

### ETIENNE BERTRAND WEILL

UN COUP DE PEIGNE ASTRAL

## **ETIENNE BERTRAND WEILL** UN COUP DE PEIGNE ASTRAL

Exhibition at Galerie Maria Wettergren, Paris 5 November, 2022 - 14 January, 2023

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### INTRODUCTION

By Maria Wettergren

"Étienne Bertrand Weill invents "abstract" images by making mobiles and putting them into motion in front of his camera, resulting in beautiful imaginary volumes, with bodies of light and skins of shadow."

> Jean-Claude Lemagny Historian of photography

On the occasion of the Month of Photography 2022, and in collaboration with the Estate of Etienne Bertrand Weill, Galerie Maria Wettergren is pleased to present the gallery's second solo exhibition of Etienne Bertrand Weill's work, featuring over twenty original silver gelatin and cibachrome prints from the 1960s and 1970s.

'Sculpting light' [Sculpter la lumière] is the title behind E. B. Weill's project, who in the 1950s began his kinetic work based on light in motion. Inventor of his own tools and creative processes conceived specifically to produce these families of images, it was in around 1957 that he began to build mobiles made from simple materials (wood, glass, Plexiglas, wire...) that he then subjected to light and various movements. E. B. Weill imagined an art where the film would not have "even enough time to seize the contours of the object. What remains of the object's form *is a new transient appearance".* This momentary appearance, he would name "Metaform" [Métaforme].

In a dedicatory poem written in 1963 entitled "Un commerce de lumières forgées avec le surnaturel " (A Trade of Forged Lights with the Supernatural), Jean Arp echoes his admiration for E. B. Weill's "Metaforms", which he likened to "an astral combing... ropes of stars... from real stars to dreamy companions... hourglass wonders... vibrations and waves of flowers." A book project is later born in 1964, imagined as a 'naked' dialogue between Arp's poem and 12 of E. B. Weill's "Metaforms". It would nevertheless remain in the state of a preprint model. Galerie Maria Wettergren is delighted to publish, for the first time, a limited edition of this unseen art book, based on the original model. The publication is scheduled for the start of 2023.

For the scenography of the exhibition, Galerie Maria Wettergren pays tribute to the kinetic dimension of his art with photographic works suspended freely in space, inspired by E.B. Weill's exhibitions of the 1960s and 70s. A continuation of the exhibition will include a projection of his audio-visual work "Musique pour les yeux" (Music for the Eyes), kinetic suites of "Metaforms" composed in collaboration with other artists, musicians, dancers, and comedians, revealing the artist's aspiration towards a musical and immaterial dimension; a total art. E. B. Weill's pioneering work remains avantgarde even today. The 2012 retrospective at the BnF, *Vertige du Corps*, testifies to this and was preceded by a large number of solo and group exhibitions, as well as screenings of "Music for the Eyes." E. B. Weill's work can be found in private collections and museums in France including the Centre Pompidou, Paris; Musée Reattu, Arles; and the BnF, Paris. His works can equally be found in collections in the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Germany and Israel.





## **"CONCERNING THE SPIRITUAL IN ART"**

By Joëlle Naïm

"Detached from [the artist], [the true work of art] takes on an autonomous life, becomes a personality, an independent subject, animated with a spiritual breath, which equally leads a real material existence – a being."

> Wassily Kandinsky "Concerning the Spiritual in Art"

In exhibiting a group of *Métaformes* created by the photographer Etienne Bertrand Weill (1911-2001), Galerie Maria Wettergren allows us to discover, or rediscover, the universe of this artist who, in the secrecy of his studio, far from the beaten tracks, developed a powerful oeuvre - of which the *Métaformes* are the culmination and summit – crossing over the second half of the twentieth century and establishing itself within its artistic movements, such as abstract art or kinetic art.

The change of century did not diminish the force that emanates from this set of work. On the contrary. For those of us who are immersed in the racket of the present dark times and the erratic movements that disrupt it, to walk among these photographs, suspended by an invisible thread, black and white or in color, abstract writings combed with a brush of light, is to participate in a motionless but vibrant dance, it is to listen to and "see" a silver silence that is capable of carrying us away, enlightening us. Presented as they are, in a beautiful revisitation of an historic exhibition, these sumptuous frozen images give us the feeling of entering a cathedral of which only fragments remain suspended in time and space.

The magic that emanates from these works, from these ethereal veils that seem to be moved by a quasi-divine, cosmic breath - hence the metaphor of the "astral combing" used by Jean Arp -, pipe organs of light, charcoal-infused explosions, light



whirlwinds, could make the spectator believe, at first glance, that this is the fruit of a "New Age" inspiration. This would be a great misunderstanding of the meaning and the meticulous exploration that led to their creation.

