

# THOMAS BOIVIN

Presse & Interviews

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Selection of critical texts and interviews — 2016–2026

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## Vision(s) #87 — Le silence du regard

Aliocha Boi — Vision(s) Podcast, novembre 2025 — Texte original en français

Il y a des images qu'on croit comprendre immédiatement. Elles semblent simples, presque évidentes. Et puis, lorsqu'on s'y attarde vraiment, elles se mettent à changer. Elles glissent, elles se déplient. Elles révèlent une profondeur discrète, une ambiguïté douce, une complexité qui ne cherchait pas à se montrer.

Les photographies de Thomas Boivin ont précisément ce pouvoir-là. Elles ne s'imposent pas, elles s'installent. Elles se regardent lentement, à plusieurs reprises, en y découvrant chaque fois une nouvelle nuance. Thomas est un portraitiste qui regarde sa ville en partant de celles et ceux qui l'habitent. De Belleville à Menilmontant, jusqu'à la place de la République, ses livres composent un Paris intime, un Paris qui ne se donne pas frontalement mais qui se laisse approcher, froler, apprivoiser.

Ce qui frappe dans son travail, c'est cette manière d'habiter ses sujets. Tout semble né d'une patience profonde, d'un rapport au temps long, de cette lumière précise que lui offre la chambre grand format qu'il utilise assez souvent. On sent une attention rare, presque silencieuse, qui traverse ses images.

Et puis il y a Thomas lui-même : une voix douce, posée, un regard exigeant mais sans dureté. Il s'exprime comme il photographie, avec prudence, avec mesure, comme si chaque mot devait respecter la personne ou le lieu dont il parle. Passer un moment avec lui a quelque chose d'apaisant, presque méditatif.

### *English translation*

*There are images we think we understand immediately. They seem simple, almost obvious. And then, when we truly linger on them, they begin to change. They shift, they unfold. They reveal a quiet depth, a gentle ambiguity, a complexity that was never seeking to show itself.*

*Thomas Boivin's photographs have precisely this power. They do not impose themselves — they settle in. They are to be looked at slowly, more than once, each time revealing a new nuance. Thomas is a portraitist who looks at his city through the people who inhabit it. From Belleville to Menilmontant, through to the Place de la République, his books compose an intimate Paris — a Paris that does not give itself frontally, but allows itself to be approached, grazed, tamed.*

*What strikes you in his work is this way of inhabiting his subjects. Everything seems born of a deep patience, a long relationship with time, and that precise light afforded by the large-format camera he often uses. One senses a rare, almost silent attentiveness that runs through his images.*

*And then there is Thomas himself: a gentle, measured voice, an exacting gaze without hardness. He speaks as he photographs — with care, with restraint, as if each word must honour the person or place he is speaking of. Spending time with him has something calming about it, almost meditative.*

## Place de la Republique, fraternite des visages

Fabien Ribery — L'Intervalle, 7 mars 2026 — Texte original en francais

Place de la Republique, c'est a Paris bien sur, mais c'est aussi chaque fois que des gens se regroupent en un lieu public pour defendre des valeurs fondamentales, ou simplement le traversent, comme une evidence. C'est aussi un livre de Thomas Boivin, ouvrage superbe publie par Stanley Barker — apres Menilmontant (2023) et Belleville (2022) — tel un album pense pour traverser le temps, faire archive.

Oeuvre sans texte, composee d'une quarantaine de portraits en noir & blanc, Place de la Republique montre le visage de la jeunesse d'aujourd'hui, et de quelques adultes. On entend souvent la plainte d'une societe marquee par une forme de declin, mais non, pas ici, chacun.e etant montre.e dans sa noblesse, sa singularite, sa sensualite immediate et salutare.

Des etres, pas des sujets ou des personnages, saisis dans un moment d'interiorite, et regardes comme on s'approche d'un secret. La lumiere les revele, voire les transfigure. Chaque portrait peut etre contemple longuement, il faut prendre le temps de la rencontre, observer les details vestimentaires, la coupe de cheveux, les bijoux, le teint de la peau, tout cet effort d'etre au monde particulierement touchant.

Nous ne sommes des numeros, ou des individus interchangeableables, nous dit en filigrane Thomas Boivin, mais des individus uniques, de fragilite et de pleine puissance. Ses images procurent une joie de fraternite. Le peuple est la, celui d'aujourd'hui et de demain, on peut avoir confiance, vivre est une merveille, malgre les tourments qui nous etreignent tous a tel ou tel moment.

