

Centre
de la photographie
de Mougins



Stephens Shames





Press kit

**Comrade Sisters:
Women of the Black
Panther Party**


**28.06 –
6.10.2024**

Curators:

**François Cheval
and Yasmine Chemali**

**Opening
on Thursday 27.06
2024
19:00**

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The Mougins Center of Photography is an institution dedicated to still and moving images, tasked with promoting and exhibiting the many trends in contemporary photography. Open to all forms of photographic modernity, the Center, as a municipal institution, boosts the cultural and tourism sector of the town of Mougins, seeking to enhance the region and foster international communication. From its opening on July 3rd 2021, its mission is to support the creation and experimentations of artists of all profiles: from France or overseas, up-and-coming or established. This support takes various forms including producing, exhibiting, publishing and residencies. Other local authorities in the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region (PACA), including those of Marseille and Nice, are already demonstrating a dynamic approach to photography by way of varied exhibitions or thanks to proactive publishing houses and diverse residency programs. The Mougins Center of Photography will complement these activities by providing a similar service for contemporary photography.

Comrade Sisters: Women of the Black Panther Party

Stephen Shames was twenty years old when, as a student at Berkeley, he came into contact with the beginnings of what would later become the Black Panther Party. From that moment onwards, he followed the history of this movement for emancipation within the Civil Rights movement until its dissolution. Benefitting from the friendship of the principle leaders, in particular Bobby Seale and Huey Newton, the photographer could report freely on all the forms of a political organisation that wanted to be involved in every aspect of the African-American community, from food aid to education, health to security. A relatively unknown aspect of the Black Panther Party, which these photographs bring to light, is the place occupied by activists within the organisation. Women, some of whom would go on to achieve certain notoriety (Gloria Abernethy, Evon Carter, Kathleen Cleaver, Angela Davis, Ericka Huggins, Adrienne Humphrey), were on the front line of every struggle. They were the ones who set up free breakfasts for schoolchildren, medical clinics and schools, distributed the media and so forth. Of all ages and walks of life, they represented two-thirds of the organisation's activists. As speakers and organisers, these activists were committed to redefining the role of women within the organisation itself! This lends an original dimension to the story, providing it with a distinctive resonance.

As Angela Davis points out, this exhibition "reminds us that women were literally at the heart of this new political approach to Black freedom."

François Cheval

'Stephen Shames:
Comrade Sisters, Women
of the Black Panther Party'
is the first exhibition in
an African-American trilogy,
followed by those
of Bayeté Ross Smith
and Kwame Brathwaite.

This exhibition takes part
of the Rencontres d'Arles
program as part
of the Grand Arles Express
manifestation.

Biography

Stephen Shames

Born in 1947 in Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA, Stephen Shames was a student at the University of Berkeley in California when, at the age of 20, he met Bobby Seale, founder of the Black Panther Party, during an anti-Vietnam War protest in San Francisco. As the party's privileged photographer, he became its main chronicler for seven years, from 1967 to 1973. Feeling more like an activist than a mere bystander, he decided to make photography a form of political engagement and the Black Panthers' struggle his primary battleground.

