of the birth of Picasso.
- 1982** – The Ecole Nationale Supérieure de la Photographie (ENSP) opens in Arles where he teaches until 1999.
- 1983** – Invited to the Unterlinden Museum in Colmar to produce a variation on the Grünewald Altarpiece. Artistic Director of Rencontres Internationales de la Photographie. Invited to teach at the last workshop supervised by Ansel Adams in Carmel, California.
- 1985** – Artistic Director of the Arles Dance Festival.
- 1986** – Invited to Photokina Fair in Cologne. Photographer of the Year, Higashikawa, Japan.
- 1987** – Works with painters Paul Jenkins and Karel Appel on their ballets presented at the Salle Favart in Paris.
- 1989** – Guest of Honour at the twentieth Rencontres Internationales de la Photographie d'Arles.
- 1990** – Travels to Lithuania where he meets photographer colleagues from Vilnius and Kaunas. First colour overprints of bullfights and nudes (Florida). He is the first foreign teacher invited to teach at Osaka University, Japan.
- 1991** – Starts work on the *Venus of Arles* at the Louvre. For the twenty-second Rencontres Internationales de la Photographie d'Arles, he puts together an exhibition devoted to Tina Modotti and Edward Weston.
- 1992** – His work is included in the French National Fund for Contemporary Art collections (FNAC), Paris.
- 1993** – With pianist Stéphane Kochoyan, he produces an audiovisual show, *Jazz y Toros*, created at the Nîmes Opera House and put on again at the Amphitheatre in Arles for the twenty-fourth Rencontres Internationales de la Photographie, as well as in Bayonne and Béziers (with jazz trio Kochoyan / Humair / Labarrière).
- 1994** – Artistic Director of the twenty-fifth Rencontres Internationales de la Photographie d'Arles. The Maison Européenne de la Photographie (MEP) in Paris acquired his works for their collection.
- 1995** – The Basel collector Charlotte Reber donates 450 of Lucien Clergue's photos to the University of Harvard, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- 1996** – Lecture at the University of Harvard, Cambridge, Massachusetts, for the reception of Reber's donation. Prize-winner at the World Press Photo Contest, Amsterdam.
- 1998** – The collector Marina Staehelin gives all the photos she and her husband had collected over a period of thirty-five years to several Swiss museums.
- 1999** – A Guest at the thirtieth Rencontres Internationales de la Photographie d'Arles.
- 2000** – "A Life in Photography" award in Benevento, Italy.
- 2001** – Fidel Castro's government bans him from Cuba. The motive given: "Photographer of Nudes."
- 2002** – Guest of honour at the fiftieth anniversary of the FERIA de Nîmes at the Fine Arts Museum.
- 2003** – Guest of honour at the international symposium "Success and Failure in Creative Leadership" organised by Creando in Interlaken, Switzerland. Presented with the "Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur".
- 2005** – Lucie Award, Outstanding Life in Fine Arts Photography, New York.
- 2006** – First photographer to be elected a member of the Institut de France's Académie des Beaux-Arts, Paris. Opens the eighth section devoted to photography.
- 2007** – Induction under the Dome of the Institut de France on 10 October. Christian Lacroix created his costume and his academican's sword.
- 2008** – The Association Lucien Clergue en Pays d'Arles is set up. Appointed "Commandeur des Arts et des Lettres".
- 2011** – Guest of honour at the Nordic Light International Festival of Photography, Kristiansund, Norway.
- 2013** – Appointed President of the Académie des Beaux-Arts.
- 2014** – Dies on 15 November in Nîmes.
- 2015** – The forty-sixth Rencontres Internationales de la Photographie d'Arles are dedicated to Lucien Clergues. The City of Nîmes pays tribute by choosing an overprint for the poster of the 2015 FERIA de Nîmes. *Nuit de la Photographie*, "Musical Calligraphy - homage to Lucien Clergue", La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland. Posthumous award from the Manuel Rivera-Ortiz Foundation, Arles.

## Exhibition opening times (14 November 2015 - 15 February 2016)

Open every day, except Tuesdays, from 10 am to 8 pm.

Late-night opening on Wednesdays until 10 pm.

Closed on Tuesdays.

Early closure at 6 pm on 24 and 31 December. Closed on Friday 25 December 2015

This exhibition is organised by the Réunion des musées nationaux - Grand Palais in partnership with the Atelier Lucien Clergue.



**Curator and Artistic Director:** François Hébel and Christian Lacroix

Patron of the exhibition:

