

PRESS KIT 2025
MANUEL BESSE

WHAT THE EYE IGNORES, THE IMAGE UNEARTHES

Photography is a subtle alchemy, a breach in the fabric of time. It sculpts light, shapes it, and subdues it. It does not seek to convince, it imposes. It hunts the ephemeral, captures the elusive, and offers it to eternity. Each shot suspends continuity. In this temporal fissure, light and shadow negotiate their power, transcending appearances, liberating what vibrates under the bark of reality, what pulses behind the obvious. It is an act of authority, a masterful affirmation of existence.

CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY

MANUEL BESSE

**PRESS KIT
2025**



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Manuel Besse - Elements of presentation

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Artistic vision

Manuel Besse explores the flaws of the contemporary world through his multi-faceted photography, often in black and white, resolutely human, at the crossroads of documentary and visual art. His work questions the margins, silences and absences. Each image is a fragment suspended between revelation and mystery. He photographs what the ordinary eye ignores but what reality endures. His approach is part of an aesthetic of tension, in which each shot becomes an act of resistance. In contrast to the illustrative image, his work engages in an archaeology of the sensitive, revealing the buried strata of human experience in a world saturated with surfaces.

Major themes

- Metropolitan invisibility, chaos and marginality
- Urban isolation and social fractures
- Collective memory and intimate resonance
- Ecological crisis, climate upheaval and territorial resilience
- identity, migration, precariousness, housing

Recent awards & distinctions (2023-2025)

- 2025 – All About Photo Awards - Winner among the 25 international photographers of the year
- 2025 – Monochrome Masters Vol. 1 - Photographyze.co : 100 greatest black and white masters
- 2025 – Winner of the Grand Prix Photo of Saint-Tropez, Premium Class - Farewell Rio series
- 2024 – Bronze medal at the ReFocus Awards - Portrait, Favela Rocinha (Rio de Janeiro)
- 2024 – AAP Magazine #41 Black & White, First Prize – John E. Davis (New York)
- 2024 – AAP Magazine #40 Portraits, Second Prize – *Those two blue eyes light your face* (Finland)
- 2023 – Special Mention AAP Magazine #32 – *À l'Origine* (Amazonia - Brésil)

Works available

- Limited edition art prints, signed and numbered
- Certificates of authenticity, premium finishes, custom formats
- Major series: Macadam, Farewell Rio, À l'Origine, Two Blocks to the East, Under Tension
- Prices on request
- Special orders and collaborations on request



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BIOGRAPHY

Manuel Besse is a versatile photographer whose work explores the human, social and aesthetic dimensions of the world. Influenced as a child by photographer **Don McCullin**'s documentary on the Vietnam War, he began his photographic career in the early 1980s, winning the Polaroid First Prize at the **École Nationale Supérieure Louis-Lumière** and taking part in several group exhibitions. He then broadened his skills in photography, videography, fine arts and ethnology by attending the **Académie Charpentier**, the **École du Louvre** and the **Université Paris Cité** under the guidance of **Maurice Bitter**, a leading figure in journalism.

His ongoing exploration took him to Central America, Brazil and the Amazon where, in 1987, **he was the first Frenchman to document the Serra Pelada gold mines**. A freelance photographer for **Cosmo International** and **Sipa Press**, he joined Colombian army missions against drug traffickers in the heart of the tropical jungle. These experiences transformed his perspective and took him across **French Guiana, Argentina, Venezuela** and **Suriname**, where he navigated the Maroni River with the Foreign Legion and crossed little-known territories.

From untamed lands to the great American metropolises, his travels have taken him to the edge of the world and the intimate, capturing the raw beauty and human vulnerability of landscapes in tension. In the 1990s, he travelled to the Dolomites, Canada and the Arctic Circle, consolidating his commitment to environmental preservation and local cultures. He continued his visual research in **Europe, Africa** and **Central Asia**, making these territories a natural extension of his career. **Awarded a prize in 1994 for his documentary 'À quoi ça rime?'**, the photographer continued his artistic odyssey in Labrador, Alaska and the United States, capturing diversity in striking images that reflect his own reading of the world.

He criss-crosses New York, Los Angeles, Detroit, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, tracking the contrasts of a fractured society. In the heart of the urban fabric, loneliness confronts the crowd, and dignity meets resilience. Through his uncluttered, mostly black-and-white photography, Manuel Besse takes an attentive, unpretentious look at contemporary realities, exalting the structure of forms, the richness of singularities and revealing the intimate gravity of reality. He creates universal narratives; silent, essential, inviting contemplation and reflection.

