

**LES DOUCHES  
LA GALERIE**

PRESS KIT

# SABINE WEISS

## *In the Sunshine of Life*

UNTIL JANUARY 30TH, 2021



© Sabine Weiss / Courtesy Les Douches la Galerie

When I had to choose a title for this exhibition, I wanted to highlight the character of Sabine Weiss. Sunshine, smile, energy, optimism, dedication... there is no lack of qualifiers. Temperament, too! *In the Sunshine of Life* soon became obvious because it summarizes quite well her appetite.

As you will have understood, it is with great tenderness that we present at the gallery a new exhibition of Sabine Weiss, with well-known photographs, and some more unusual ones, and always composition and light as the key words.

Françoise Morin

**Les Douches la Galerie**

5, rue Legouvé 75010 Paris | [lesdoucheslagalerie.com](http://lesdoucheslagalerie.com)

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# Childhood's Art

## PAR MARIE DESPLECHIN

There are objects everywhere in the little studio where she's lived for over seventy years. On the walls there are paintings, reliquaries and an extravagant collection of ex-votos that climbs like a Virginia creeper on the silt of the staircase. Polished stones in front of the fireplace, sulphides on a shelf, a mortar with a hole in the bottom, a mummy mask... 'I hoard stuff', states Sabine Weiss. The large, round stone that seems to have two eyes came back with her from Egypt. She offered it to Hugh, her husband, who asked her everytime she returned from a trip, 'Did you bring a gift for me?' She found the little Quran holder for him in Ramatuelle. She had the letters that were engraved in the silver translated: 'Let joy, happiness and love overtake you'. Each thing here has its story, and each story is precious. Sabine sets the holder back on the tray on the chest of drawers, beneath the staircase. She looks at it and moves it a few millimetres. She squints ever so slightly to check it's in the right place. 'Just yesterday, I was saying to myself, that's enough now! I'm always composing'. It's a habit she's developed over many years since she's become her eye.

She has the same look as she leafs through the proofs for this book. But this time, she hasn't left it up to others to choose the photos. She's taken on the task, reviewing her entire life's work. She stops, giving each image the affectionate attention that she grants to objects. 'Oh,' she says, 'I like that one a lot'. There are many reasons to like a photo: the model, the encounter, the story, the moment, the composition, the light, the miraculous convergence of all these elements. She sums up: 'I like my photos a lot; I'm very sentimental'. Her smile is malicious, and obvious too. Pages are lying about on the low table, displaying the passage of time. Sabine Weiss is ninety-six. She has been taking photographs since she was eleven. She began apprenticing at eighteen. She was a certified photographer at twenty-one. As a professional, she's 'done it all' from babies to the dead, photographs of paintings, perfumes and cognac, the wealthy in their lovely homes, models striking every pose imaginable... She's brought back photo-reports from the United States, Ethiopia, Portugal, Belfort, the USSR, India, Val-de-Marne... She's printed portraits of artists, writers, painters, sculptors, singers, some of whom were her friends. She also photographed Jean Monnet and Dwight D. Eisenhower. She's had prestigious clients, legendary magazines, well-known advertisers, a historic agency, in France and especially the United States. 'I've done everything', she repeats with an artisan's pride, mixed with the quantity, diversity and difficulty of the work she's tackled.

These thousands of commissioned shots warrant being the object of an inventory and an exhibition of their own. But this book presents Sabine Weiss' other world, the world of images freed from constraints, 'photos of one's own', as others have had 'a room of one's own'. The cherished visions captured during her photo-reports and the snapshots taken during walks, without paying much attention, when she would go out in the evening with Hugh, near her studio on the Boulevard Murat by the Saint-Cloud gate. Over the years, they've earned her a fame that runs parallel to and has ended up surpassing and even obscuring her success as an artisan. She greets it with a pleasure tainted with doubt. She's not sure she wants to leave the professional world behind for the world of art. She always remains guarded, 'Not an artist, not that.