If there is a spiritual element in this art, something that Wassily Kandinsky would certainly not have denied, it is the fruit of a complex process, the result of a true artistic asceticism. This art of the essential was sharpened by its contact with other forms of expression - sculpture, architecture, painting, dance, music, mime -, whose spirit, rhythms and "inner resonances" (Kandinsky, id.) he captured, as an alchemist lover of synesthesia, in order to nourish his own photographic style, bordering on the sacred.

It was particularly as the photographer of Étienne Decroux, that Étienne Bertrand Weill was trained to study, even listen to, the movement of the subtlest body, detached from all contexts and contingencies. The mime knew how to become a sculpture in movement, and disappear as such, until, dressed in a black leotard outlined by a white line around the whole body, advancing on a black background, he became pure movement.

The *Métaformes* are the ultimate culmination of these experiments, in which the human body is replaced by a minimal object in motion. This carefully designed mobile, in wire, wood, glass or Plexiglas,

after being set in motion with a calculated speed and lit at a certain angle, adopting a very precise exposure time, will vanish completely in the ensuing photograph, as if dissolved by the light. Μετά means "beyond, after" in ancient Greek. In front of these works, let's not stop at the form, already splendid, icy fire, crystalline pipe organs, crosshatched swirls... They are frozen movements, time metamorphosed into space.

This is why one has rightly spoken of "Musique pour les yeux" [Music for the eyes] (Maurice Fleuret) with regard to these works. Music, the art of time, is the very principle behind the elaboration of this form of abstraction. Many of the titles are there to guide us in this understanding: Magnificat, Contrepoint, Chants hélicés, Clé de lune, Cantate...

This is further revealed in the audiovisual kinetic montages, also presented in the exhibition. Although merely "reproductions" of the kinetic suites executed by the artist himself during dance or poetry performances, they nevertheless confirm the meaning of the photographs by putting them in motion, and thus, activating their potential, their inherent pulsations. The visual sequences, born of and accompanied by the rhythms of music, dance or voice, transform the space, or here the screen, into vibrant and fusional intensities, powerful enough "to cause vibrations of pure resonance in the soul " (Kandinsky, id.).





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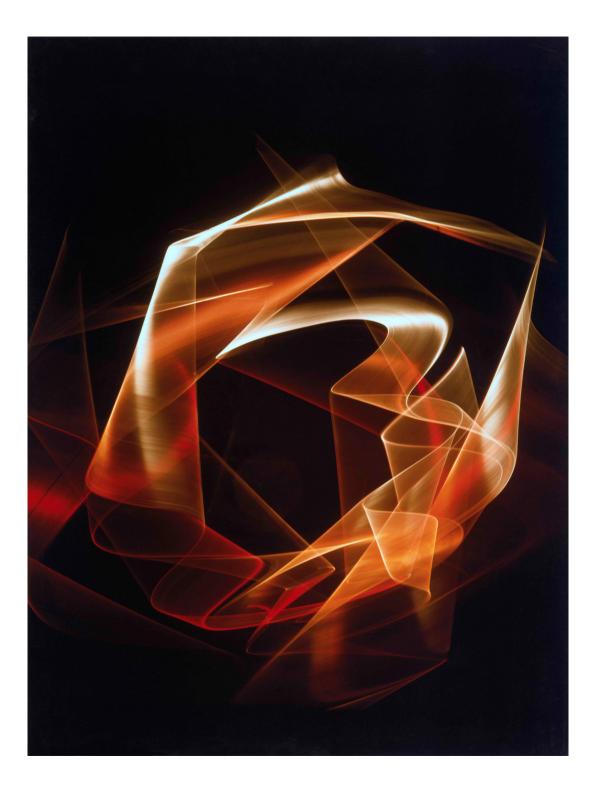


Exhibition view: Etienne Bertrand Weill, *Un coup de peigne astral* (Photo: Nicolas Brasseur) Galerie Maria Wettergren, 2022 UN COMMERCE DE LUMIERES FORGEES AVEC LE SURNATUREL Un sosie d'Edgar Allan Poe découvrit un jour de désespérance dans le tiroir de son secrétaire acheté a un émigré des petites poudres provoquant d'aimables tourbillons un commerce de lumières forgées avec le surnaturel. Perruques de lumière. Un coup de peigne astral. Des cordages d'étoiles. De véritables astres en compagnons de rêve. Ouragans de photographe. Sabliers de merveilles. Vibrations et ondes de fleurs. Des brouillards sévères dont je n'ai jamais vu de pareils dans mes nombreux voyages. Tentes d'éclatements desquelles sortent des armées d'enfants. Vous me demandez d'où elles sortent? De chaises et de pots qui explosent de lits fracassés par des Quatorze-Juillets privés. C'est Etienne-Bertrand Weill qui en détient le secret!

31 janvier 1963

Jean Arp (1886-1966)





he proposes."