Les corps, cadres un peu en dessous du buste occupent la page, sans orgueil, sans volonte de domination, ils sont la, remarquablement presents. Il y a de la juvenilite, des marques d'un basculement vers un autre age, une modernite qui touche. De la solennite. Une facon de se tenir debout. Les portraits isolent, mais le livre rassemble.

Diversite ethnique, heterogeneite de la France — les images ont ete realisees entre 2019 et 2023 —, aujourd'hui comme hier. Comment ne pas regarder ce livre de democratie directe quand pleuvent sur nous les bombes incendiaires des discours d'exclusion ? Place de la Republique ne fait pas la lecon, mais c'est un livre politique, parce qu'il croit en la beaute de chacun, et qu'il pense que celle-ci est un partage.

### *English translation*

*Place de la Republique is in Paris, of course — but it is also every place where people gather in a public space to defend fundamental values, or simply pass through, as if it were the most natural thing in the world. It is also a book by Thomas Boivin, a superb work published by Stanley Barker — following Menilmontant (2023) and Belleville (2022) — conceived as an album made to endure, to serve as an archive.*

*A wordless work, composed of around forty black-and-white portraits, Place de la Republique shows the face of today's youth, and of a few adults. One often hears the lament of a society marked by decline —*

*but not here, where each person is shown in their dignity, their singularity, their immediate and life-affirming sensuality.*

*Human beings, not subjects or characters, caught in a moment of interiority and regarded as one approaches a secret. Light reveals them, even transfigures them. Each portrait can be contemplated at length; one must take the time of the encounter, observe the details of clothing, the cut of hair, the jewellery, the skin tone — all that effort of being in the world, so particularly moving.*

*We are not numbers, not interchangeable individuals, Boivin tells us in watermark, but unique beings, fragile and fully powerful. His images produce a joy of fraternity. The people are there — those of today and tomorrow — one can trust that living is a wonder, despite the torments that grip us all at one time or another.*

*The bodies, framed just below the bust, occupy the page without pride, without any will to dominate — they are simply there, remarkably present. There is youthfulness, signs of a shift toward another age, a modernity that touches. There is solemnity. A way of standing upright. The portraits isolate, but the book gathers together.*

*Ethnic diversity, the heterogeneity of France — the images were made between 2019 and 2023 — today as in the past. How can one look at this book of direct democracy without thinking of the incendiary bombs of exclusionary discourse raining down upon us? Place de la Republique does not lecture, but it is a political book, because it believes in the beauty of each person, and holds that such beauty is something to be shared.*

<https://linter valle.blog/2026/03/07/place-de-la-republique-fraternite-des-visages-par-thomas-boivin-photographe/>

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## Portraits Filled with Meaning

Stefan Vanthuyne — De Standaard (BE), 17 decembre 2025 — Texte original en neerlandais (traduit en anglais)

'The nature of photography is that it engages life,' Robert Adams once remarked. That life is often too chaotic, the now 88-year-old American photographer added. But what an artist tries to give you is a reminder of those rare moments when things did seem to carry meaning. Those words came back to me when I saw the quiet, elegant portraits that Thomas Boivin — for whom Adams is somewhat of a guiding figure — made between 2019 and 2023 on the Place de la Republique.

The historic square in the heart of Paris is a major crossroads in the city. In more than one sense, it is a place of movement, of change, but also of stillness. After the 2015 attacks, people gathered there to mourn. For Boivin too, Place de la Republique gradually became a place layered with meaning. But in the beginning it was simply a transfer point in the metro.

In 2017, Boivin had left Belleville, the Parisian neighbourhood to which he had dedicated his two previous photobooks. He had bought his own studio and moved in with his partner. Over time, he began to see the place as a challenge. 'I had always photographed people in quieter environments, and for a long time I had wanted to learn how to work in the bustle. It's more demanding, but as you get older you tend to cling to what you know — so finding ways to keep challenging myself became important.'

Early in 2018, Boivin learned he was going to become a father. 'A baby was coming, and I had no intention of being an absent father. So I asked myself: where can I make as many portraits as before,

but in less time? Place de la Republique was on my route — it was perfect.'

Busy places turned out to be incredibly difficult to photograph. 'So I switched to a technical camera and increasingly longer lenses, to isolate things very precisely. At first that was mainly a practical decision — but such things are never purely practical. Method and intention shape each other.'

By the time he fully switched to the technical camera, Boivin had a newborn daughter. 'Your first child causes a radical shift in how you look at the world. Suddenly you're no longer the last of your kind. Generations, mortality, continuity, the future — those questions hit differently.' There was also the broader context: two years of Trump, then Covid, and a growing realization that climate change was no longer something abstract.