Sabine Weiss has never wanted to be admired by the crowds. With a wave of her hand, she dismisses the idea that she could ever have sought such a thing. 'I didn't need it... I had work'. Nevertheless, three of her photos appeared in the MoMA's memorable exhibition from 1955, *The Family of Man*. The curator Edward Steichen, to whom she'd been recommended, at first gently discouraged her. She seemed so young. Thirty years old. Then he took a look at her dossier and changed his tune. So Sabine Weiss is not an unknown. She's had solo exhibitions, last year in Chicago, Minneapolis, New York, Lincoln. She didn't go to the openings. In fact, she didn't even see any of them. 'No time... I had so much work!' For her to finally contemplate her photographs on the wall, a group of friends, led by Hugh, had to organise a hanging in Arras, at the Centre Culturel Noroit, for and in spite of her. That was in 1979, when she was fifty-five. And even then... As she was getting ready to hand over her boxes of photos for the organisers to work through, Robert Doisneau admonished her: She absolutely must choose the images herself. She complied and made the selection from her collections from the 50s and 60s. The reward was immediate: enlarged, framed, hung, the photographs appeared to her 'as they should'. Doisneau, she states, helped her to see herself. To such an extent that she again adopted the practice that she'd given up for a good ten years, of refusing commercial offers, and set off cruising again. If she had to do it again, as she's often confided, she would give up commissioned work. No fashion, no advertising. Photo-reports, strolls, encounters, that's what she

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would do, exclusively. A life entirely devoted to the pleasure of seeing. 'I delight in being obliged to look', she says. A life of delight.

A fantasy. For how else can we free Sabine Weiss' non-commissioned work from her life in constraints? How can we understand the singularity of her photographs, their integrity, their slightly rough quickness? Weiss pauses over one of them: 'I like this one a lot. It's very bad technically, but this gentleman leaning over to buy a sprig of lily of the valley for his kids...' It is said that in order to free oneself so happily from technique, one really has to have mastered it. Sabine Weiss has practiced so much that she can see without seeing (everything). Her compositions defy clarity and blurriness, details, people crossing a field. 'You can't predict anything. You do what you can. We're dependent upon chance. I like that'.

Because it is free of ambition, Sabine Weiss' work escapes both manufacturing and anecdote. Its coherence is not to be found in a project, but in a placement. It resembles its creator, whatever her reservations about considering herself an artist. It might be that the word 'artist' lacks something that would do justice to the industrious quality of photography, which after all cannot trade in whimsy since it is first and foremost an art based in technology and chemistry, an art of making. (...)

Sabine Weiss has photographed many children. Professionally, she's been asked to do so a lot, perhaps also because she's a woman. But there's something else. Everywhere she's gone, from India to Saint-Cloud, she's brought back portraits of children. Her photos are not particularly 'cute', nor even evocative. The children are represented raw, as full-fledged people, captured in their social, cultural, family truth. Funny or heart-rending, they exist as actors in the world. She remarks that, 'I'm not too far from all that', and it's probably to the persistent vigour of her own childhood that she owes the integrity of her gaze. She knows like no one else how to photograph children because she is their equal.

Sabine Weiss does not recall ever being impressed by her models, even the most illustrious ('Marshall Juin was very nice'). Yet she says, 'Children don't make you scared; they're not going to smash your face'. Looking at her photos, she observes that 'Many children, many elderly people, maybe they do more interesting things than adults'. Vagrants too, bums, gypsies, 'simple' people. 'Working-class areas move me. They're not pretentious. I don't manipulate them'. She, who's photographed so many of the world's happy people for magazines, seems to find a form of peace and tenderness on the margins of triumphal, adult society. That's where she pauses, moved by a gesture, an attitude. She chooses 'people on the outside', 'people on their own'. 'You know', she adds, looking at her work, 'it's never very cheerful'.

For all that, indifferent to the maelstroms of her century, Weiss has never 'meddled with politics'. Is Switzerland to blame? 'We never talked much about politics back home; we lived quite calmly'. In the long interview she granted Amaury Chardeau for France Culture, she settled the question: 'I'm not militant. I'm not a feminist. I don't even have the words for that sort of thing. I'm very committed to my own life, in my photography. In the end, I'm a very self-centered person'. She also says, 'I'm not fervent', which describes her perfectly.

