

S I M A et ses amis



Marcel DUCHAMP, Île-de-France, c. 1955 - © Estate Michel SIMA



**BOOGIE
WOOGIE**
PHOTOGRAPHY



Galerie Huit Arles

6 JULY - 4 OCTOBER 2026
8 RUE DE LA CALADE ARLES
OPENING HOURS:
WWW.GALERIEHUITARLES.COM

Festival
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Arles



A T M A V O C A T S

Galerie Huit Arles

presents

SIMA et ses amis

Exhibition - Sale

in collaboration avec **Boogie Woogie Photography**
and under the curatorship of **Fabienne Martin**

Opening week of the Rencontres d'Arles:

Monday to Sunday 11am-1pm | 2pm-7pm
Thursday, July 9, 3pm-7pm

July 15 to 31 july :

Wednesday to Saturday 11am-1pm | 3pm-7pm

August 19 to 29 august :

Wednesday to Saturday 11am-1pm | 4pm-7pm

September 2 to October 4

Wednesday to Saturday 11am-1pm | 3pm-6pm

Opening reception on 16 July 2026

6 pm - 8 pm

Private viewings possible by appointment

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SIMA et ses amis

Is there a time when the world will become such a difficult place that it will be impossible for it to be a home for any form of life? Will creation allow us to continue living and save us?

At the end of the 1940's, as the horrors of the Second World War were coming to an end, German philosopher Théodore Adorno answered by declaring that artistic creation was impossible after such a breach in civilisation. Would Michel Smajewski, known as SIMA, reveal the contrary?

Michel Smajewski returned to France in 1945 after having spent three years in concentration camps. Taken in by his friend Romuald Dor de la Souchère, curator at the Château d'Antibes, he gradually regained his physical health, without being able to take up sculpture again. He started photographing his entourage, and his artist friends encouraged him. Weren't photography and sculpture similar in many ways? Didn't they both reproduce reality whilst immortalising it ?

SIMA, who was very close to the artist of the École de Paris, rapidly became a privileged witness of the artistic vitality of the post-war years. He produced unique portraits of his peers. That is why, at Paul Éluard's suggestion, he took on his artist's pseudonym «SIMA», an anagram of the French word for friends : AMIS.

SIMA seems to have been eclipsed by the presence of all the major figures of the 20th-century Paris art scene but the close reading of his photographs reveals extraordinary energy. It is as if the subjects of his portraits were staged for the benefit of the photographer's artistic message: playing along with his photographic exercise or participating in a mise en abyme of living images.

The friendship between SIMA and these artists is most certainly the catalyst that allowed him to gently yet powerfully produce the portrait of a generation far from any academic debate on art.

After having been through the very worst, SIMA brought us the testimony of his life force. It raises one resolutely contemporary question: the importance of the view of the world of those who have faced horror and who become our friends.

Fabienne Martin

Curator

Biography :

Michel Smajewski, known as Michel Sima, was born on May 20, 1912, in Slonim, Poland. He came from the Jewish bourgeoisie.

From his childhood, he devoted himself to drawing and tried his hand at small sculptures.

1929

At 17, he left for Paris, wanting to become sculptor. Admitted to the Académie de la Grande Chaumière, he took drawing courses until 1932 and studied sculpture. He partially earned his living by photographing current events for newspapers.

1934

He became a student of Zadkine, through whom he met Jean Cocteau, who introduced him to Paul Éluard and Picabia. He joined the group of friends who participated in Sunday literary gatherings at Francis Picabia's home.

He began working for news agencies, producing photojournalism coverage on Paris and political events. During this period, he created a portrait of Antonin Artaud, experimented with solarized photography, and took shots of his own sculptures.

1935

He briefly worked for Brancusi. He assisted sculptor Robert Couturier, who was in charge of executing a project for Aristide Maillol for the 1937-1938 Paris Universal Exhibition.

He became friends with Robert and Youki Desnos, a very strong friendship that lasted until Robert Desnos's deportation.

1936

Robert Desnos introduced him to Pablo Picasso and Gertrude Stein. Sima frequented the literary and artistic circle that gathered at Gertrude Stein and her brother Leo's place on Rue de Fleurus

1939

Until 1940, he participated in various group exhibitions and split his time between Paris and Vallauris, where he had a studio.

1942

In July, he exhibited with Picabia at La Lounge Library in Cannes. This exhibition earned him real critical success. A month later, he was denounced, arrested in Golfe-Juan, and deported to Auschwitz. He would be one of the few survivors.

1945

Upon his liberation in May 1945, he took refuge in Cannes with his friend Romuald Dor de la Souchère, curator of the Antibes castle. At that time, he made portraits of Antonin Artaud, experiments with solarized photos, and shots of his sculptures.

In May of the same year, he was admitted to a clinic in Grasse where he remained several months convalescing.

