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PRESS RELEASE

**Zuleika Gallery Collaborates with Anstice Oakeshott to present
MARILYN STAFFORD | STREET STORIES
from 14 April – 23 April
at Zuleika Gallery, Woodstock**



Illustrated works:

Image 1: Model in Ready-to-Wear, with girl in scuffed boots, Montmartre, Paris, c1955 © Marilyn Stafford

Image 2: Girl with milk bottle, Cité Lesage-Bullourde, Paris, c1950. © Marilyn Stafford

Artist:

Marilyn Stafford
1925 (Cleveland, Ohio, USA) - 2023 (Shoreham-on-Sea, UK)

As part of Photo Oxford Festival Zuleika Gallery presents *Marilyn Stafford | Street Stories*, a celebration of the life and work of an extraordinary 20th century photographer who was only discovered in her tenth decade.

One of the few women to jostle her way to the front of the industry during a time when photography was undoubtedly a male dominated world, Marilyn Stafford brought the energy and truth of daily life into her practice, which encompassed street photography, fashion, portraiture, and social reportage. With a special focus on her representation of women and children, this exhibition reveals the joy she found sharing the

stories of others, often in the context of life on the street.

Marilyn Stafford described herself as a natural observer, she began experimenting with photography at the age of six using the family Box Brownie camera. Recalling the first photograph she ever took, a picture of water flowing in a stream she said,

'I was standing in it, feeling emotional watching the water over the stones, I had an urge, I wanted the feeling to be remembered.'

It was this desire to reproduce a 'feeling' that was to motivate her throughout her life. However, despite the sense that photography 'always existed within her', Marilyn initially explored a career on the stage. It was only after an unexpected opportunity to photograph Albert Einstein in 1948 that she found herself on a path to a career in the medium.

In the early 1950s, newly based in Paris, Marilyn found herself circulating in the local photography scene with the renowned war photographer Robert Capa, and celebrated street photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson, two founders of Magnum Photo Agency. It was in the company of Cartier-Bresson, as she tramped the streets of Paris, that she discovered her love of natural light and a documentary approach. Hungry to share the world she saw around her, Marilyn turned her camera towards those whose narratives were often overlooked, such as the joyful roguish children who scampered in her path. In *Girl with milk bottle, Cité Lesage-Bullourde, Paris, c1950*, a child strides towards the camera carefully holding a milk bottle in her hands; the pride and importance of her assignment is clear on her face. The photograph is reminiscent of Henri Cartier-Bresson's renowned piece *Rue Moffetard*, in which a young boy marches towards us, bottles under each arm with a look of sheer glee. Shot in Paris during the same period, Stafford's *Girl with milk bottle*, clearly shows the deep influence Henri Cartier-Bresson had on her practice, and indeed the inspiration she found from other humanist photographers of the era.

Whilst Fashion Photography provided a reliable income for her, Marilyn shrewdly developed a penchant for bringing life on the street into her fashion assignments. Almost unheard of at the time, she relocated her models from the studio into the urban landscape and with her deceptively casual approach brought model, photographer, fashion, and passerby together with skill, respect, and humour.

'They were not just fashion photographs; they were fun photographs. The kids loved it, I loved it and the models loved it and I think it shows in the pictures.'

In, *Model in Ready-to-Wear, with girl in scuffed boots, Montmartre, Paris, c1955*, a girl sits on a railing whilst a model poses beside her. The contrast between the clean-cut clothes alongside the scuffed boots of the child could not be more striking. Significantly Marilyn's photograph portrays these two vastly different figures with equal weight. Whilst the assignment was to document clothes on a model it is the child, with her strong poise and steady gaze that is more likely to live in our memories.