Kol Hazamir, 1974 40,4 x 30 cm Original cibachrome print by E.B. Weill "As a generator of images, he offers us a setting in which we are free to imagine, to interpret the dream of our choice. Etienne Bertrand Weill does not impose,

> Jean-Claude Gautrand Photo tribune, January 1970

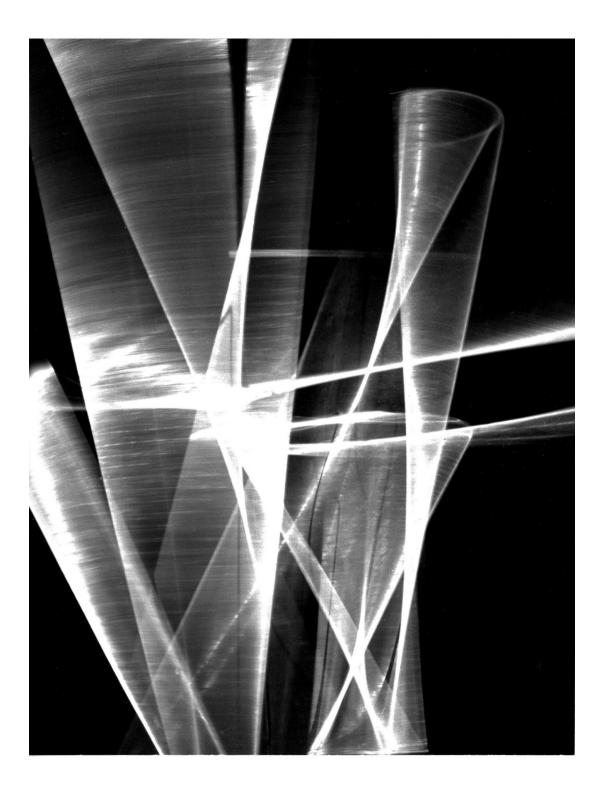
# **METAFORMES** SILVER GELATIN PRINTS (1957 - 1966)



"Like music, the Métaformes are created by various vibrations or modulations distributed in time and space (volume). When an object moves during a given time, it generates a modulation perceptible to the eye through the camera. This modulation becoming object, the succession of the various modulations thus created, by their sequence, their metamorphoses, their oppositions, their fugues, their ruptures, their rhythms, etc. become in a way elements of visual music."

Exhibition view: Etienne Bertrand Weill, *Un coup de peigne astral* (Photo: Nicolas Brasseur) Galerie Maria Wettergren, 2022

"Les Métaformes par Étienne Bertrand Weill" Today, N° 35, February 1962



*Cantate,* 1957 50 x 40 cm Original silver gelatin print by E.B. Weill



"...un commerce de lumières forgées avec le surnaturel.
Perruques de lumière.
Un coup de peigne astral.
Des cordages d'étoiles.
De véritables astres en compagnons de rêve.
Ouragans de photographe.
Sabliers de merveilles.
Vibrations et ondes de fleurs."

Jean Arp

"Un commerce de lumières forgées avec le surnaturel" Extract of poem dedicated to Etienne Bertrand Weill, 1963

> *Circé,* 1961 80,5 x 58,6 cm Original silver gelatin print by E.B. Weill





"As I sought to express the ambience of the stage and its different phases of movement in a single image, I studied and tried to master the movement, the invisible trajectory that only photography can capture. This rendering of the invisible that places time into space... "

Étienne Bertrand Weill "Du spectacle au mouvement" Artist note, undated

> *Contrepoint,* 1961, (pages 26-27) 39,5 x 50 cm Original silver gelatin print by E.B. Weill

Proposition Pour Un Décors Classique, 1963 59,5 x 47 cm Original silver gelatin print by E.B. Weill





*Magnificat,* 1963 80,5 x 58 cm Original silver gelatin print by E.B. Weill



Exhibition view: Etienne Bertrand Weill, *Un coup de peigne astral* (Photo: Nicolas Brasseur) Galerie Maria Wettergren, 2022