As she'd have it in fact, it was simply a coincidence of timing that placed her in the school of humanist photography along with her friend Robert Doisneau and all the others such as Willy Ronis, Brassai, Henri Cartier-Bresson, and so on. She met others, without ever connecting with them. She doesn't need a group, and in any case, she has Hugh. She doesn't think they've had any influence on her work. The only person who did was much earlier than them: August Sander, the great German portraitist from the beginning of the last century. She definitely admires him. 'Very simple. Very head-on. That definitely interested me'. She herself has no hesitation in recognizing the documentary aspect of her work; she likes to 'bear witness'. And she steers clear of anecdotes like the plague. Very Sander. (...)

Sabine, who so heartily exists, says of her subjects, 'Photographing a person means making them exist'. Less in the image itself than in the moment of sharing, when one offers her eyes and the other his gaze. Again and again, showing another photo, Sabine Weiss narrates a similar situation:

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'And her, she was so happy, she needed someone'. There is no hint of arrogance in this universal sympathy established as a method of approach. More like an inexhaustible jubilation, born from a shared vitality. Something like a joyous redemption, a double redemption, on both sides of the lens. 'Maybe I'm kind deep down', Weiss quips, with a naughty smile. 'Maybe'.

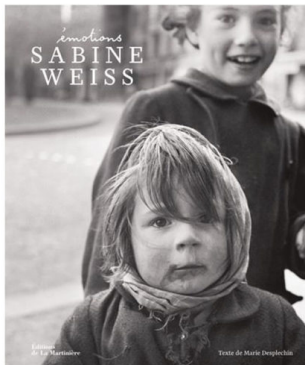
'Oh really? You've heard of me?' Sabine asks, doubtfully. 'I'm not that well known after all...' When I object, she seems stunned. Then she closes the chapter murmuring, 'Very well, very well. That's great...' She organises the proofs of the forthcoming book on the table in front of her. 'These are Sabine Weiss' choices. I included the photos that I like. I tried not to select well-known things'. She corrects herself: 'Yes, all the same... I tried not to disappoint'.

**Marie Desplechin**

Excerpts from *Émotions*, published by Éditions de la Martinière, 2020

## Émotions

### PUBLICATION



Éditions de La Martinière, 2020

Text by Marie Desplechin

Hardcover

256 pages

24 x 28,5 cm

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# *In the Sunshine of Life*

## **IMAGES**

### **Sabine Weiss**

*La première cigarette, Paris, 1957*

Gelatin silver print, printed later

Print size: 16 x 12 inches

Signed by the artist on verso

© Sabine Weiss / Courtesy Les Douches la Galerie

N° Inv. SW2010011



### **Sabine Weiss**

*Madrid, 1950*

Gelatin silver print, printed later

Print size: 16 x 12 inches

Signed by the artist on verso

© Sabine Weiss / Courtesy Les Douches la Galerie

N° Inv. SW2010009



### **Sabine Weiss**

*Valence, 1954*

Gelatin silver print, printed later

Print size: 16 x 12 inches

Signed by the artist on verso

© Sabine Weiss / Courtesy Les Douches la Galerie

N° Inv. SW2010008



# *In the Sunshine of Life*

## IMAGES

### **Sabine Weiss**

*New York, 1955*

Gelatin silver print, printed later

Print size: 12 x 16 inches

Signed by the artist on verso

© Sabine Weiss / Courtesy Les Douches la Galerie

N° Inv. SW191001



### **Sabine Weiss**

*Courses à Auteuil, Paris, 1952*

Gelatin silver print, printed later

Print size: 12 x 16 inches

Signed by the artist on verso

© Sabine Weiss / Courtesy Les Douches la Galerie

N° Inv. SW1605013



### **Sabine Weiss**

*Les lavandières, Bretagne, 1954*

Gelatin silver print, printed later

Print size: 12 x 16 inches

Signed by the artist on verso

© Sabine Weiss / Courtesy Les Douches la Galerie

N° Inv. SW1605042



# Sabine Weiss

## BIOGRAPHY

Born in Switzerland in 1925.  
Lives and works in Paris, France

1924 Sabine Weiss born Weber, was born the 23rd July in Saint-Gingolph, Switzerland  
1936 When she was twelve she bought her first camera with the savings of her pocket money