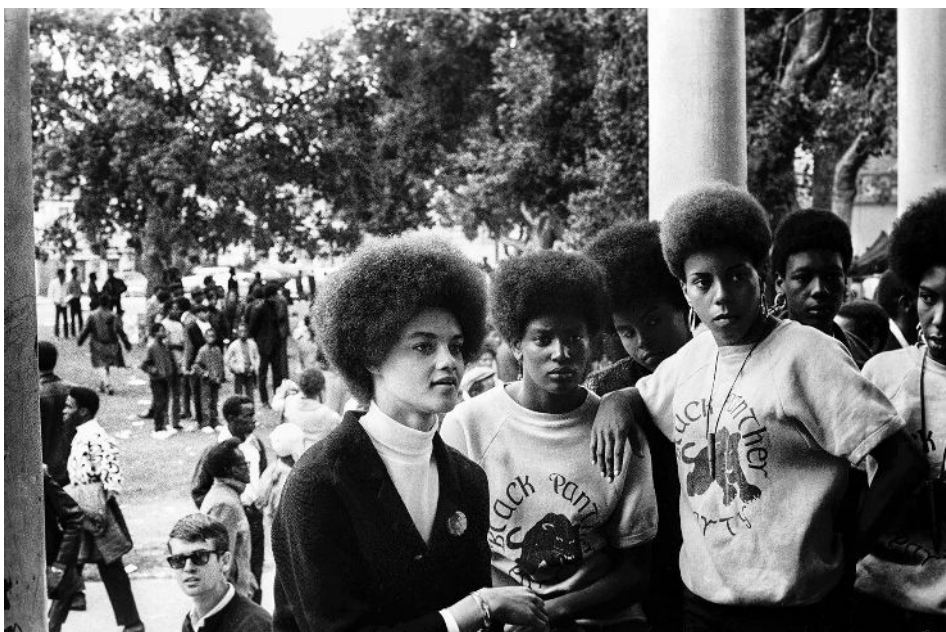
As a photojournalist, Stephen Shames captured life on the streets of the Bronx, particularly focusing on youth ('Bronx Boys', 1970-1980). Known for his documentary and socially conscious work, he delved into issues of social misery and poverty, particularly that of children, a subject on which he testified before the United States Senate in 1986. In his own words, his approach is 'to give a voice to those who are denied it', without staging or resorting to pathos. In particular, he addresses child poverty and racial or prison issues to draw attention to social problems in the United States, much like photographers Lewis Hine, Jacob Riis, or Marion Post Wolcott did before him.

Stephen Shames has received numerous awards for his work, and his prints are in the largest public collections, including the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA, New York), Metropolitan Museum (New York), Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery (Washington, DC), George Eastman Museum (Rochester, NY), International Center of Photography (New York), Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture (Washington, DC), San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, The New York Public Library, The Bancroft Library (Berkeley), University of California (Berkeley), The Corcoran Gallery of Art (Washington, DC), The Museum of Photographic Arts San Diego, The Museum of Fine Arts Houston, Philadelphia Museum of Art, National Civil Rights Museum (Memphis, TN), Oakland Museum of California, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (New York). He has authored over ten monographs, including *Power to the People: The World of the Black Panthers by Stephen Shames and Bobby Seale* (Abrams Books, 2016) and *The Black Panthers* (Aperture, 2006).

Black Panther Party

Stephen Shames

Kathleen Cleaver
at the 'Free Huey' rally
in DeFremery Park,
July 28, 1968,
Oakland, California



In October 1966, at a time when the Black movement was becoming increasingly radical, two activists, Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton, founded the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, which later would become the Black Panther Party (BPP). They drew up the 'Ten-Point Program' which aimed to propose concrete solutions to the issues the Black community was experiencing.

Having learnt the lessons of the assassination of Malcolm X (1965), the Selma to Montgomery Marches (March 1965), the riots of the 'long hot summers' of the 1960s¹ and the movement opposing the war in Vietnam, the BPP brought together advocates of a less conciliatory approach. The BPP was highly active in the community and defined itself as revolutionary, anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist.

On 1st January 1967, the BPP opened its first office at 5624 Grove Street, Oakland, California. The first four-page issue of the Black Panther newspaper was notably illustrated

1. The 'long, hot summers' refer to riots that occurred during the 1960s – Harlem in 1964, Watts in 1965, and the dozens of riots in 1967 and 1968 – in which more than two hundred people were killed.

Black Panther Party

by Emory Douglas. Douglas joined the organisation after being drawn to the Black Panther Party 'because of its dedication to self-defense'. He then asserted: 'The civil rights movement headed by Dr. King turned me off at time, for in those days non-violent protest had no appeal to me. And although the rebellions in Watts, Detroit and Newark were not well organized, they did appeal to my nature. I could identify with [the Black Panthers].'