His approach lies at the crossroads of documentary and art, probing the abysses of isolation, the human condition and memory. Among his most emblematic projects, the *Macadam* series examines the social dynamics of large cities, capturing fragments of existence marked by inequality, and **offering these anonymous people a visibility that is both legitimate and salutary, questioning our relationship with others, with public space and with the invisible.**

Based in Saint-Tropez, Manuel Besse is also a scuba diver, a specialization that enables him to capture the fragile beauty of underwater ecosystems with precision. Always in search of an Eden in the Devil's Heaven, he nourishes an unquenchable passion for ethnology, primitive religions and primitive arts. Contemplative, viscerally connected to the living, **he finds in nature an absolute refuge**, a matrix of inexhaustible inspiration. His photography doesn't just capture the moment; it tracks its quintessence. **Each image becomes a visual echo of chaos, crystallized in its raw vertigo, without artifice or concession.** Her work questions our relationship with living things, inviting us to slow down, feel and **see beyond appearances.**

Between 2023 and 2025, **his portraits and compositions, in both black & white and color, were honored by the prestigious AAP Magazine** in the "Black & White" and "Colors" categories. In 2024, he received a **bronze medal at the reFocus Awards** for his Rio de Janeiro - Favela Rocinha series. In 2025, he once again asserts his vision with force, **winning the Grand Prix Photo de Saint-Tropez ("Premium Class") and being listed among the 100 contemporary masters of black & white in Photographyze.co's Monochrome Masters Vol. 1.**

In an age of digital immediacy, **Manuel Besse defends photography rooted in the tangible.** Faced with the dematerialisation of the gaze and visual saturation, he strives to capture the ineffable, imposing on each image a depth and authenticity that the digital flow cannot alter. **Each shot is an act of resistance, an aesthetic and human commitment** that is also embodied in his creative approaches and professional alliances.

Today, **Manuel Besse works alongside galleries, collectors, brands and institutions in their search for powerful works** that will leave a lasting impression. His photographs, available **in limited and certified editions**, find their place in a variety of environments where they embody the encounter between art and human sensitivity. Always on the move, he continues his peregrinations, **driven by a quest for emotion and meaning**, placing his vision at the very heart of contemporary photography.



VISION AND AESTHETICS



The vision

Manuel Besse deploys an intrusive, almost surgical gaze, piercing the surface of the visible to unearth the unseen and the unheard. His photographs don't capture scenes: they dissect silences, extracting whispers from flesh, stone and wind. Each image stands out like an open crack in reality, a motionless vertigo where time wavers and oblivion recedes. His images, of a rare density, do not freeze the moment, they prolong it, make it resonate, opening temporal gaps where absence and memory intrude. Through his works, Manuel Besse questions our relationship with space, silence and oblivion, inviting the viewer into an active, almost meditative contemplation. Rejecting artifice and the spectacular, the photographer favors an organic, direct approach, where each framing becomes an act of revelation. He plays with lines, angles and volumes to create lapidary compositions that force the eye to linger, to look beyond the obvious.

Aesthetics

Manuel Besse's aesthetic is akin to etching on film, a goldsmith's work in which shadow carves light like a sculptor carves marble. His portraits, hollowed out by deep blacks and brilliant whites, recall the roughness of bronze oxidized by time, while his landscapes dissolve into a fluid abstraction akin to pictorial art. He captures the matter of reality in a masterful balance between chaos and order, freezing the moment in an immutable imprint - a quintessence - a memory engraved in the eye.

CRACKS IN THE WORLD ORDER

Manuel Besse explores the image like a territory to be cleared, combining the precision of a cartographer with the intuition of an alchemist. His work does not confine, it reveals. He dissects reality and unearths what escapes the hurried eye, what remains buried beneath the surface. His photographs don't just represent; they question, destabilise, shake up certainties and reconstruct perception with a disturbing clarity.