'I'm pessimistic by nature,' Boivin says. 'And the only thing that truly tempers that pessimism is meeting people. Photography gives me a space in which I can encounter someone apart from all abstractions. And it was always — what's the right word — something that saved me, a kind of grace.'

Each portrait is simply beautiful, in a way that often feels delicate — something owed solely to a mutual, unspoken openness and honesty. Beauty, Adams said, does nothing more than affirm that life itself has meaning. That, in the end, is what Boivin's portraits tell not only him, but us as well.

<https://www.standaard.be/media-en-cultuur/portretten-vol-betekenis/114538375.html>

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## Thomas Boivin: Place de la Republique

Brad Feuerhelm — American Suburb X, 23 novembre 2025 — Original text in English

Place de la Republique is a central meeting point in Paris. Several underground metro lines stop at its station, and its wide-open square is a gathering place for many people, particularly younger people. When you first enter the square, there is a flurry of activity, but it never feels overly crowded. If you are there in the spring, summer, or early fall, on a sunny day, you get a sense of a common place, a transitory and ephemeral space in which the citizens of Paris change their destination or escape the metro into the warrens of streets surrounding the square.

Place de la Republique is a place where people occasionally assemble, protest, and eulogize tragic events such as the Paris attacks in 2015, with Marianne, the anthropomorphized symbol of France, presiding over all in sheer, statue-like form, arm aloft, eyeing the horizon above.

Thomas Boivin has been quietly whittling away at a substantial record of Parisian life for quite some time. His previous books, *Menilmontant* and *Belleville*, are shaped by a consistent monochromatic investigation of both places through the people who walk their streets. One unifying theme in Boivin's work is his sense of light, reminiscent of Thomas Roma, Sergio Purltell, and Mark Steinmetz, amongst others.

Most of the work concerns younger people making their way through the city and though the emphasis is still on place, the question I come away with is how this generation of young Parisians will accommodate the enormous challenges in their social, economic, and political life over the coming years. Boivin manages to create images that allude to this vulnerability without feeling intrusive, which is especially difficult when using a 4x5 camera on a tripod.

I tend to think of Boivin's work as having a sweetness. I am reminded of Robert Doisneau and the history of French Humanism in his work. That trope of photograph making had lost much of its power by the 80s and has laid relatively dormant in contemporary practice until quite recently, with a new emphasis on looking at people with a sensitive eye again. I look forward to seeing where Thomas points his camera again.

<https://americansuburbx.com/2025/11/thomas-boivin-place-de-la-republique.html>

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## Les regards doux-amers de Thomas Boivin

Marc Donnadiou — The Art Newspaper (FR), 24 novembre 2024 — Texte original en français

Deux ans après *Belleville*, sorti en avril 2022 chez Stanley/Barker et aujourd'hui épuisé, paraît *Menilmontant* chez le même éditeur britannique et promis à un succès identique. Thomas Boivin s'est fait une place à part au sein du panorama de la photographie française contemporaine, laquelle n'est pas sans rappeler la démarche de Patrick Faigenbaum autour du temps et des silences, de l'image face au rythme du réel ; une approche propre à troubler et à redéfinir notre appréhension et notre compréhension du monde qui nous entoure.

Thomas Boivin choisit ainsi ses sujets, principalement des situations urbaines emblématiques de notre société actuelle, qu'il étudie durant de longues années avant de les publier sous la forme de livres, qu'il compose avec soin, ou d'expositions, dont il réalise l'ensemble des tirages.

D'une colline l'autre, *Menilmontant* poursuit le propos de *Belleville* : un regard lent et attentif sur un quartier parisien en pleine reconfiguration dont Thomas Boivin collecte les instants les plus singuliers, entre aube et crépuscule, tragédie et poésie, disparition et épiphanie, intimité et extimité. Il y a au fil des pages, portées par une lumière incomparable, des moments d'une douceur et d'une tendresse inégales et d'autres dont la dureté est presque tranchante, à l'instar d'un arrondissement — le 20<sup>e</sup> — sans équivalent à Paris.

Par la même, l'artiste reinvente l'humanisme en photographie, à l'aube d'un XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle qui en est particulièrement dépourvu. Aussi certaines images s'affirment-elles comme des actes de résistance minuscules mais tenaces à l'encontre des transformations urbaines comme des évolutions sociales contemporaines : elles accueillent le monde avec une distance précautionneuse et sans jugement.