*Justice*, 1963 47,5 x 31,5 cm Original silver gelatin print by E.B. Weill

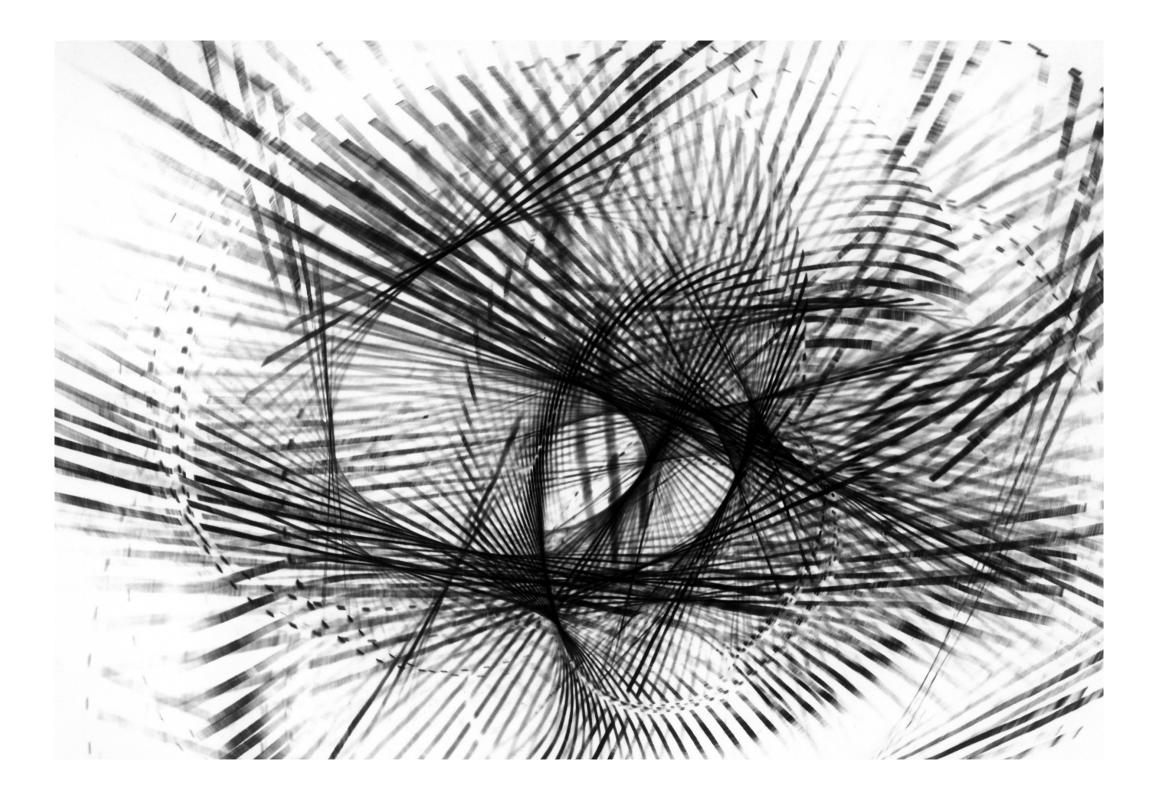




Le Passage, 1964 50 x 34 cm Original silver gelatin print by E.B. Weill

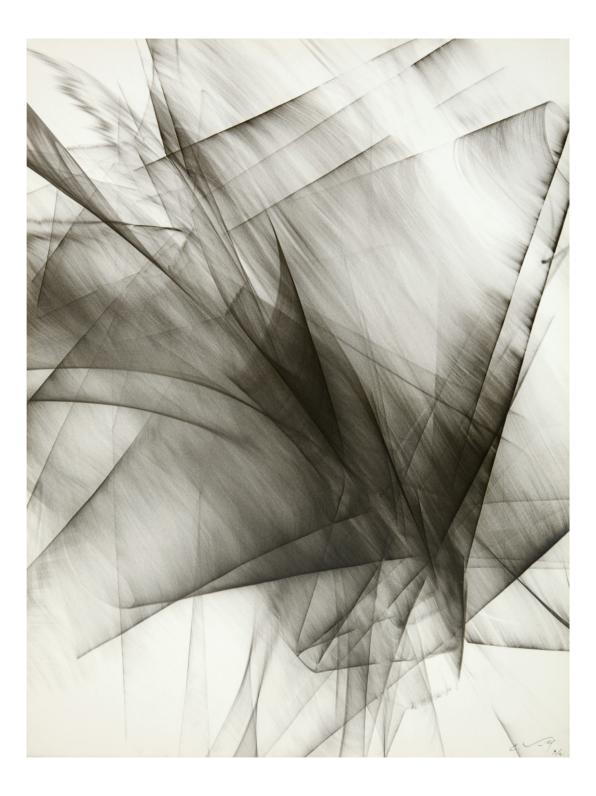
"What remains on the paper is the transfiguration of matter and form by movement and time."

> Étienne Bertrand Weill "Métaformes", ca. 1965





Exhibition view: Etienne Bertrand Weill, *Un coup de peigne astral* (Photo: Nicolas Brasseur) Galerie Maria Wettergren, 2022



Mesure À Mille Temps, 1965, (pages 38-39) 44 x 58 cm Original silver gelatin print by E.B. Weill

> *Psaume LVII (Fugitive Inversée),* 1966 59 x 44 cm Original silver gelatin print by E.B. Weill



*Chants Hélicés,* 1966 59 x 44,5 cm Original silver gelatin print by E.B. Weill

# **METAFORMES** CIBACHROME PRINTS (1964 - 1984)





THE R. L.