Each image acts like a meticulous sampling of the material of the visible, revealing fragments where presence and erasure coexist. This process evokes the work of an archaeologist, delicately unearthing what time has buried. But where archaeology seeks to reconstitute, Besse suspends. He freezes the mystery without dissolving it, leaving the image to vibrate with ambiguity and questions. In his work, light operates like a scalpel. It cuts, hollows and slices, revealing volumes and scars beyond the real. His blacks absorb, his whites slice. The moment is illuminated, fleeting and burning. This mastery of contrasts is not a visual effect, but a language in its own right. A narrative where tension and inconstancy meet, and where light and shadow become instruments of incision and unveiling.

The faces Besse captures defy narrative. Suspended between confession and expectation, they speak to the viewer with intensity. Frontality and silence impose themselves as a raw narrative, a mute interpellation that demands a response. These portraits, refusing a linear narrative, open up gaps, spaces where the viewer must project his or her own questions. They recall the evocative power of silent cinema, where immobility and pure expression contain a latent dramatic tension. Each photograph acts as a freeze-frame, a fragment from an invisible sequence whose before and after escape our view. This tense, poignant framing transforms each scene into a refined arena where time seems suspended, oscillating between immobility and revelation.

This manipulation of time gives Besse's works a double reading: they are both tipping points and imminent explosions. They capture the urgency and fragility of the present, while hinting at its uncertain extension. Far from being static, these images vibrate with an organic flow, a latent tension ready to break the balance, not to tell, but to release suspended truths. Between the visible and the invisible, Besse's works distill the moment to extract its essence.

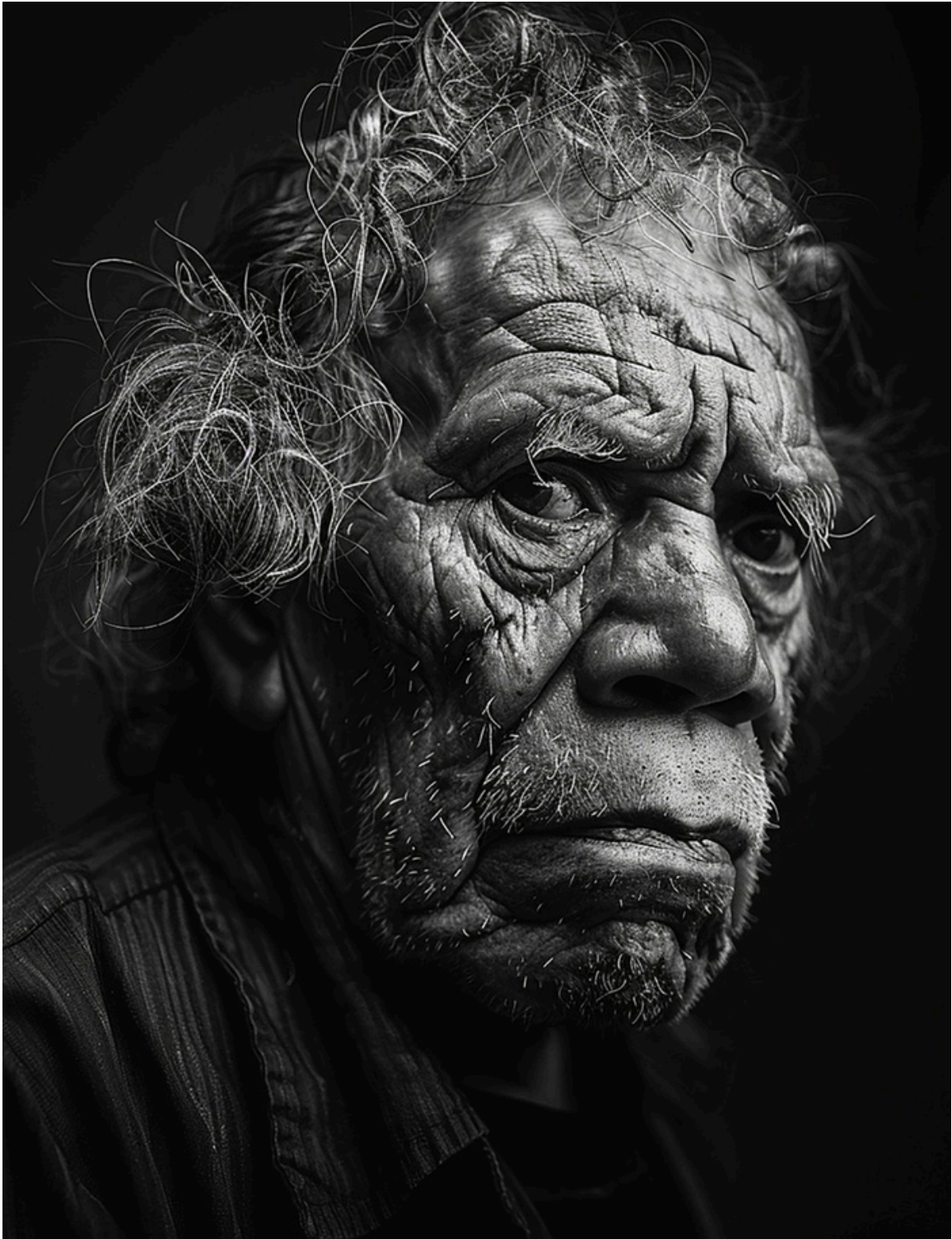
Besse's work is an exploration of expectation. His photographs, like cinematographic montages, create a visceral rhythm from fragments. They fix unfinished gestures, imminent falls, the edge of chaos, and impose a face-to-face confrontation in which ambiguity becomes vertiginous. These works require the viewer to question what they see as much as what they think they are and know.