1942 Starts studying photography at the renamed Atelier Boissonnas in Geneva

1945 She graduated and opens her own studio at Geneva

1946 Moves to Paris and becomes assistant of fashion photographer Willy Maywald until 1950

1950 She married the American artist Hugh Weiss. Together they were going to be among the friends of Cocteau, Utrillo and Rouault. Also they become close friends with Jacques-Henri Lartigue. She had several commissioned work and photographed many artists, musicians and writers

1952 At Vogue Magazine Robert Doisneau discover her pictures and offers her to join the Agence Rapho where he already works. The same year she signed for a nine years contract with Vogue as a fashion and documentary photographer. Works as a freelance photographer for many American and Europeans magazines such as Match, Life, Time, Newsweek, Town And Country, Fortune, Holiday, European Travel And Life, Esquire,

1954 Exhibitions in USA at the Art Institute of Chicago, Walker Art Center of Minneapolis, Bard College, Limelight Gallery of New York, and at the Nebraska Art Center of Lincoln

1955 Edward Steichen choose three of her pictures for the milestone exhibition of photography « The Family of Man », first presented at the MoMA and the become a traveling exhibition

1961 She starts to survey the world sharing her time between the commissioned work and her personal work

1987 Recognized with the order of Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres

1999 Recognized with the order of Officier des Arts et des Lettres

2010 Recognized with the order of Ordre national du Mérite

## WOMEN IN MOTION 2020 AWARD

In partnership with Les Rencontres d'Arles, the 2020 Kering *Women In Motion* Award for photography has been given to Sabine Weiss.

In March 2019, Kering and Les Rencontres d'Arles announced their partnership agreement and launched the Women In Motion program at Arles. This led to the creation of the Women In Motion Award for photography, to be held every year in recognition of the career of an exceptional woman photographer. The award is accompanied by €25,000 in prize money for the acquisition of works by the winning photographer for the collection of Les Rencontres d'Arles. In 2019, the inaugural Women In Motion Award went to American photographer, Susan Meiselas.

Kering is also collaborating for the first time with the Paris Photo art fair for photography. As a way of furthering its commitment to women photographers, the Group is supporting the Paths Elles X Paris Photo 2020 exhibition organized by France's Ministry of Culture. With the cancellation of the traditional Paris Photo fair at Le Grand Palais, a digital exhibition entitled Paths Elles X Paris Photo has been created at [ellesxparisphoto.com](http://ellesxparisphoto.com). The website includes interviews with around 30 women photographers about their status as female artists, their commitments as activists, and their sources of inspiration.

Sabine Weiss, the winner of the 2020 Women In Motion Award, will also feature on the website.

