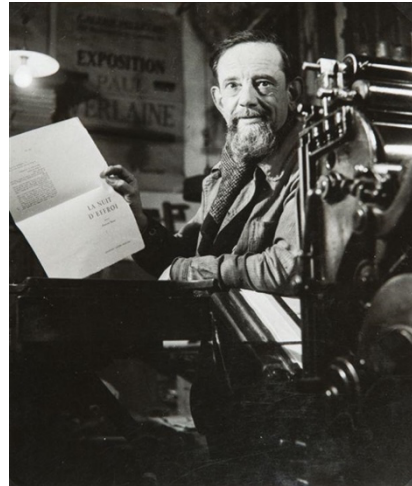


Robert Doisneau (1912 – 1994)

Born in Gentilly (close to Paris) in 1912, Robert Doisneau became a professional engraver, and from 1931 on worked as a gifted photographer. Having been exempted from military service upon the beginning of WW II, he had a job as an industrial photographer with Renault (cars) from 1934, but was fired in 1939 as he had not kept deadlines several times.

The war events that led to the occupation of northern France including Paris in June 1940 made Robert Doisneau flee from Paris and hide with friends near Bordeaux in the west of France for several months.



Yet, as the largest part of France was under German control and the so-called “free France” was ruled by the collaborationist Vichy government, Doisneau decided to return to Paris – and become a man of resistance. He did not join any of the bigger or smaller resistance groups but worked in a more or less isolated way: Making use of his abilities and talents as an engraver and photographer, he made fake IDs for persecuted people, risking his own life to help others escape.

At one incident, when time was too short to make a fake ID for a man called Serge Dobhowski, Robert Doisneau didn’t even hesitate to give away his own real ID-card to Serge – an action that would most certainly have cost his own life as well as Serge Dobhowski’s life if it had been discovered.

Having stayed undiscovered in the underground until the liberation of France, Robert Doisneau and journalist Pierre Betz began as early as the start of 1945 with a photograph report series on “imprimeurs clandestins” (clandestine pressmen) on those mostly unknown resistance fighters who had risked their lives in creating false papers and IDs.

After the war, Robert Doisneau became one of the most famous and most popular photographers of France. Up to today, many of his black-and-white photos of Paris are sold in souvenir shops.