Manager Street

Exhibition view: Etienne Bertrand Weill, *Un coup de peigne astral* (Photo: Nicolas Brasseur) Galerie Maria Wettergren, 2022

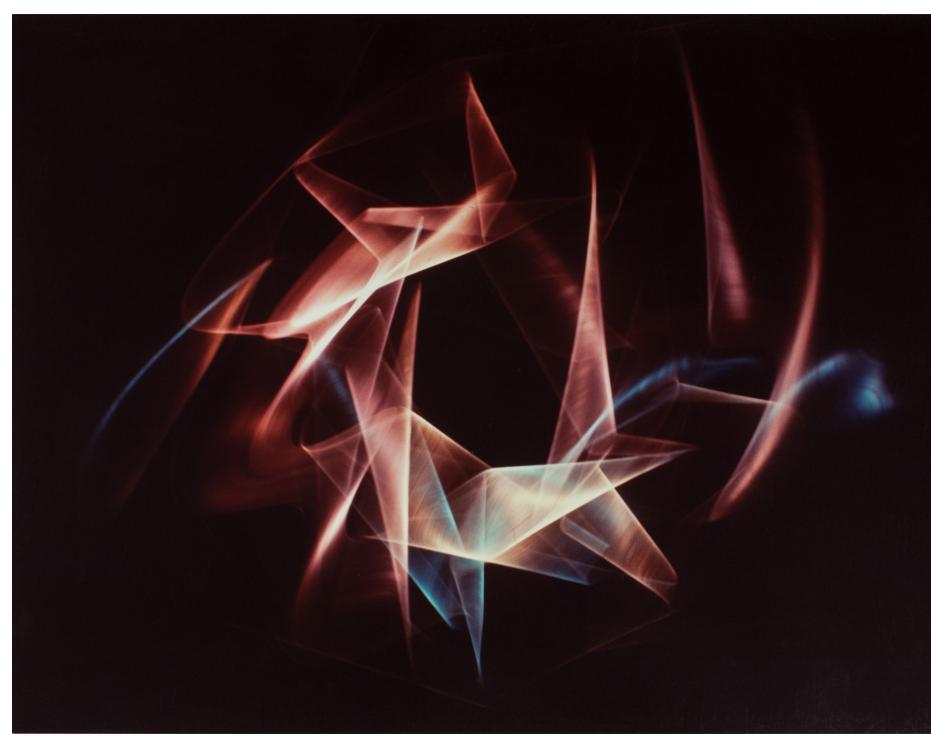
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"I think that one of the roles of the artist ... is to help others find their view (on the world and on things) and with this gaze, the fundamental feeling, according to Heschel, of wonder."

Étienne Bertrand Weill's comment on Agam's film





*Fantaisie Pour Une Étoile*, 1964, (pages 52-53) 30,2 x 40,5 cm Original cibachrome print by E.B. Weill

> *Tourbillonnante,* 1964 40,5 x 30,5 cm Original cibachrome print by E.B. Weill

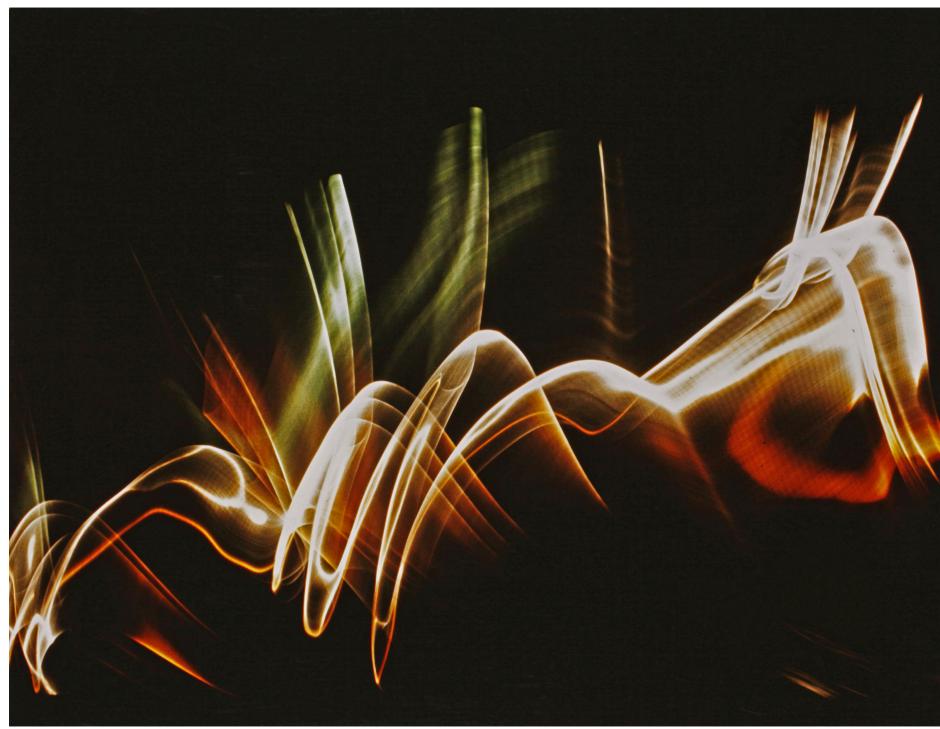


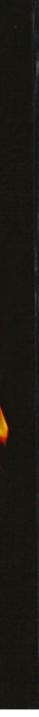
"...quel vent muet m'emporte et laisse Mon corps en de nouveaux atours, Etonné que rien ne le blesse De ces départs et ces retours ? Toute dévolue aux méandres de mes caprices irisés, Où suis-je au fond de ces baisers D'aurore et de salamandres ?"