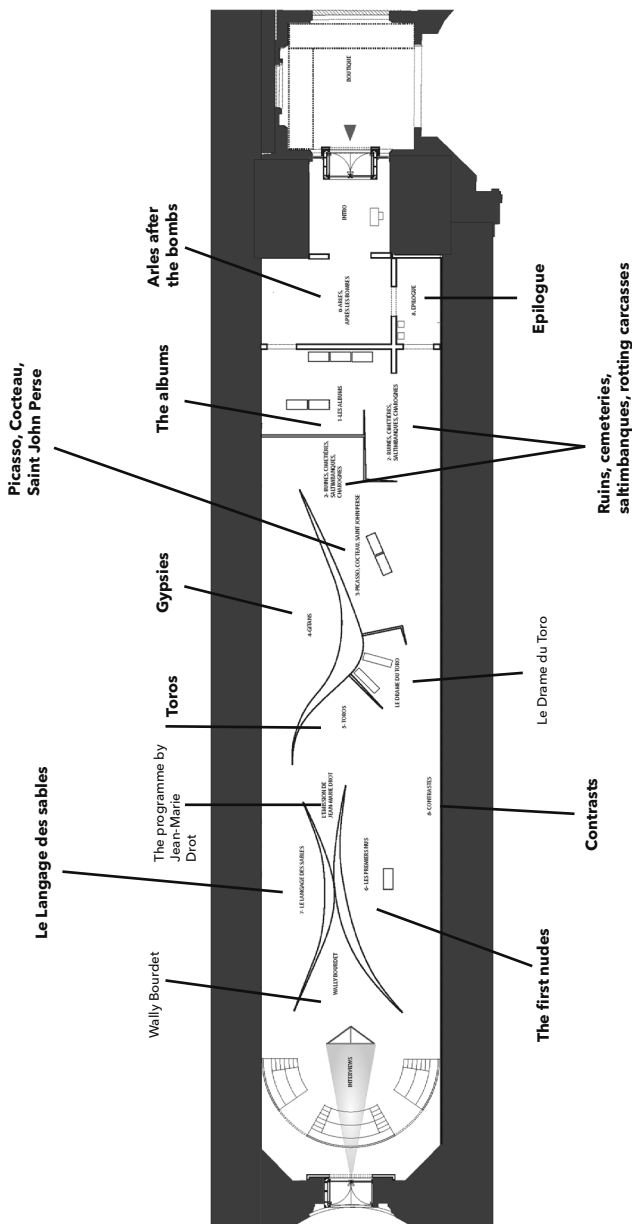


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# EXHIBITION MAP



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# AROUND THE EXHIBITION

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## EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

**AUDIO-GUIDES (to hire): French, English, Spanish €5**

### ADULT TOURS

#### Guided tour

Founder of the Rencontres d'Arles festival which has become an international reference in photography, the first photographer to be elected a member of the Académie des Beaux-Arts, a friend of Picasso, Cocteau and the great Gypsy guitarist Manitas de Plata, Lucien Clergue holds the spotlight in this very rich exhibition. Accompanied by a tour guide, discover all the facets of his talent.

Duration: 1 hour 30 minutes/Price €19 - Concessions €14 - Tribu ticket offer €52 (for a group of 4 paying visitors, including 2 young people aged 16 to 25).

Dates: Outside school holidays: Wednesday at 2.30 pm and 7.30 pm, Saturday at 11 am and 4 pm

School holidays: Wednesday at 2.30 pm and 7.30 pm, Saturday at 11 am, 2 pm and 4 pm

### TOURS FOR FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

**Introductory tour of the exhibition.** Special offer for new visitors!

Learn about the intensity of life at the Grand Palais with a tour guide and explore the graphic creations of Lucien Clergue.

The tour is followed by free time to explore on your own.

Duration: 1 hour/Price €10. Free for under-16s, up to 3 children per adult (booking required).

Dates: Saturday 16 January at 2 pm

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## CULTURAL PROGRAMME

Admission to the auditorium is free with an invitation, which can be downloaded from [grandpalais.fr](http://grandpalais.fr).

### WEDNESDAY MEETINGS, 6.30 pm

**Chair: Natacha Wolinski, art critic and writer**

**Wednesday 18 November** *Lucien Clergue and photography*

With François Hébel and Christian Lacroix, co-curators of the *Lucien Clergue* exhibition.

**Wednesday 25 November** *The Rencontres d'Arles, an adventure in photography*

With Maryse Cordesse, President of Rencontres d'Arles from 1977 to 1983, and François Hébel, co-curator of the exhibition.

### FRIDAY FILM SCREENINGS, 2 pm

**Friday 20 November.** *Lucien Clergue, à la mort, à la vie* by Elisabeth Aubert Schlumberger, 2009, 52'

**Friday 27 November.** *Clic Clac, Clergue, portrait of photographer Lucien Clergue* by Bernard Gille, 2009, 52'

**Friday 11 December** *Le Testament d'Orphée* by Jean Cocteau, 1960, with Cocteau, Jean Marais and Maria Casarès, 80'

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## MULTIMEDIA

**THE EXHIBITION APP** Detailed information, programme, audio-guides, etc.

Downloadable audio-guides: French, English and Spanish - €2.99

**THE EXHIBITION E-CATALOGUE.** For iPads. €6.99

### THE EXHIBITION FILM

**Clic Clac Clergue.** A film by Bernard Gille, 52 min.

Broadcast on France 5. Joint production © 2008 Paris-Barcelone Films in partnership with France 5 and the Centre National de la Cinématographie. DVD © 2015 Rmn-Grand Palais, €19.90

### EXHIBITION VISITORS BOOK

Leave your reviews in one of the digital visitors books, at the exhibition exit, and and share them on the social networks!

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## PUBLICATIONS

**EXHIBITION CATALOGUE,** Publications from Réunion des musées nationaux - Grand Palais, €35

# THIS SEASON AT THE GRAND PALAIS

## ÉLISABETH LOUISE VIGÉE LE BRUN

23 September 2015 - 11 January 2016

Élisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun was one of the finest portraitists of her time, an equal to Quentin de La Tour or Jean-Baptiste Greuze. From a middle class background, she would find her place at court amongst the great and mighty of the land and, more especially, with the king and his family. This led her to become the official court painter of Marie-Antoinette. The exhibition, the first French retrospective of this artist, presents nearly 130 of her paintings, offering a comprehensive overview of a major pictorial work and a large part of the history of Europe.

## PICASSO.MANIA

07 October 2015 - 29 February 2016

One hundred masterpieces by Picasso, some of which have never been exhibited, juxtaposed with the great masters of contemporary art, David Hockney, Jasper Johns, Roy Lichtenstein, Andy Warhol, Jean-Michel Basquiat, etc. The exhibition is both chronological and thematic, examining the different moments of the critical and artistic reception of Picasso's work and the stages in the mythification associated with his name.

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