De même, le portrait chez Thomas Boivin est-il sans cesse mis en interaction avec les différentes façons dont les êtres humains pratiquent leur ville, mais également avec les enjeux de la prise de vue. Autrement dit, ce livre, comme toute l'œuvre de Thomas Boivin, ne cesse de se poser ces questions élémentaires : qu'est-ce qu'une image ? Qu'est-ce que faire image ?

### *English translation*

*Two years after Belleville — published in April 2022 by Stanley/Barker and now out of print — comes Menilmontant from the same British publisher, destined for equal success. Thomas Boivin has carved out a singular place within the panorama of contemporary French photography, one not unlike the approach of Patrick Faigenbaum in its attention to time and silence, to the image as it meets the rhythm of the real — an approach that troubles and redefines our apprehension of the world around us.*

*Boivin selects his subjects — primarily urban situations emblematic of contemporary society — and studies them over long years before publishing them as carefully composed books or exhibitions, for which he makes all the prints himself.*

*From one hill to the next, Menilmontant extends the inquiry of Belleville: a slow, attentive gaze upon a Parisian neighbourhood in full reconfiguration, from which Boivin collects its most singular instants — between dawn and dusk, tragedy and poetry, disappearance and epiphany, intimacy and extimacy. Throughout its pages, carried by an incomparable light, there are moments of unmatched softness and tenderness, and others whose hardness is almost cutting — much like the 20th arrondissement itself, which has no equivalent in Paris.*

*In doing so, the artist reinvents humanism in photography, at the dawn of a twenty-first century particularly bereft of it. Certain images assert themselves as minute but tenacious acts of resistance against both urban transformation and contemporary social change: they welcome the world with cautious distance and without judgment.*

*Equally, the portrait in Boivin's work is continually placed in dialogue with the varied ways human beings inhabit their city, as well as with the stakes of the photographic act itself. In other words, this book — like all of Boivin's work — never stops asking the most elemental questions: what is an image? What does it mean to make one?*

<https://www.artnewspaper.fr/2024/11/24/les-regards-doux-amers-de-thomas-boivin>

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## **Thomas Boivin's Sensitive Exultation of a Parisian Neighborhood**

Seb Emina — Aperture (USA), 12 aout 2022 — Original text in English

The first time I look through Thomas Boivin's book *Belleville*, I try to find the places I know. Belleville is a neighborhood in northeastern Paris, and Boivin made these black-and-white photographs while wandering its streets. Immediately I spot the area's two parks, a certain plumber's shop front, the hard-to-describe atmosphere of particular points on certain streets.

Belleville is home to one of Paris's two major Chinatowns, just one community within a patchwork of cultures. The portraits in this book, of strangers Boivin is drawn to, reflect this intricacy but are not essentialized by it.

The second time I look through *Belleville* I am struck by the stillness, a sort of ghostly silence, that seems to emanate from each photograph, even when people are present. Perhaps this stems from Boivin's preoccupation with what one could call nonspecific places: a flower bush obscuring a drain, a faded curtain in an anonymous window, tree tendrils on an unplaceable fence. The result has a woozy or hallucinatory quality, as if we are slightly removed from reality.

In a statement released with the book, Boivin says: 'Although the photographs hardly depict the city, I find they convey the sensation that I had, walking the streets of Belleville.' A sense of place is more potent when sublimated into something else entirely. Belleville often seems less about questing for the essence of its titular neighborhood than attempting a personal exaltation of the ordinary.

Georges Perec's term *infra-ordinary* feels relevant to the preoccupations at play here, as does his famous quote: 'What we need to question is bricks, concrete, glass, our table manners, our utensils, our

tools, the way we spend our time, our rhythms... Describe your street. Describe another. Compare.'  
Perec, I should add, grew up in Belleville.

<https://aperture.org/editorial/thomas-boivins-sensitive-exultation-of-a-parisian-neighborhood/>

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## The Art of Handheld Camera

Brigitte Ollier — Blind Magazine (FR), 10 mars 2022 — Texte original en français

Detenu, ou tendu, selon les jours, Thomas Boivin accueille les visiteurs dans son atelier avec un plaisir non dissimulé et un goût pour le café nature. Belleville, qu'il appelle son vrai deuxième livre, vient de paraître : il est remarquable par son éloquence et une réserve rare dans la génération de Boivin. C'est sur rien, et je trouve ça absolument formidable. Je voulais échapper à toute explication. Il sourit avec une satisfaction à peine dissimulée en contemplant son livre, dépourvu de tout texte, sans même une légende, avec sa veste bleu Klein comme un dessin d'enfant.