The BPP organised itself into 'chapters' specific to each state of the Union, 'branches' subdivided into 'sections', etc. The movement gained momentum after Huey Newton was arrested in October 1967 on suspicion of killing a policeman. The BPP then launched the 'Free Huey' movement, which had a unifying effect far beyond the Black community. In particular, it forged alliances with other radical organisations, whether Puerto Rican or Native American. During this period, the organization took root and grew in strength. Police pressure in no way hindered its progress. On the contrary, the BPP received a great deal of support from artists such as the conductor and composer Leonard Bernstein, the writer James Baldwin, actors and actresses such as Jean Seberg, Jane Fonda, Marlon Brando and Donald Sutherland, and members of the liberal left. In 1970, Jane Fonda defined the BPP as 'our revolutionary vanguard'.

The movement spread like wildfire across the country, setting up offices in sixty-eight towns and cities. It did not cease to grow. By the end of 1969, it had five thousand members and forty-five branches, and its newspaper had distributed one hundred thousand copies. The movement remained popular in the Black ghettos, not only for the self-defense measures it coordinated, but also for the wide range of social assistance it put into place, such as the distribution of meals and clothing, free schooling and medical care. This social policy, inaugurated in 1970, marked the end of the radical stance of the BPP and created strong tensions – exacerbated by confrontations with police – within the organisation, which was by then tearing itself apart.

Black Panther Party

From 1967, in response to the growing reputation of the movement, the authorities, via the FBI, deployed the 'COINTELPRO' (for 'Counterintelligence Program') against the BPP, aimed at harassing it and limiting its influence. Its purpose was to 'protect national security, prevent violence and maintain the existing social and political order'.²

The various actions taken by the FBI and a succession of internal crises led to the downfall of the BPP. From 1971 onwards, the most radical activists either died, went into exile or were imprisoned. Dissent weakened the BPP and the organisation broke up in March 1971 during a public conflict between Huey Newton and Eldridge Cleaver. Between Eldridge Cleaver, who called for urban guerrilla warfare, and Huey Newton, who advocated reformist changes in society, the split was complete. The influence of the Black Panther Party gradually declined during the 1970s, until its dissolution in 1982.

2.
Hannah Foster, COINTELPRO
[Counterintelligence Program]
(1956-1976),
[https://www.blackpast.org/
african-american-history/
cointelpro-1956-1976/](https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/cointelpro-1956-1976/),
consulted on 30 March 2024.