Extract of the poem "La pieuvre" by Robert Ganzo, on which Weill made an audiovisual montage and which included Caprices Irisés (1967)

Caprices Irisés, 1967 30,4 x 41,4 cm Tirage Cibachrome d'époque réalisé par E.B. Weill





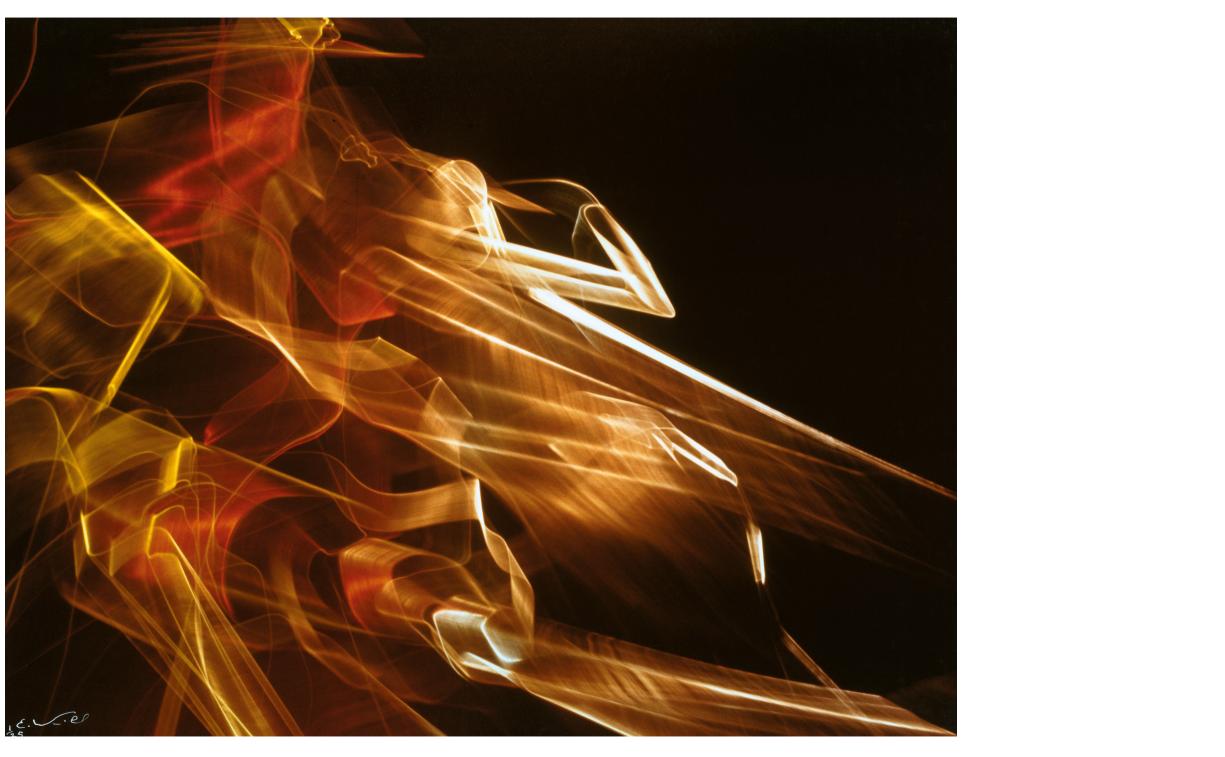




*Chevauchée Iréelle*, 1970, (pages 58-59) 30,4 x 40 cm Original cibachrome print by E.B. Weill

*Venue d'ailleurs*, ca.1970 - 1980 40,5 x 30 cm Original cibachrome print by E.B. Weill





*Nacrée,* 1971, (pages 62-63) 30,4 x 40,4 cm Original cibachrome print by E.B. Weill

Etude pour un trio - 14e Variation, 1978, (pages 64-65) 30,5 x 40,2 cm Original cibachrome print by E.B. Weill

> *Evolutive,* 1979 40,5 x 30,5 cm Original cibachrome print by E.B. Weill









*Solaire*, 1984, (pages 68-69) 30,4 x 40,4 cm Original cibachrome print by E.B. Weill