Né le 19 juin 1983 à Saint-Mande (Val-de-Marne), ce photographe trouble la paix, et le statut, de l'image avec cinquante-deux photographies en N&B; prises dans un territoire en apparence rebattu : le quartier de Belleville à Paris. Les photos sont d'autant plus destabilisantes que Belleville n'est pas vraiment le sujet. Rien ici ne rappelle le passé ; on est à des années-lumière de Willy Ronis (1910-2009) et de son homme à la valise dans les escaliers de la rue Vilin (1950). À bas la nostalgie, seul le présent compte !

Fantasme depuis tant d'années, ce livre ne sort pas de nulle part, souligne le photographe. Je pense qu'il est fidèle au travail. S'il y a des moments de maladresse, ils appartiennent davantage au travail qu'au livre ; et en ce sens je suis très heureux. Mais, en même temps, le livre ne m'appartient plus, il a une autonomie.

De quoi parle donc Belleville ? D'une relation au monde qui ne s'impose pas, qui se vit dans l'image. Une relation nourrie, entre autres, par l'héritage de ses prédécesseurs américains, comme Robert Adams et Mark Steinmetz, qui jouissent d'un rapport au monde incroyable, et c'est quelque chose qui ne peut être vécu et transmis que par la forme, ça ne peut pas être déclaratif.

Peuple de passants inconnus qui nous ressemblent — à la fois vibrant en dedans et regardant discrètement ailleurs — Belleville doit se lire en silence. C'est une photographie douce et mystérieuse qui ne montre pas tant qu'elle nous invite à penser — d'où sa singularité.

### *English translation*

*Relaxed, or wired, as the case may be, Thomas Boivin welcomes visitors at his studio with unconcealed pleasure and a love for natural coffee. Belleville, which he calls his 'true' second book, has just come out: it is remarkable for its eloquence and a kind of reserve rare in Boivin's generation. 'It's about nothing, and I absolutely love it. I wanted to escape any explanation.' He smiles with barely hidden satisfaction as he contemplates his book, free of any text, not even a caption, with its Yves-Klein-blue jacket like a child's drawing.*

*Born on June 19, 1983, in Saint-Mande (Val-de-Marne), this photographer disturbs the peace, and the status, of the image with fifty-two B&W; photographs taken in a seemingly well-trodden territory: the Belleville district of Paris. The photos are all the more unsettling in that Belleville isn't really the subject.*

*There is nothing here to evoke the past — we are light years away from Willy Ronis and his man with a suitcase on the steps of Rue Vilin (1950). Down with nostalgia, only the present matters!*

*'Fantasized about for so many years, this book doesn't come out of nowhere,' stresses the photographer. 'I think it is faithful to the work. If there are moments of clumsiness, they belong more to the work than to the book; and in this sense I am very happy. But, at the same time, the book no longer belongs to me, it has an autonomy.'*

*So what is Belleville about? 'A relationship to the world that does not impose itself, that is lived in the image.' A relationship nourished, among other things, by the heritage of his American predecessors, such as Robert Adams and Mark Steinmetz, who enjoy 'an incredible relationship to the world, and that's something that can only be experienced and conveyed by the form, it cannot be declarative.'*

*Populated by unknown passersby who look like us — at once throbbing on the inside and quietly looking away — Belleville must be read in silence. This is gentle, mysterious photography that does not as much show as urges us to think — hence its singularity.*

<https://www.blind-magazine.com/fr/news/thomas-boivin-a-main-levee/>

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## **Belleville aurait pu être un piège pour Thomas Boivin**

Jean-Marc Bodson — La Libre Belgique (BE), 23 mai 2022 — Texte original en français

La photo-titre de l'exposition Belleville de Thomas Boivin à la Fondation A nous montre une toute jeune fille à vélo sur le trottoir d'un très large boulevard qu'on devine parisien. Plus atifiée qu'habillée, un regard de guerrière sous une chevelure abondante et peu domestiquée, elle semble tout droit sortie de l'imagier du réalisme poétique des années 1950. C'est un portrait magnifique, mais peu représentatif de la cinquantaine d'autres images de l'exposition.

Ce coin populaire de Paris aurait pu être un piège pour lui. Ceci d'autant plus qu'il l'a abordé non pas en documentariste, ni même avec un projet clair, mais bien, comme il le confiait à Fabien Ribery, en promeneur amoureux de son quartier, à la manière des Willy Ronis, Sabine Weiss et consorts. Mais c'est précisément ce qu'il a voulu éviter.