Stephen Shames

May, 1970,
New Haven, Connecticut

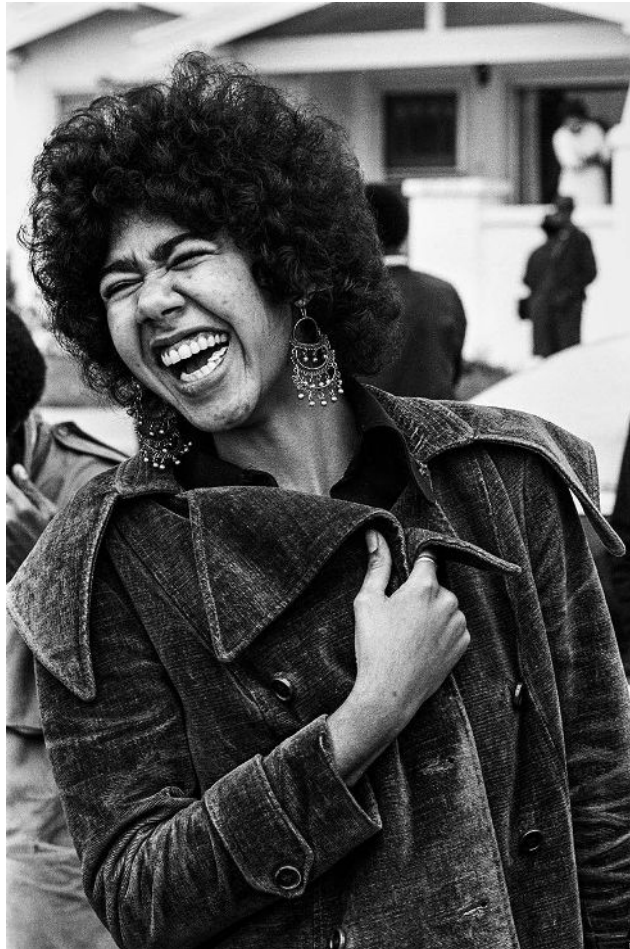
1970,
Boston, Massachusetts



Stephen Shames

Ericka Huggins,
March 31, 1972,
Oakland, California

1972,
Palo Alto, California



Stephen Shames

Marsha Taylor (left)
at 'Free Huey' rally in Provo Park,
1969,
Berkeley, California



Comrade Sisters

Comrade: com.rade / pr. 'käm'rad,
a familiar spirit, a team mate,
a friend in struggle,
an intimate, fellow traveler

Sister: sis.ter / pr. 'sist'r
family, sibling, friend, partner, member

Comrade Sisters: the family we choose,
a bond that defies location,
time and biology,
a life well-lived

Excerpt from the text
by Ericka Huggins, published
in *Comrade Sisters: Women
of the Black Panther Party*
(Woodbridge,
ACC Art Books, 2022).

Stephen Shames

Adrienne Humphrey tests a woman for sickle cell anemia during Bobby Seale's campaign for Mayor of Oakland, 1973, Oakland, California



1970,
Toledo, Ohio



Cahiers #8

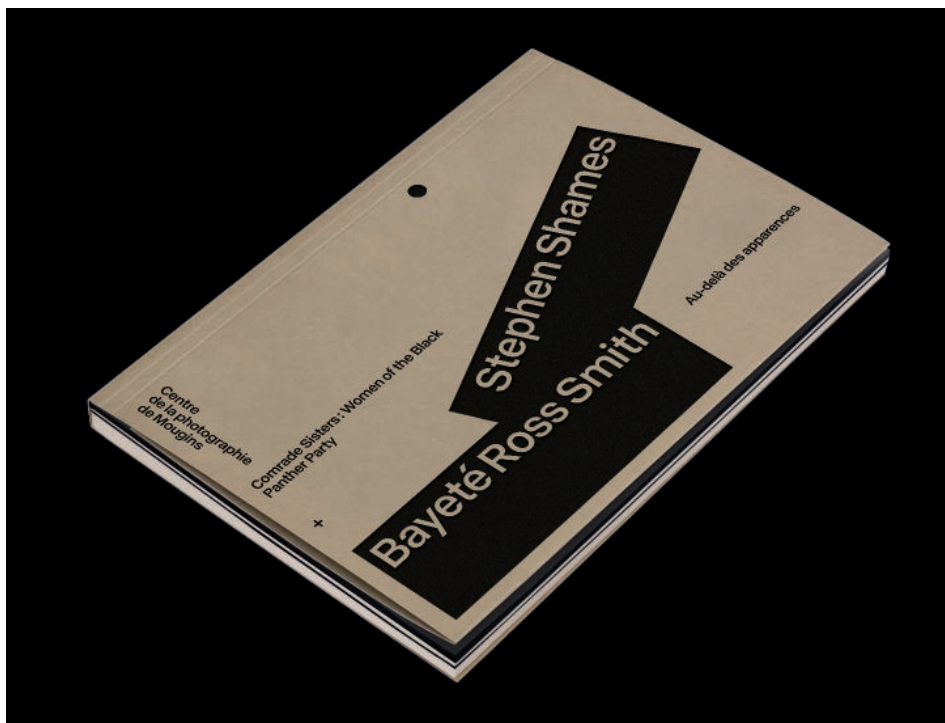
Comrade Sisters: Women
of the Black Panther Party

Stephen Shames

+

Au-delà des apparences

Bayeté Ross Smith



Authors:

Yasmine Chemali
François Cheval
Paul David Henderson
Ericka Huggins

Translation: Jennetta Petch

Publishing:

June 2024
Bilingual French/English
192 pages
29 €
Isbn : 979-10-90698-57-4

On sale in the Mougins
Center of Photography
store.