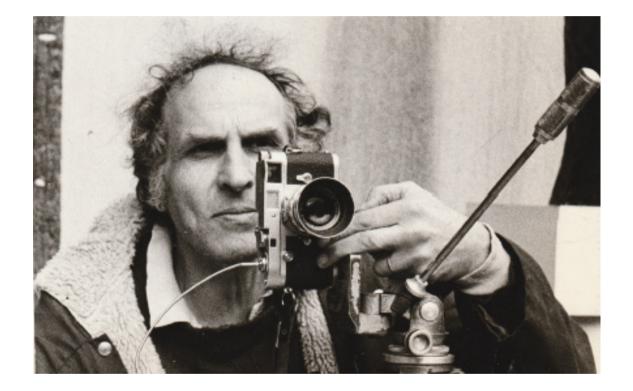
*A Venir*, 1984 40,5 x 30,5 cm Original cibachrome print by E.B. Weill



Exhibition view: Etienne Bertrand Weill, *Un coup de peigne astral* (Photo: Nicolas Brasseur) Galerie Maria Wettergren, 2022



	Co. 1011-108	



#### SHORT BIOGRAPHY

1919	Born in Paris
1938	Graduated from the National School of
1940	Mobilized in June, debacle, youth work
1942-1943	Member of the resistance (the Sixth 'E works as a laboratory assistant at the and forging papers in the guise of a pl
1944	Joined the underground 'Eclaireurs Israéli and participated in the liberation of Vos of Germany
1946	Returns to Paris, builds a photo studio in
1947	Meets Marcel Marceau who introduces h
1948	Marries Jacqueline. Followed by birth c
	Nadine 1952, Eliane 1955.
1956	First attempts of his Métaformes
1957	First exhibition of Métaformes
1958	Cécile is born
1963	'Laboratoire des Arts', project for the Osal J-L.Renucci and F.E.Alata, architects
1965	First audiovisual show, "Sol de Compiègr Bernard Mermod at the Vieux Colombie
1976-83	Teacher at the University of Paris I Sorb
1981-83	Jury member, visual arts
1987	Emigrates to Israel
2000	Audiovisual show on three texts by Anc performance by Tamara Mielnik
01/2001	Death of the artist

### PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Centre Pompidou, Paris, France

French National Library (BnF), Cabinet of Prints and Photography, Paris, France French National Library (BnF), Department of Performing Arts, Paris, France Museum of Fine Arts and Archaeology, Toulouse, France Nicéphore Niepce Museum, Chalon sur Saône, France

of Photography and Cinema rk camps

Eclaireurs Israélites de France'), ne Neyrpic factories in Grenoble ohoto studio

lites de France' then joined the army osges, Alsace and the occupation

n the bathroom next to his bedroom him to his master, Étienne Decroux of Laure 1949, Marie-Anne 1951,

akaWorldFair, in collaboration with

gne" by Robert Desnos, narrated by bier Theater (Paris) rbonne, Department of Visual Arts

ndré Neher - "Empreintes", dance

Museum of Fine Arts and Archaeology, Toulon, France Musée Réattu, Arles, France Galerie Nationale de Prêt Photographique, Paris, France Pierre David-Weill Collection, Paris, France Museum of Fine Arts and Archaeology, Besançon, France City Hall, Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA

#### SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2022	Un coup de peigne astral, Galerie Maria Wettergren, Paris, France
2014	Métaforme (Photographies 1959 – 1982), Galerie Maria Wettergren, Paris, France
2012	Vertige du Corps, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, France
2008	Galerie Hautefeuille, Paris, France
2007	La librairie de la photo, Paris, France
2005	Mimos, 23th International Festival of Mime
	Centre Culturel de la Visitation, Périgueux, France
2001	Hommage à Étienne Bertrand Weill, Théâtre Gérard Béhar, Jerusalem, Israel
	Centre de la Danse Suzanne Dellal, Tel-Aviv, Israel
1993	Festival du Mouvement Theater International et Galerie Esther Klein,
	Philadelphia, USA
1992	Alliance française, Jerusalem, Israel
1989	Theatre of Chicago, Chicago, USA
1988	Centre Yaïr, Jerusalem, Israel
1986	Centre Rashi, Paris, France
1983	Montreal Cinémathèque & Winnipeg Theatre, Canada
1981-82	Travelling exhibition in the universities of Georgia, Kansas, New York and
	the Cultural Centers of Maine, North Carolina and Wisconsin, USA
1980	Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie, Besançon, France
1979	Club Méditerranée, Neuilly, France
1978	French Embassy, New York, USA
	Musée Guimet, Paris, France
	Musée de Poitiers, Poitiers, France
1977	C.A.E.S. – C.N.R.S. Meudon-Bellevue, France
	Centre culturel de Garches, Garches, France
1976	Galerie Saint Roch. Paris. France