Au fil des images, on a l'impression de découvrir un photographe américain de la veine documentaire, héritier du style distance et peu expressif des cadors de la FSA des années 1930 ou de la photographie de rue des années 1960-70. La gamme étendue des gris de ses tirages n'y est certes pas pour rien, mais il y a plus : sa façon d'aborder le portrait, non pas sur le vif, mais en connivence avec les gens rencontrés ; sa façon de décrire le lieu en alternant portraits, paysages et natures mortes dans la grande tradition américaine.

Ses portraits vraiment exceptionnels — pas étonnant qu'il cite aussi volontiers un Mark Steinmetz — font le constat d'un Paris multiculturel, à mille lieues des stéréotypes franchouillards. Tout ceci fait qu'à la sortie, on a l'impression d'avoir rencontré Walker Evans dans le jardin de Robert Doisneau.

### *English translation*

*The title photograph of Thomas Boivin's exhibition 'Belleville' at Fondation A shows a very young girl cycling on the pavement of a wide Parisian boulevard. More adorned than dressed, with a warrior's gaze beneath an abundant and untamed head of hair, she seems to have stepped straight out of the*

*'poetic realism' imagery of the 1950s. It is a magnificent portrait, though hardly representative of the fifty or so other images in the exhibition.*

*This popular corner of Paris could have been a trap for him — all the more so as he approached it not as a documentarian, nor even with a clear project in mind, but rather, as he confided to Fabien Ribery, as a wanderer in love with his neighbourhood, in the manner of Willy Ronis, Sabine Weiss and their ilk. But that is precisely what he sought to avoid.*

*Leafing through the images, one has the impression of discovering an American documentary photographer — an heir to the detached, understated style of the FSA masters of the 1930s or the street photography of the 1960s and 70s. The extended range of greys in his prints certainly plays a part, but there is more: his way of approaching portraiture, not on the fly but in complicity with those he meets; his way of describing a place by alternating portraits, landscapes and still lifes in the great American tradition.*

*His truly exceptional portraits — it is no surprise that he readily cites Mark Steinmetz — bear witness to a multicultural Paris, a world away from French-stereotype clichés. All of this gives one the feeling, at the end, of having encountered Walker Evans in the garden of Robert Doisneau.*

<https://www.lalibre.be/culture/arts/2022/05/23/belleville-aurait-pu-etre-un-piege-pour-thomas-boivin-LZS7JSGTHBGEJERGFEIVFECWB4/>

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## Photo Saint Germain

Helene Giannecchini — Simone / Galerie PhotoSaintGermain (FR), 2018 — Texte original en francais

"Even reaching the tobacco shop a hundred meters down the road becomes a journey." — Issei Suda

Les photographies de Thomas Boivin sont unies par une même délicatesse, une précision et une sobriété qui leur confèrent leur force. Longtemps il n'a pas montré son travail, préférant poursuivre sa recherche du geste juste et d'une esthétique qui se passe de la démonstration. Ni photographe de l'intime ni photographe documentaire, il choisit de ne pas faire coïncider son travail avec les grandes classifications de l'histoire de l'art et tient à ce que quelque chose échappe, à ne pas borner la réception des images qu'il collecte patiemment au fil de ses déambulations parisiennes.

Des visages, des pans de ville que l'on regarde peu — détails d'un mur, cageots de légumes attendant leur étal, grille de parc sous un ciel gris : voici ce que découvrent ces photographies d'une grande douceur. Sa série sur Belleville, l'une des plus importantes à ce jour, est constituée de dizaines de silhouettes, des traits d'inconnus à qui l'image confère une profondeur et une densité d'apparition rares.

Pour lui la photographie est un art à la merci des hasards que la ville offre et son travail est ainsi le fruit de longues marches, de rencontres fortuites, du surgissement d'un profil au comptoir d'un café. Le cadrage est généralement frontal et pourtant il n'y a aucune violence dans ces photographies ; elles ne s'imposent pas mais nous révèlent doucement leurs nuances. Thomas Boivin cherche une certaine distance, une légèreté aussi ; il s'agit d'accueillir ce qui se passe, même la chose la plus minime, de se tenir au plus près du réel.

La photographie n'est jamais faite que de ses sujets, et l'on a parfois tendance à oublier que la qualité du tirage, de l'objet même qu'est une image, contribue tout autant à sa valeur que ce qu'elle nous

montre. Et les tirages de Thomas Boivin témoignent d'une grande exigence formelle. Les gris moyens s'y déploient avec élégance, les zones de transition d'un espace à l'autre, d'une texture à l'autre sont d'une grande finesse si bien qu'il faut rester plusieurs minutes devant ses photographies pour qu'elles nous arrivent pleinement.

