

608. NEW YORK, 1947

(French, 1908-2004)

Gelatin silver print.

13 5/8 x 9 3/16" (34.6 x 23.3 cm)

Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson, Paris

Audio courtesy of Acoustiguide



PETER GALASSI:

Cartier-Bresson loved to talk about how he [could] be so discreet and inconspicuous that nobody ever noticed him. And in fact, he did have that talent, and many of his pictures are observations of scenes that were going on where it's important that he wasn't disturbing the reality that he was trying to describe. But every now and then, comes along a picture that he couldn't have made except for the fact that he was noticed. And this is one of the greatest ones.

This picture, made in Foley Square in New York, in 1947, is a perfect example of a picture that couldn't exist unless he had been noticed. [In] the frame that he made before this picture, these three guys are talking on the steps. And then two of them noticed him. And one of them is your absolutely classic powerful, self-satisfied, New York lawyer/ businessman and he sort of puffs out his chest and displays his self-satisfaction to Cartier-Bresson and that's what makes the picture.