



615. AUTOMOBILE SHOW, PARIS, 1968

(French, 1908-2004)

Gelatin silver print.

7 15/16 x 11 3/4" (20.2 x 29.8 cm).

Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson, Paris

Audio courtesy of Acoustiguide

PETER GALASSI:

There's no question that Cartier-Bresson's heart was in the old ways of life. But above all, what he paid attention to was the life of people in front of him. And so although he may have not liked it, he paid very acute and sensitive attention to the transformations of life that were brought by modern industry and commerce.

This picture is a perfect example of that. It's not just the automobile, because there's nothing particularly new about that. But it was the automobile show. Where the people go and they're captivated by the new, and the shiny, and the thrill of consumerism.

He once said to me, "Now, Peter, you have to remember, that the 1930s were still the 19th century." And what he really meant was that the world we know now, where technology is everywhere, where consumerism is everywhere, is really something that's rather recent. And part of what makes Cartier-Bresson's work so extraordinary, and I think in photography, fundamentally unique, is not just its global reach but that it also had this historical reach, from the old world of centuries and centuries ago, into the world that we live in now.