Il y a aussi une attente à destination du spectateur : il faut une certaine qualité d'attention et de regard pour saisir la puissance de ce travail. Et ces photographies qui se lèvent lentement, qui s'ouvrent à force d'être vues pour nous dévoiler leur intensité, sont justement de celles qui durent et persistent dans l'œil de ceux qui s'y confrontent.

#### *English translation*

*"Even reaching the tobacco shop a hundred meters down the road becomes a journey." — Issei Suda*

*Thomas Boivin's photographs are united by a shared delicacy, a precision and sobriety that give them their strength. For a long time he did not show his work, preferring to pursue his search for the right gesture and an aesthetic that has no need of demonstration. Neither an intimate photographer nor a documentary one, he chooses not to align his work with the grand classifications of art history, and insists that something always escapes — that the reception of the images he patiently gathers on his Parisian wanderings should never be confined.*

*Faces, and stretches of city that one rarely looks at — the detail of a wall, crates of vegetables waiting for their stall, a park fence under a grey sky: these are what these photographs of great gentleness reveal. His series on Belleville, one of the most significant to date, is composed of dozens of silhouettes, the features of strangers upon whom the image confers a rare depth and density of presence.*

*For him, photography is an art at the mercy of the chances a city offers, and his work is the fruit of long walks, chance encounters, the sudden emergence of a profile at a café counter. The framing is generally frontal, and yet there is no violence in these photographs; they do not impose themselves but gently reveal their nuances. Boivin seeks a certain distance, a lightness too — it is about welcoming what happens, even the most minimal thing, staying as close as possible to the real.*

*Photography is never made of its subjects alone, and one sometimes tends to forget that the quality of the print — of the very object that an image is — contributes as much to its value as what it shows us. And Boivin's prints testify to a great formal rigour. The middle greys unfold with elegance; the transition zones from one space to another, from one texture to another, are of great finesse — such that one must stand before his photographs for several minutes before they fully arrive.*

*There is also an expectation placed on the viewer: a certain quality of attention and looking is required to grasp the power of this work. And these photographs that rise slowly, that open through the act of being seen to reveal their intensity, are precisely those that endure and persist in the eye of those who encounter them.*

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## **a short story — Photobook Review**

Sarah Knelman — Aperture / Photo Book Review 012 (USA), Spring 2017 — Original text in English

EXT. — ITALIAN COURTYARD — DAY. The sun shines on a warm morning as tourists take in the view of the surrounding countryside. A young man with a camera looks instead toward a young woman with

hair glinting in the sunlight as she writes in a notebook. Girl: 'What a nice camera, are you a photographer?' So ensues the finding and following of love to its end.

Twelve intense days retold with a poet's heart and a cinematic drive, scattered loosely over a few months in Italy, France and Portugal. We watch her dancer's body move, undressed, her striking features caught at various angles and distances, like studies of a beautiful statue. We see her leap gleefully from the edge of a walkway and out of the frame. And later we see her expression fall, her sweater pulled tight around her (sudden?) change of heart.

In the spaces between his pictures, like intertitles in old silent movies, we read, in her imperfect English and his perfect French, about journeys taken, letters written, cigarettes smoked, sparkling wine drunk, about a closing declaration of love met only with a reticent hug.

The book that recounts this short story is as provisional and tentative as the affair itself. The black and white images, though carefully arranged, are bluntly printed, and the thin, textured paper stock gives it the feel of a novella, or an unfinished storyboard. As a gesture, it might be a kiss goodbye for the kiss that never was, a memoir of a fleeting affair, or a melancholic love letter to love — the kind that hits you in the pit of the stomach as fast as a girl can smile, the kind that might, as this one did, dissolve to black with the same dreamy speed as it took shape.

<https://aperture.org/pbr-012/photobook-review-012-reviews/>

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## Photobook Reviews — W28/2016

Jorg M. Colberg — Conscientious Photo Magazine (USA), 10 juillet 2016 — Original text in English

People fall in love (and out of love) all the time. Life wouldn't be as exciting as it can be if that weren't the case. Our culture wouldn't be the same without artists of all kinds contributing to re-telling that same story over and over again, without us ever getting tired of hearing it, reading it, seeing it.

That's why and how Thomas Boivin's a short story works so well. Boy meets girl, somewhere, and they meet again, and again, and then at some stage, as is often the case, one of them loses interest, for whatever reasons. The details don't really matter that much because it's not a reportage or a documentary. Instead, it's a man looking at a woman, desiring her and being infatuated by her, watching her doing all kinds of things, every one of which somehow is so important.

