

# Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## Photographing people in places

Maurice Amiel · Wednesday, November 4th, 2020

### The feature image ...

... taken by **R. Doisneau**, shows clearly the *mutual interaction of people and place in defining a particular situation*, in this case the use of a derelict blank wall as a blackboard by a young girl playing at being a school mistress to her younger sibling.

In this post I have selected some images taken by **R. Doisneau** and others by his compatriot **M. Riboud** in order to compare the different way they photographically handle that mutual interaction of people and place.

### Introducing R. Doisneau and M. Riboud

Whereas, **Doisneau** is the typical poetic *people-observing Parisian flaneur*, **Riboud** is the typical sharpshooting *globe-trotting event and place recording photographer*.

What attracts **Doisneau**, is the *direct capture of the expression, the posture, the unique and the personal with no intermediate* ... and he does it with sensitivity and humor.

As I see it, **Doisneau** considers **people as the essential ingredient in establishing a photographic sense of situation**, (as shown below).



Doisneau: the two brothers, Paris 1934

What attracts **Riboud**, is the *capture of a whole scene, with what elements of place and people contribute to understanding it*, and he does it clearly, and sometimes inventively.

As I see it, **Riboud** considers **place as the essential ingredient in establishing a photographic sense of situation**, (as shown below)



Riboud: Hydroelectric construction, Turkey, 1955

## The selection

I have selected three pairs of images based on similar situations in order to illustrate the different approaches of **Doisneau** and **Riboud**.

### A café scene

In **Doisneau's** image, taken from behind the counter, nothing detracts from the congeniality of the Parisian café, *with attention given to the personal situation and the particular relation of the standing customers to the server: a coal delivery man, a wedding party and an office clerk on a break (as shown below)!*



Doisneau: Black and white café, Paris 1948

**Riboud's** image is taken of an Istanbul mosque-neighboring café through a window, *partly covered with religious and political posters and with photographs of the customers-filled café, framing a glimpse of the outdoor terrace and the streetscape beyond ... with not a live person in it! (as shown below).*



Riboud: A neighborhood café, Istanbul, Turkey, 1998

### A sidewalk scene

In this image, **Doisneau** records a gathering of employees and/or residents taking a break on the sidewalk in front of the building they work in, *the direct and clear view of the scene, produces in the viewer a sense of being part of it. (as shown below).*



Doisneau: Mailmen and pedicures, Paris, 1949

In this image, **Riboud**, elects to place his point of view behind a store window *that structures the image in three parts, roughly corresponding to the various groupings of people.*

*Doing this seems to arise the curiosity of children in the street who, peeping at him through the store window, giving the scene an added situational dimension. (as shown below).*



Riboud: Peking, China, 1965

## People in the street ... streets with people

**Doisneau** chose to call his image of a young family group standing at a street corner “ *The children of Place Hébert – Paris 18ème – 1957*” ... *by doing so he confirms his attraction to people's expression, posture and dress in order to socially characterize their relationship to a place. (as shown below)*



Doisneau: The children of Place Hébert, Paris, 1958

**Riboud** chose to call his image simply “*Leeds, England, 1954*” and, by doing so, *assumed that the obvious working-class neighborhood of the place would by itself socially characterize the situation of the people in it. (as shown below)*



Riboud: Leeds, England, 1954

## End words

These belong to the two photographers quoted in the volumes devoted to their work. (See Credit and bibliography)

**Doisneau** said of Paris that it was like a “... *theatre where you book your seat with time waiting. And I am still waiting*”

**Riboud** mentioned that Henri Cartier-Bresson once told him: “*Marc, you were born with a compass in your eye*”

## Credit and bibliography

The images and their legends, by **R. Doisneau**, were taken from: **Gautrand, J-C**, *Robert Doisneau 1912-1994*, Taschen, Köln, 2003

The images and their legends, by **M. Riboud**, were taken from: **Riboud & B. Eveno**, *Marc Riboud – paroles d’un taciturne*, Delpire, Paris, 2012

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