

Biography

Paris-based photographer Patrick Bezzolato began taking photos in 1979. Since then, his lens has been focused on Paris, capturing the atmosphere of the unfashionable north of the city as well as the interior courtyards and narrow dead-end streets of its remaining blue-collar neighborhoods. It's a Paris that evokes fond memories, far-removed from the elaborate façades and architectural grandeur usually associated with the City of Light. A forgotten city within a city. While the historic and exceptional poetic significance of these areas is now acknowledged, in the early 1980s it was considered politically correct to shun them, to be ashamed of living there. Paris's Grands Projects (prestigious architectural projects such as the Louvre Pyramid and the Orsay Museum) were grabbing the headlines and the attention of the critics, while blue-collar neighborhoods were slated for renovation. French cinema, in spite of the undeniable quality of box-office hits such as Bob Swaim's *La Balance* (The Nark) and *Tchao Pantin* by award-winning director Claude Berri, tended to reduce these districts to their criminal elements. Going beyond the stereotypes, Patrick explored these run-down neighborhoods, conscious that their days were numbered. From the former warehouse district of Bercy to the traditionally blue-collar neighborhood of Belleville, he discovered a friendly and endearing side to the city that could have come straight out of Belleville-Menilmontant, Willy Ronis's famous collection of photographs taken 30 years earlier.

As the different options of the profession of full-time photographer (fashion, advertising, or illustration) didn't attract him, Patrick decided to devote himself to the subject that really inspired him even if it meant being a reporter without a remit. So he continued to earn his living as an architect while pursuing his passion for taking black and white photos of older neighborhoods of Paris that remained untouched by progress. Having two occupations meant that the time available to give free rein to his personal creativity was limited, but from these snatched moments a body of work gradually emerged. After ten years of taking photographs and a harvest of 40,000 negatives, it was time to exhibit.

From public spaces and cultural centers in Paris and the suburbs to the far reaches of the French provinces, Patrick Bezzolato's portrayals of a hidden side of Paris were then exhibited overseas as far afield as New York and Ecuador. At every event, the public was unanimous in its response to these images that bring to mind the poems of Jacques Prévert. In reacting to these contemporary photos so redolent of the past, visitors' most frequent comment is "Your photos restore my faith in Paris."

For Patrick, photography is a means of going beyond oneself, and more particularly, a deeply human adventure. What he is most proud of is not the sensitivity of the artistic approach he has mastered, but of having gone against the flow to show a little-known side of Paris, of having contributed to restoring its dignity and preserving its memory, and most of all, of having touched people's hearts.

But this Parisian photographer is also far-travelled and equally comfortable in other surroundings. Today, his distinctive point of view and photographic style are evident in his images of cities such as New York, Shanghai, Tokyo, Moscow, Buenos Aires and Rio

Prizes

- . Prix Ansel Adams - 1996
- . Prix Eugène Atget - 2000
- . Prix Ansel Adams - 2001
- . Premier prix en Photographie - Cercle des artistes Parisiens - 2005

Publications

- . Images d'hier dans le Paris d'aujourd'hui (Images of yesterday in the Paris of today) - October 2003 - 120 Pages - 92 Photos - text by Frédérique Bousquel - Editions Parimagine - *Out of print*.
- . Mémoires des rues - Paris XIXe (Memories of street, Paris 19th arrondissement) - Mai 2007 - 190 pages - 320 documented photos - text by Patrick Bezzolato - Editions Parimagine - *Out of print*.

Subjects photographed

- . Belleville, times past, passing of the seasons. Photographs of Paris's most evocative blue-collar neighborhood. Exhibitions, books and conferences.
- . Images of yesterday in the Paris of today. Collection of photographs taken in blue-collar neighborhoods in Paris during the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s. Exhibitions, books and conferences.
- . Brasil, Água e Sal. Everyday Brasil, beyond the usual snapshots. Exhibitions.
- . New York. In spite of its excesses and drama, New York remains a familiar city, endearing and full of memories. The myth survives and the magic remains. Exhibitions.

Exhibitions

Since 1990, Patrick Bezzolato has had regular exhibitions in Paris, throughout France, and abroad. Since 1994 he has exhibited at the International Photo Fair in Bièvres.

One of the most outstanding exhibitions was at "La sauvegarde de Paris historique" (Protecting historic Paris) in 2001. In the first few days, almost 3,000 visitors came to this centrally located gallery, situated near the "Maison Européenne de la Photo" (European Photo Center). Another exhibition, which attracted the same number of visitors, was held there in 2003 to mark the publication of "Images d'hier dans le Paris d'aujourd'hui".

Patrick has also been invited to represent France abroad at the Biennale de la photographie de Quito (Biennale of Photography in Quito) in 2005. The exhibition was shown in the main cities of Ecuador over a four-month period, including at the municipal museum of Guayaquil, the country's largest city.

In preparation

- . Shanghai. The world's biggest construction site hasn't become another Singapore. For the moment, China the eternal is rubbing shoulders with a meteoric modernity. The last photos before construction work begins. Exhibition planned for June 2011.
- . Village to megalopolis. Exhibition covering six cities, as villages are swallowed up by expanding urbanization: Paris, New York, Mexico, Moscow, Shanghai and Tokyo.
- . La photographie. Essays on photography.

Collections

- . French National Library - Direction of the prints and photographs.
- . University of Colorado, Boulders - USA - Special Collections Department - University Libraries.

Activities

- . More than 100 exhibitions since 1991.
- . Photo reportage – photo shoots.
- . Teaching at photography workshops, including how to shoot a photo, printing and processing.
- . Jury president at various photo competitions.
- . Conferences on photography and the history of Paris (at universities, Paris town halls, regional cultural centers and associations).