1946

He returned to Golfe-Juan where he found Picasso, who gave him emotional and material support. Thanks to Sima, Picasso, cramped in his vacation spot, obtained permission to use a room in the Antibes castle as a studio. On Picasso's advice, Sima took up photography again. He photographed Picasso's work and the evolution of his creation. This was the beginning of a unique photographic documentation of the artist and his work.

1947

The magazine "Aux écoutes" published an article stating that Sima was the only one able to photograph Picasso's last paintings. He refused to sell these shots, regardless of the offer

1948

Solo exhibition of Sima at the Galerie Lambert in Cannes featuring carved stones he picked up on the beach. Publication of Sima's first book "Picasso à Antibes" by René Drouin with an introduction by Jaime Sabartes and a poem by Paul Éluard.

1949

Sima participated in the group exhibition "De Palissy à Picasso" organized in Vallauris

1987

Death of Sima.

Shortly before his death, he entrusted his complete works, as well as the negatives of his voluminous archives, to Pierre, his only son.

1950

Group exhibition with Picabia at the Galerie Colette Allendy in Paris.

1951-1961

He dedicated himself to photographic portraits of artists. Thus his visual chronicle of the second period of the "École de Paris" came to light.

1952

Solo exhibition at the Galerie H. Niepce in Paris, Sima presented new ceramics and small enamelled sculptures.

1959

Fernand Nathan Publishing released "21 Visages d'Artistes". Disappointed with the quality of this publication, Sima decided never to publish photographs again.

1967

He discovered Ardèche through his friend René Besset and decided to settle there with his family. In the south, he dedicated himself again to sculpture, using olive wood he found there.

Press visuals :



MATISSE Henri (1869-1954) Villa le Rêve, Vence 1948 ©estate Michel SIMA



FOUJITA Tsugouharou ou FOUJITA
Léonard (1886-1968)
Rue Delambre, Paris 1951
©estate Michel SIMA

GIACOMETTI Alberto (1901- 1966)
Rue Hippolyte Maindron, Paris c.1953
©estate Michel SIMA



GILOT Françoise (1921-2023)
Atelier de F. GILOT, Paris c.1954
©estate Michel SIMA



About Galerie Huit Arles

Founded in 2007, Galerie Huit Arles has built a solid reputation thanks to its rigorous selection of artists whether established or emerging and the quality of its hangings and installations. Exhibitions are organized independently or in collaboration with other structures. Its partners include numerous collaborations, including the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, Helmut Newton Foundation Berlin, The British Journal of Photography, Factum Arte, and Galerie Sit Down in Paris. In addition to its regular exhibitions and prestigious openings, the gallery hosts artistic stays for discerning travelers, artist residencies, and thematic workshops. Much more than a simple exhibition space, Galerie Huit Arles is a place of creation, inspiration, and conviviality, located in an exceptional setting.

Pour en savoir plus : www.galeriehuitarles.com

About Boogie Woogie Photography: :

Boogie Woogie Photography is a gallery founded in Hong Kong in 2016 to promote photography in Asia. It takes its name from Piet Mondrian's painting, *Broadway Boogie Woogie* (1942-43), and the blues dance music he so adored. The launch of Boogie Woogie Photography responds to the growing interest in artistic photographic prints in Asia. Collectors, galleries, and museums are now increasingly promoting photographic works and the artists who produce them. Boogie Woogie Photography's mission is to serve as a platform for galleries, collectors, businesses, and photographers wishing to develop photographic projects in Hong Kong and Asia. Under the direction of Vanessa Franklin, the gallery represents photographers, organizes exhibitions as curator or producer, and advises collectors. Boogie Woogie Photography is located in a spacious loft in Wong Chuk Hang, Hong Kong's new art district. Visits are by appointment only.

About Fabienne Martin :

Fabienne Martin is the founder of FAM, the pioneering modelling agency created in Paris in 1977. At a time when the arts and fashion were undergoing profound cultural transformations, Fabienne Martin envisioned an agency that would be much more than a business: a true creative laboratory where models, photographers and designers could collaborate freely.

Over two decades, she cultivated an environment that championed individuality and experimentation, helping to shape a singular and bold vision of womanhood.

Under her direction, FAM became a central place for some of the most innovative photographers of the time, leaving a lasting mark on both the aesthetics and culture of fashion.

Her legacy lives on through the radical creativity she encouraged and the community she built: a group of artists who celebrate not only beauty, but also collaboration, boldness and vision.

About ATM Avocats :

ATM Avocats is an independent law firm based in Paris, renowned for its expertise in business law, intellectual property law, media and press law, and art law.

Founded by Maître Alain Toucas-Massillon, the firm has for many years advised public figures, artists, collectors, galleries, cultural institutions, and creative industry professionals in the protection, promotion, and transmission of their works and rights.



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