Our publications:



#1 Isabel Muñoz 1001

176 pages
 Isbn: 979-10-90698-50-5
 © 2021
 Authors:
 Yasmine Chemali,
 François Cheval,
 Stéphane du Mesnildot,
 Yuta Yagishita,
 Pascal Bagot,
 Emil Pacha Valencia
 Translation:
 Sara Heft



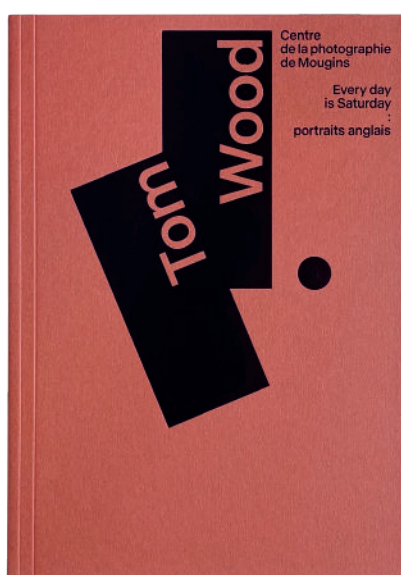
#2 Natasha Caruana + Jenny Rova L'amour toujours

192 pages
 Isbn: 979-10-90698-51-2
 © 2021
 Authors:
 François Cheval,
 Laurence Pourchez,
 Jenny Rova,
 Natasha Caruana,
 Dr Chris Hoff,
 Christophe Perrin,
 Yasmine Chemali
 Translation:
 Sara Heft



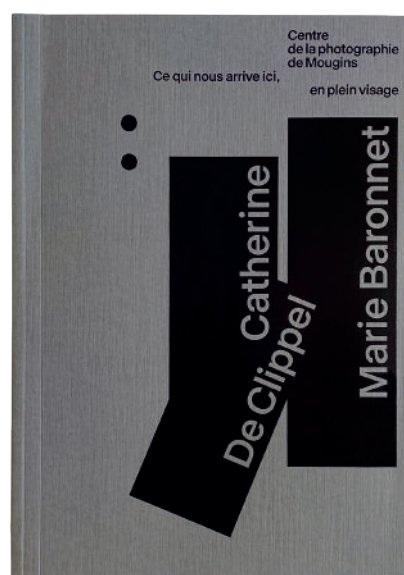
#3
Yuki Onodera
+ Li Lang
La clairvoyance du hasard

176 pages
 isbn: 979-10-90698-52-9
 © 2022
 Authors:
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 András Páldi,
 Jean Daunizeau,
 Takayo Iida,
 Yasmine Chemali
 Translations:
 Ruth Oldham,
 Patrick Honoré



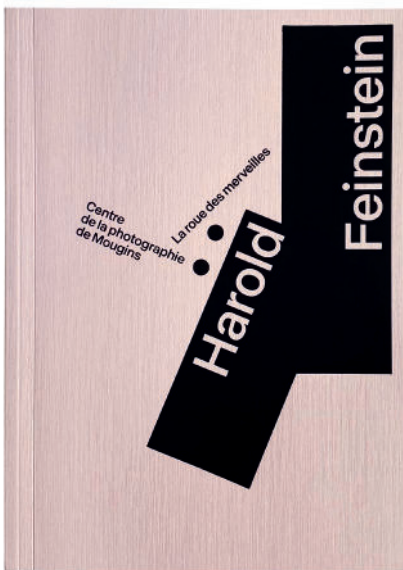
#4
Tom Wood
Every day is Saturday:
portraits anglais