In this dialogue between revelation and mystery, between surface and depth, Manuel Besse sculpts light and excavates shadow. His photographs, passages between the tangible and the inapparent, invite us to embark on a non-linear journey through the cracks of a fragmented memory, where echo and loss become raw materials. Fragments plucked from silence, carved out of light and shadow; traces that defy time and haunt the eye long after it has turned away.





EMBLEMATIC WORKS



1st Prize 2024 from AAP MAGAZINE, in the 'Black & White' category

John E. Davis – New-York City, 2023



Bronze medal at the reFocus AWARDS 2024 "World Photo Annual"

2nd Prize 2024 - AAP MAGAZINE, in the 'Portrait' category



Those two blue eyes light your face – Finland, 2023



Winner 2023 - AAP MAGAZINE in the 'Portrait' category



Winner 2024 - AAP MAGAZINE in the 'Portrait' category



Portrait taken in Amazonia - Brazil, 2024



Studio portrait - Saint-Tropez, 2025



Portrait taken in Amazonia - Brazil, 2024



Winner of the 11th Grand Prix Photo de Saint-Tropez - 2025

EXHIBITIONS AND PUBLICATIONS

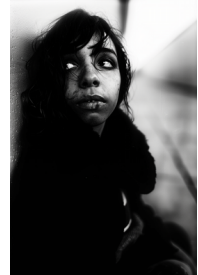
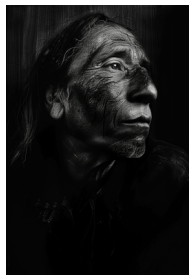
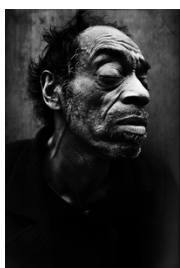
Manuel Besse's work has been shown in various countries around the world. Each exhibition bears witness to growing artistic recognition and a constant dialogue with public, cultural and institutional spaces.

Recent exhibitions include :

- 2025 - Auction and exhibition - Saint-Tropez - FRANCE
- 2024 - Street exhibition, Vidigal district - BRAZIL
Urban portraits taken in Rio de Janeiro.
- 2024 - International exhibition Luces & Sombras, Buenos Aires - ARGENTINA
Series presented: A Dog Day Afternoon.
- 2023-2024 - Office Notarial B&B, Paris - FRANCE
Presentation of the series Dans la fatigue, le divin sort des hommes.
- 2022 - International Photo Competition, Saint-Tropez - FRANCE
Group exhibition between Land and Sea.

Recent publications :

- 2025 - Publication in Photographyze.co's Monochrome Masters Magazine Vol.1
- 2025 - Publication in AAP Magazine AWARDS 2025 - THE MIND'S EYES, 2025.
- 2025 - Publication in Var-matin - Grand Prix Photo: "au-delà des clichés"
- 2024 - Publication in CanvasRebel - Exclusive interview.
- 2024 - Publication in AAP Magazine #41
Special black and white issue, 2024.
- 2024 - Publication in AAP Magazine AWARDS 2024
THE MIND'S EYES, 2024.
- 2024 - Publication in AAP Magazine #40
Special portrait issue, 2024.
- 2024 - Selection of reFocus AWARDS 2024
3rd place, Favela Rocinha, Rio de Janeiro 2024.
- 2023 - Article published in the regional daily La Montagne,
about the exhibition Dans la fatigue, le divin sort des hommes.
- 2023- Publication in AAP Magazine #32
Selection in the Merit Award's Gallery