The book tells this story well, using text and creative layouts of a kind that of late have become a bit rare. The combination of text and photographs, with layout and design, makes a short story work. You don't need spectacular photographs for a spectacular photobook about love — if everything in the book adds up well, then the book is more than merely a collection of pictures.

a short story is a really strong example of text and image working together — one of my favourites, along with Yolanda by Ignacio Navas, The Spook Light Chronicles, and Love on the Left Bank by Ed Van der Elsen.

<https://cphmag.com/reviews-w282016/>

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## Why oh why is nothing simple anymore

Colin Pantall — Blog (UK), juin 2016 — Original text in English

*A Short Story* by Thomas Boivin is a lovely book. It's a poetic affair, that tells the story of a relationship — from meeting across a table, to the beginning of passion, the apex, the highs and lows of a long distance relationship, final petering out into asymmetrical falling out of love, separation, heartbreak and desolation.

It's a universal story, and the words are universal in a way. They are not pinned down in some ways, and they are certainly not pinned to the pictures which have a floaty, nebulous feel to them. So it's dreamlike.

*A Short Story* is a really strong example of text and image working together and it's probably one of my favourites — along with *Yolanda* by Ignacio Navas, *The Spook Light Chronicles* by Antone Dolezal and *Lara Shipley*, *Yu* by Dragana Jurisic, *Early Works* by Ivars Gravlejs, *Love on the Left Bank* by Ed Van der Elsen.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20221002004435/https://colinpantall.blogspot.com/2016/06/>

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## A Short Story — Thomas Boivin

Gabriela Cendoya — Blog (ES), 11 janvier 2016 — Texto original en castellano

Una historia de amor para comenzar bien el año. *A short story* es una historia de amor y desamor, contada en varios capítulos, o secuencias, en forma de diálogo entre texto y fotografía, que nos lleva de Italia a París, para acabar en Portugal.

Un relato cinematográfico de doce días, donde las palabras, junto con la tipografía y composición, crean una nueva forma de interacción. Algo como un poético story-board. El encuentro es entre una bailarina y un fotógrafo (Vera y Thomas), entre luz, espacio y tiempo. Boivin maneja su relato con mucha sensibilidad.

*A Short Story* va adquiriendo cada vez más densidad según lo lees, creando un ritmo y espacio de la narración tan sutil, entre la fotografía fina y elegante de Thomas, la luz acariciando el cuerpo de Vera en blanco y negro, paseando en movimientos lentos, como en pasos de danza.

Pocos fotolibros manejan el texto con tanta audacia y tan buenos resultados. El diálogo, con su particular tipografía, ocupa un espacio muy importante en la publicación. Thomas Boivin consigue así que tiempo y espacio sean protagonistas principales en el relato. Una herramienta tan potente como la cámara.

Y el resultado es un libro muy especial, inteligente y sensible, un juego a la vez divertido y bello, melancólico y con final triste, como en las mejores películas. Una obra compleja que obliga al lector a una mirada distinta y nueva. Boivin dice en una entrevista que para él un libro de fotografía tiene que leerse como lo mejor de la literatura americana o rusa.

### *English translation*

*A love story to start the year well. A short story is a tale of love and heartbreak, told in several chapters, or sequences, in the form of a dialogue between text and photograph, taking us from Italy to Paris and ending in Portugal.*

*A cinematic narrative of twelve days, where words, combined with typography and layout, create a new form of interaction — something like a poetic storyboard. The encounter is between a dancer and a photographer (Vera and Thomas), between light, space and time. Boivin handles his narrative with great sensitivity.*

*A Short Story gains in density as you read it, establishing a narrative rhythm and space of remarkable subtlety — Thomas's fine, elegant photography, light caressing Vera's body in black and white, moving in slow movements, like dance steps.*

*Few photobooks handle text with such audacity and to such effect. The dialogue, with its distinctive typography, occupies a very prominent place in the publication. Boivin thus makes time and space the principal protagonists of the narrative — a tool as powerful as the camera itself.*

*And the result is a very particular book: intelligent and sensitive, a game that is at once playful and beautiful, melancholic and sad in its ending, like the best films. A complex work that obliges the reader to look differently and anew. Boivin confides in an interview that for him, a photography book must be read like the best of American or Russian literature.*

<https://gabrielacendoya.wordpress.com/2016/01/11/11-de-enero-2016-a-short-story-thomas-boivin/>