192 pages
 isbn: 979-10-90698-53-6
 © 2022
 Authors:
 François Cheval,
 Leïla Vignal,
 Jean Daunizeau,
 Alexis Tadié,
 David Peace,
 John Peel,
 Yasmine Chemali
 Translations:
 Ruth Oldham,
 Alexis Tadié,
 Leïla Vignal



#5
Catherine De Clippel
+ Marie Baronnet
Ce qui nous arrive ici,
en plein visage

192 pages
 isbn: 979-10-90698-54-3
 © 2022
 Authors:
 Jérôme Esnouf,
 François Cheval,
 Jean-Paul Colleyn
 Translations:
 Ruth Oldham,
 Jennetta Petch



#6

Harold Feinstein
La roue des merveilles

192 pages

Isbn: 979-10-90698-55-0

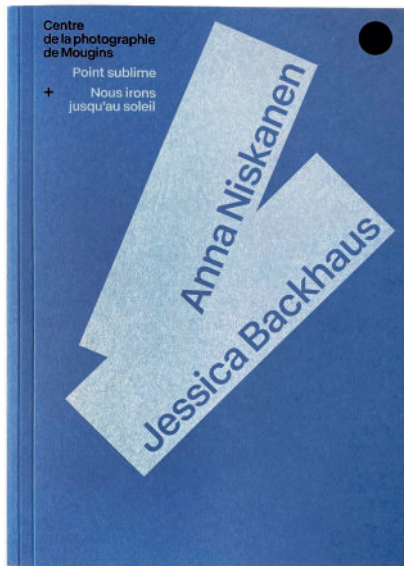
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Authors:

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Alexis Tadié,
Ya'ara Gil-Glazer,
Yasmine Chemali

Translations:

Ruth Oldham,
Jennetta Petch,
Alexis Tadié



#7

Anna Niskanen
Point sublime
+ Jessica Backhaus
Nous irons jusqu'au soleil

144 pages

Isbn : 979-10-90698-56-7

© 2023

Authors:

François Cheval,
András Páldi
Anna Niskanen

Translation:

Jennetta Petch

Public

Conversation

with Stephen Shames,
photographer
Ericka Huggins,
activist and leader
in the Black Panther Party
Saturday 29.06.2024
17:00
Free admission

Family tour Storytelling

The team at the Centre
of Photography are offering
an original format for family
visits to the exhibitions.

Saturdays

6.07,
3.08
11:00 → 11:30

Wednesdays

17.07,
14.08
16:00 → 16:30

Sundays

1st.09,
6.10
16:00 → 16:30
Free admission on the 1st
Sunday of the month.

programme

European Heritage Days

Saturday 21.09
and **Sunday 22.09**
Free admission
Full programme
on the website

Screening

*The Black Panthers:
Vanguard of the Revolution*
by Stanley Nelson
(USA, 2015, 115', VOSTFR)

Saturday 7.09
19:00

Free admission

Discussion

**Défricheuses, Féminismes,
caméra au poing et archive
en bandoulière**
with Nicole Fernández Ferrer,
(Centre audiovisuel
Simone de Beauvoir)
and Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez,
(Cité internationale
des arts)

Saturday 28.09
18:30 → 20:00

In French
Free admission

Contacts

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Informations

Open

28.06 → 30.09.2024

11:00 → 19:00

Closed on Tuesdays

1st.10 → 6.10.2024

13:00 → 18:00

**Closed on Mondays
and Tuesdays**

Admission

Adult → 6 €

Student → 3 €

Group (10 or +) → 4 €/ pers.

Guided tours → 10 €/ pers.

Free

1st Sunday of each month

Under 18, students

from the region PACA,

job seekers,

disabled visitors and one

accompanying person,

ICOM / ICOMOS / CIPAC,

Friends of the Center,

teachers, press,

guide-lecturers.

**Guided tours (express)
every Wednesday
and Saturday
→ 15:00**

**Book your
guided tour + workshop
for schools, groups
and associations:**

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sbostanci@villedemougins.com

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