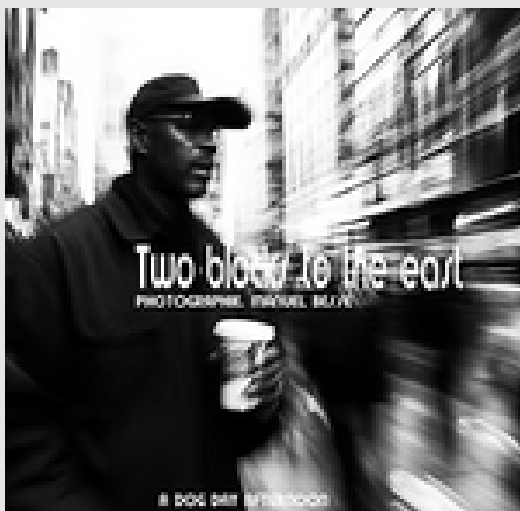
Manuel Besse's work has been exhibited in various venues in France and abroad, attracting the interest of curators, critics and collectors. His photography, both rigorous and instinctive, is part of a contemporary visual style in which each image questions our relationship with reality. Through his exhibitions, he engages in a profound dialogue between the spaces he travels through and the eyes that look upon them, inviting a sensitive reading of the world's fractures.



PUBLISHED BOOKS



Macadam is a photographic trilogy by Manuel Besse, published in 2024 by A Dog Day Afternoon. Captured in black and white, it explores the soul of major metropolises through street portraits and evocative contemporary scenes. Shot in New York, Los Angeles, Detroit, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, this collection reveals a raw, intimate look at humanity in the midst of urban chaos.



Keep your eyes wide open. Because in these pages, New York forgives nothing. It gives itself - quite raw - with grace, with rage, bittersweet, to those who dare to look it in the face. Manuel Besse has plunged into it as if into a black sea, with no horizon, an abyss of shadow and clarity that swallows you up and spits you out transmuted. His images are not mere portraits, but bursts of flesh, the gaping arteries of a city on the brink of collapse.

Here, the world cracks and topples over. Mountains, jagged by wind and rock, erect their scars like open memories. Manuel Besse captures this raw chaos - a mineral vertigo where every crack seems ready to break, where space vacillates, tense between rising and falling. The wind bites, the stone creaks. Everything trembles in tawny tension, on the edge - the air ready to give way under the weight of silence, on the brink of storm.



Everything is born, decomposes and is reborn. Matter collapses and proliferates in an endless, raw and instinctive cycle. Manuel Besse plunges into the heart of this organic pulse - a primitive tension where roots, winds and waters compete for land. His images capture the breathing of the elements, where balance vacillates between expansion and erasure, chaos and harmony. The natural elements conceal unsuspected splendors for those who know how to observe.





AWARDS AND DISTINCTIONS

This page highlights the exceptional career of a photographer whose artistic vision resonates on an international scale. Every award he has received testifies to his commitment to revealing the invisible, to capturing what escapes the eye, offering a unique and moving perspective on urbanity and humanity. A master in the art of capturing the decisive moment, Manuel Besse transcends the simple image to deliver powerful, universal visual fragments. His bold approach, blending aestheticism and emotional depth, has captivated the most prestigious juries, consecrating his status as a must-see artist on today's global scene.

Recent Awards and Distinctions :