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# Sabine Weiss

## EXHIBITIONS (SELECTION)

- 2020 *Sabine Weiss, Une vie de photographe / La Bretagne des années 1950*, Le Kiosque, Vannes  
*New York, New York !*, Peter Fetterman Gallery, Santa Monica  
*Vertiges*, Le voleur d'images, Paris
- 2019 *Four vintage photographs by fourteen women photographers*, Keith de Lellis Gallery, New York  
*La Bretagne des années 1950 / Les amoureux*, Baie de Saint-Brieux Photo Festival  
International photo Incadaqués  
*Habiter*, Festival du regard, Cergy Pontoise  
*La vie*, In focus Galerie, Cologne  
Luxembourg Street Photography festival  
*L'atelier d'Alberto Giacometti*, LaM, Villeneuve d'Ascq
- 2018 *Les villes, la rue, l'autre*, Centre Pompidou, Paris  
*Sabine Weiss, Fred Herzog, La ville miroir*, Les Douches la Galerie, Paris  
*Sabine Weiss en trois expositions*, Orléans et Olivet  
*Vers la lumière*, Galerie ARTEF, Zurich  
*Les voyages de Sabine Weiss*, Saint-Gingolph, Suisse
- 2017 *Sabine Weiss: intimate memory*, Stephen Daiter Gallery, Chicago  
*Remembrances of things past*, Holden Luntz Gallery, Palm Beach  
*Vagabondages : Sabine Weiss, Marc Riboud, Edouard Boubat & Jacques Henri Lartiges*, Le Voleur d'images, Paris  
Festival Chroniques Nomades, Auxerre
- 2016 *The Humanist Vision*, Holden Luntz Gallery, Floride  
*Ils jouent... je m'en amuse*, Biennale internationale de l'image, Nancy  
Rétrospective, Jeu de Paume, Château de Tours, Tours  
*Le monde de Sabine Weiss*, Les Douches la Galerie, Paris
- 2015 *Les hommes et leurs croyances*, 12ème festival photographique de Saint Benoit, Vienne  
*En passant*, Mois de la Photo en Nièvre, Palais Ducale, Nevers  
*En passant*, 47ème salon d'Art Photographique à Sarlat  
Médiathèque François Mitterrand, Argentan  
*En passant*, Festival de la photographie à Dax  
*La Nuit des images*, Musée de l'Elysée, Lausanne  
*L'âme révélée*, Festival photographique de Moncoutant  
*New York*, Les Douches la Galerie, Paris  
*Regards de femmes*, Galerie HEGOA, Paris
- 2014 *Chère Sabine*, Salon de la Photo, Paris  
*Portraits d'artistes*, Galerie Patrick Cramer, Genève  
*Photobastei*, Zurich  
*Portugal, 1954*, Festival de la Photo de mer, Vannes  
*L'amour pour la vie*, Espace Citroën Experience Center, Creative Galerie, Sao Paulo  
*L'amour pour la vie*, Centro Cultural Correios, Rio de Janeiro
- 2013 *Des Enfants*, Fondation Carzou, Manosque  
*L'âme révélée*, La Teinturerie, Trans'Arts Photo, Cogolin  
*Sabine Weiss, Photographies*, Médiathèque Valais, Martigny

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# Sabine Weiss

## EXHIBITIONS (SELECTION)

- 2012 *Le Geste*, Galerie Guillaume, Paris  
*Tajiri*, Museum Het Valkhof, Hollande
- 2011 *Toujours en mouvement !*, Galerie Guillaume, Paris  
*Des Enfants*, Galerie Saint Ravy, Montpellier  
*Photographies des années 50*, Musée Aachen, Aix-la-Chapelle  
*Reflets*, Galerie la Nivelle, Saint Jean de Luz
- 2010 *Sabine Weiss*, Berck, France  
*Intimes Convictions*, Joinville, France  
*Rétrospective fond culturel Katherina*, Moscou
- 2009 *Les Enfants*, Musée des Arts, Thonon  
*Intimes Convictions*, Galerie Le Garage, Orléans  
*Photos 1949-2009*, Galerie Quintessence, Utrecht
- 2008 *Un demi-siècle de photographies*, Maison Européenne de la Photographie, Paris  
*L'année 1986 dans le département*, Musée MAC/VAL, Vitry  
*Mode au Printemps années 50*, Espace Van Gogh, Arles  
*Portraits d'artistes*, Galerie Hutter, Bâle
- 2007 *Sabine Weiss*, Heerlern, Espace ABP, Hollande  
L'Inde, Palais de la Culture, Puteaux
- 2006 Musée d'Art Moderne de la ville de Paris  
*Les années 50*, Galerie Caméra Obscura, Paris  
*Portraits d'artistes*, Zamora, Espagne  
*Birmanie*, Galerie Alternance, Arras
- 2005 Galerie Assolibri, Florence, Italie  
*Les Hommes et leurs croyances*, Montauban
- 2004 *Chroniques Nomades*, Rétrospectives, Honfleur
- 2003 *Portraits d'artistes*, Espace 1789, Saint Ouen  
*Des Enfants*, Festival Focal, Coudekerque Branche, France
- 2002 *Les années 50*, Klotz-Simon Gallery, New York  
*Portraits d'artistes*, Galerie Solstices, Lille
- 2001 Rétrospective – Villa Aurélienne, Fréjus, France
- 2000 *Poussettes, charrettes et roulettes*, Maison de la Photographie, Bièvres  
Katomah, New York, USA  
*Portraits d'artistes*, Galerie Lefort Openo, Paris
- 1998 *Les Hommes et leurs croyances*, Maison Descartes, Amsterdam  
*En passant*, Cherbourg, France
- 1997 Kizoku, Tokyo, Japon
- 1996 *Lumière et Tendresse*, Maison Européenne de la photographie, Paris  
*Regard intime*, Montalcino, Italie
- 1995 Île de la Réunion, Nice, France  
*La Bulgarie*, Maison des Photographes, Plovdiv, Bulgarie  
*Les Femmes*, Musée Omar Rayo, Roldanillo, Colombie
- 1994 *La Bulgarie*, Musée Cyrille et Méthode, Sofia, Bulgarie