Centre Rashi, Paris, France Orly Airport, Paris, France Galerie Lilienhof, Fribourg en Brisgau, Germany Bibliothèque Municipale de Troyes, Troyes, France Inauguration of the Centre Culturel du Vésinet, Vésinet, France 1975 Galerie Cottache, Paris, France Centre Culturel de la ville nouvelle de Cergy-Pontoise, France Centre Rashi, Paris, France Parti socialiste, rencontres culture, Paris, France Chälon sur Saône, France Maison de la Culture, Colombes, France 1974 Maison Jean Vilar, Marly le Roi, France Rencontres de la Culture du Parti Socialiste, Cité Universitaire, Paris, France Gallery Knoll, Nîmes, France 1973 Librairie Lamartine, Paris, France Centre Alsthom, Paris, France Holstebro Museum, Denmark, Copenhagen 1972 Maison des Jeunes et de la Culture, Paris, France Malakoff Festival de Collias, Île-de-France, France 1971 Secrétariat des Clubs, Paris, France Théâtre Récamier (Compagnie Renaud-Barrault), Paris, France Wervicg-Sud, Châtillon sous Bagneux, France 1969 Palais de l'Europe, Menton, France Travelling exhibition in le Havre, Centre Culturel des Dombes, France 1968 Châtillon / Chalaronne, Bourg en Bresse, France Nouveau Centre Culturel d'Yerres, France 1967 Cloître de la Cathédrale de Vaison la Romaine, Vaison-la-Romaine, France Musée de Louviers, Louviers, France 1966 Maison de la Culture, Le Plessis Robinson, France Institut français, Sarrebrueck, Germany Edinburgh festival, Edinburgh, United Kingdom Ambassade de France, Tel-Aviv, Israel 1965 Institut Français de Haïfa, Haïfa, Israel Institut Français d'Eilat, Eilat, Israel Maison de la Culture de Beersheba, Israël Institut Français de Cologne, Germany 1964 Sarrebruck University, Germany

1962	Métaformes, Maison des Beaux Arts, Paris, France
1960	Travelling exhibition in France and Austria through the Ministry of Culture in
	France
1957	Al ferro di Caballo, Rome, Italy & Centre of French Studies in Milan, Italy
1956	Galerie d'Orsay, Paris, France
1955	Festival de Salzbourg, Salzbourg, Austria
	Galerie d'Orsay, Paris, France
1954	Galerie Palmes, Paris, France
	Université de Friboug en Brisgau, Germany

### SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2019	Vers d'autres rives, Galerie Maria Wettergren, Paris, France
2017	Corps et Ames, Galerie Jeanne Bucher Jaeger, Paris, France
	Le pouvoir du geste, Grande Salle de l'Aubette, Strasbourg, France
2016	Trajets de Iumière, Galerie Maria Wettergren, Paris, France
2015	Photographie française du vingtième siècle, Pordenone, Italy
2008	Acteurs en scène, regards de photographe, Bibliothèque Nationale de
	France, Paris, France
2005	L'œil moteur. Art cinétique et optique, Musée d'Art Moderne de Strasbourg, France
	Galerie « A l'Art Notre », Paris, France

- 1999 Exhibition Renaud Barrault, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, France
- Le temps d'un mouvement, Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris, France 1987
- Le Bougé, Edinburgh, London, United Kingdom 1985 Musée de Beaune, France and in Australia
- La photographie créative, Pavillon des Arts au Forum des Halles, Paris, France 1984
- 1983 Salon de la Photo, Porte de Versailles, France
- Une autre photographie, Maison des Arts, Créteil, France 1982
- Les photographes de l'Imaginaire, Palais de la Découverte, Paris, France 1979
- Inauguration of the Centre Pompidou, Paris, France 1977 Festival de Théâtre Musical de Poitiers, Poitiers, France
- Biennale d'Ibiza, Ibiza, Spain 1976
- 1975 Espace Mobile, Centre Culturel de Cergy Pontoise, Cergy, France Maison de la Culture de Chalon-sur-Saône, France Musée de Biot. France
- Les peintres Musicalistes, Galerie Hexagramme, Paris, France 1974

Biennale du Noir et Blanc, La Garenne Colombes, France Salon d'Art Sacré, La Grange de Négron, Nazelles-Négron, France

- Groupe des 30×40. Tel Aviv-Jaffa, Israel
- 1973 10e Festival d'Art Contemporain de Royan, Royan, France
- Journées du Graphisme, Dijon, France 1972 Maison de Toulouse-Midi-Pyrénées, Paris, France 1971
  - Le Ballet Théâtre Contemporain, Paris, France Palazzo dell'Arte, Milan, Italy
- Festival Européen de l'Image Photographique, Pau, France 1970 Le Dynamisme, Wervicg-Sud, France World Expo, Osaka, Japan
- Troisième Festival de la Photographie, Besançon, France 1968 Cinétisme, Spectacle, environnement, Grenoble, France Exposition d'Art Cinétique, Paris, France Espace Mobile pour un parcours, Cartoucherie de Vincennes, Paris, France
- Espace Mobile, Centre Culturel International de Royaumont, Asnières-sur-1967 Oise, France
- International Exhibition of Photography, Edinburgh, United Kingdom 1966
- 1963 Laboratoire des Arts, Paris, France
- 1949 Salon National de la Photographie, Paris, France