- **May 2025** – Nominated for the All About Photo Awards
Winner among the 25 international photographers of the year
Portrait entitled Saraswati, captured in a slum in Jaipur, Rajasthan
- **Spring 2025** – Nominated among the masters of black and white
Monochrome Masters Vol 01 Spring 2025
- **February 2025** - Winner of the 11th Grand Prix Photo de Saint-Tropez
Professional category "Premium Class" - **Saint-Tropez, France**
Series presented: Macadam - Urban portraits taken in **Rio de Janeiro**.
A poignant exploration of humanity in the streets of the Cidade Maravilhosa.
- **December 2024** - Bronze medal at the ReFocus Awards 2024
Portrait shot in the Rocinha favela, **Rio de Janeiro**.
An intense image, capturing the essence of human resilience.
- **December 2024** - Nominated as one of the best photographs of 2024
AAP Magazine - International recognition
- **June 2024** - Winner of #41 Black & White - AAP Magazine
Los Angeles, USA
Series presented: Macadam | Winning portrait: John E. Davis.
Winning photograph taken in New York City, embodying urban loneliness.
- **May 2024** - 2nd Place in #40 PORTRAITS - AAP Magazine
Los Angeles, USA
Winning portrait : Those two blue eyes light your face
A work acclaimed for its emotional intensity and poetic composition.
- **2023** - Particular Mention Merit - #32 Black & White - AAP Magazine
Los Angeles, USA
Series presented: À L'Origine.
Images captured in the heart of the **Amazon**.
- **2022** - Finalist for the Grand Prix Photo de Saint-Tropez
Theme imposed: Spaces - **Saint-Tropez, France**
A masterful interpretation of urban and natural spaces.

CONTEMPORARY RESONANCES

In a world of perpetual imbalance, Manuel Besse's photographs resonate like open fractures in our collective consciousness. His work captures the vulnerability of an age in which social, urban and environmental certainties are crumbling. Through his images, he reveals a contemporary landscape where the human seems to oscillate between resistance and erasure, rootedness and uprootedness. His portraits and street scenes, plucked from the chaos of everyday life, become raw reflections of our contradictions: abundance and abandonment, the verticality of cities and the collapse of ties, the intimate and the anonymous.

The faces he captures bear the stigmata of an age of tensions - migratory crises, growing precariousness, urban loneliness - while embodying a stubborn humanity rooted in the moment. Every glance scrutinized or avoided becomes a claim to existence in a world where invisibility threatens. In this sense, Besse doesn't just immortalize snippets; he documents the fault lines of a changing society, making visible what indifference too often annihilates.

His works, taken in major metropolises and on the outskirts, also reflect the violent transformations of urban spaces. They question gentrification, industrial abandonment and the persistence of the margins in cities that are reinventing themselves at the cost of profound exclusion. Architectures, sometimes standing like inaccessible fortresses, sometimes shattered like relics of a forgotten world, become symbols of an uncertain future, where collective memory struggles not to sink into oblivion. These tensions between memory and erasure, growth and ruin, give these photographs a universal scope, crossing borders and eras.

His images resonate deeply with contemporary concerns such as rising social inequality, growing isolation in urban spaces and the housing crisis. They also evoke the impact of migration and forced displacement, highlighting struggles for belonging and survival in a fragmented public space. They probe the progressive dehumanization of modern societies, where overpopulation and individualism accelerate the dissolution of collective identities.

In a world saturated with ephemeral images, Manuel Besse's work imposes a pause, a face-to-face encounter with the very essence of humanity. His images bear witness to the urgency of climate and society, where the cracks in a mountain are reminiscent of the ecological and human systems that are collapsing before our very eyes. He confronts us with geographical, social and psychological fractures, requiring the viewer not simply to contemplate, but to introspect. Each shot, in its raw power, transcends the superfluous, sounding like a silent alarm, a call to see, feel and act.

In this way, Manuel Besse belongs to a tradition of witness artists, but he goes beyond mere documentation, sculpting a visual language capable of exploring contemporary wounds while revealing spaces of resilience. His works remind us that, even in chaos, there are still glimmers of beauty and embers of resistance that cling to reality with fierce determination. Manuel Besse doesn't capture the world as it is, but as it is cracking. He shows what burns and what is reborn. More than a mirror of our times, his work becomes a raw, vivid and essential revelation of what still binds us together.





CONTACT AND ACQUISITIONS

All requests for information, acquisitions of works or organization of exhibitions can be addressed to the contact details below. Each project is studied individually to meet the specific requirements of collectors, institutions and art professionals.

- Prints are available as limited editions, numbered and signed by the photographer.
- Each piece comes with a certificate of authenticity.
- Custom formats and premium finishes.
- Manuel Besse also offers special orders for bespoke projects or exclusive series. Contact the photographer to discuss your requirements.
- All works are protected by copyright. Unauthorized reproduction or use is strictly prohibited.
- Worldwide delivery with secure packaging. Delivery times and costs available on request.
- Prices for photographs are given on request and are determined according to series, format and the photographer's current rating.

For further information or proposals for artistic collaboration, please refer to the following contact details.

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