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# Sabine Weiss

## EXHIBITIONS (SELECTION)

- 1993 Bibliothèque Publique, Port Washington, New York  
*Nous*, Galerie du Centre, Paris  
Howard Greenberg Gallery, New York
- 1992 Festival de l'Image, Le Mans, France
- 1989 Vision Gallery, San Francisco, California  
Fondation Nationale de la Photographie, Lyon
- 1987 Musée d'Art Contemporain, Dunkerque, France  
Musée de l'Elysée, Lausanne, Suisse
- 1985 *Sabine Weiss*, Amsterdam, Pays-Bas  
*Les Enfants*, Galeries Fnac, France et Belgique
- 1984 Festival d'Avoriaz, Avoriaz, France  
Galerie Contretype, Bruxelles, Belgique
- 1982 Catskill Center, New York, USA  
Fondation Nationale de la Photographie, Lyon
- 1981 Musée Nicéphore Niepce, Châlon sur Saône, France  
Musée de la Photographie, Oslo, Norvège
- 1980 Galerie Viviane Esders, Paris, France  
*Les Enfants*, Galeries Fnac, France et Belgique
- 1978 Exposition itinérante organisée par l'ACMAE  
Centre Culturel, Chatillon, France
- 1955 *Family of Man*, MoMa, New York, USA
- 1954 Limelight Gallery, New York, USA  
Nebraska Art Center, Lincoln, USA  
Bard College, New York, USA  
The Walker Art Institute, Minneapolis, USA  
The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, USA

# Sabine Weiss

## PUBLICATIONS

- 2020 *Émotions*, Éditions de La Martinière  
2018 *Sabine Weiss, Les villes, la rue, l'autre*, co-édition Centre Pompidou / Éditions Xavier Barral  
2016 *Sabine Weiss*, co-édition Jeu de Paume / Éditions de La Martinière  
2013 *L'amour pour la vie*, Alliance française de Rio de Janeiro, Brésil  
2011-14 *L'Œil intime*, autoédition  
2009 *Des hommes et leurs croyances*, Xunta de Galica  
2007 *Sabine Weiss, See and Feel*, Éditions APB, Hollande  
2006 *Musiciens des villes et des campagnes*, Éditions Filigranes  
2003 *Sabine Weiss*, Éditions de la Martinière  
2000 *Poussettes, charettes et roulettes*, Musée de Bièvre  
*André Breton*, Éditions Fata Morgana  
1997 *Des enfants*, Éditions Hazan  
1996 *La Bulgarie*, Éditions Fata Morgana  
1995 *La Réunion*, Éditions de la galerie Vincent, Saint Pierre  
1992 *Haddad*, Éditions Cercle d'Art  
*Vu à Pontoise*, édition municipale  
1989 *Intimes convictions*, Éditions Contrejour, France  
1982 *Marché et foires de Paris*, Éditions ACE, France  
1978 *En passant*, Éditions Contrejour, France  
1969 *Une semaine dans la vie de Daniel*, Éditions McMillain, USA  
1962 *J'aime le théâtre*, Éditions Rencontre, Suisse

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