As her career unfolded, Marilyn travelled internationally, successfully managing to position herself as a valuable photojournalist alongside fashion and portraiture assignments. In 1958 she visited Tunisia to record the plight of Algerian refugees fleeing from the Algerian War of Independence (she was 5 months pregnant at the time). Her photographs, selected by Henri Cartier-Bresson, were published on the front page of the *Observer*, London on 30 March 1958. Two years later she spent 12 months travelling in Lebanon, journeying to remote villages whilst also recording daily life in the cities. She witnessed women leading traditional lives alongside those who were educated and of a liberated outlook. The serene and modest nature of '*Bride's wedding guest, Bekka Valley, 1960*' sharply contrasts with the phenomenal assurance of '*Miss Lebanon Beauty Pageant, Beirut, 1960*'. Made during the same trip these images reveal the remarkable blend of modern and traditional culture in Lebanon at the time. A decade later Stafford made a memorable trip to India to photograph Indira Gandhi, India's first and only female Prime Minister. In her most arresting piece, the Prime Minister is seen boarding a plane, surrounded by a sea of men, Marilyn masterfully captures the strength and determination of her character.

Marilyn Stafford I Street Stories shares a significant insight into the valuable contribution she made to 20th Century Photography. With a career that spanned over four decades and saw her travels across Europe, the Middle East and beyond, Marilyn's extensive archive is united across subject matter by her unique view of the world. Marilyn sought out what others often did not see and whether she turned her camera towards a politician or a young child her subjects were treated with equal value; portrayed with confidence, power, and beauty.

All works are for sale.

Signed Silver Gelatin Limited Editions from £2500

Posthumous Silver Gelatin Limited Editions from £1500

Marilyn Stafford FotoReportage Award

The Marilyn Stafford FotoReportage Award for women photographers was launched in Stafford's honour by arts social enterprise FotoDocument in 2017 and is supported by Nikon UK. The award is granted annually to a professional female photographer towards the completion of a compelling and cohesive documentary photo essay, which addresses an important social, environmental, economic or cultural issue, whether local or global, and which has a focus on positive solutions. The Award launches this year on 18 March and submissions close on 19 May 2023 <https://fotodocument.org/fotoaward/>

About Anstice Oakeshott

Anstice Oakeshott is an independent Photography Specialist and Curator with eighteen years of industry experience. Previously Anstice held the position of Senior Specialist at The Photographers' Gallery where she curated exhibitions for numerous renowned and emerging photographers including Sebastião Salgado, Julie Cockburn, Wolfgang Suschitzky, Elliot Erwitt and Jacques-Henri Lartigue. With a Masters in Art History from Glasgow University, Anstice began her career managing Alon Zakaim Fine Art in London before turning her focus towards photography. Anstice advises international collectors on building both classic and contemporary collections and has presented talks on collecting photography at The Photographers' Gallery, The Hospital Club, Soho House and for the Sotheby's Institute of Art.

About Zuleika Gallery

Zuleika Gallery's focus is on Modern British and emerging contemporary art. The gallery was founded in 2015 and held premises in St James's London before moving to Cromwell Place in 2022. In 2020, the gallery opened premises in Woodstock, Oxfordshire, now the gallery headquarters. Public programming is a particular strength of the gallery. The gallery set up the Art programme at the Saïd Business School, University of Oxford in 2017. The programme has been acclaimed by participants, faculty, staff and the wider community in Oxford and beyond. Since 2021 the gallery has curated two public spaces for Blenheim Palace - the Palace State Exhibition Suite and the Stables Café. With a regular exhibition programme in Woodstock and London, Zuleika also offers bespoke art advisory services for private or corporate collectors, using our extensive experience in the art market. We enjoy placing art in the right context, whether public or private, and helping collectors making considered choices - balancing pure visual joy with stimulating ideas, while also inspiring change through art. The gallery is committed to showing art that inspires, and to making art accessible without compromise to quality, working with both the entry level collector and the connoisseur.

Address:

Woodstock: Zuleika Gallery, 6 Park Street, Woodstock, Oxfordshire OX20 1SP

London: 1-5 Cromwell Place, 1-5 Cromwell Place, South Kensington, London, SW7 2JE

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ZULEIKA GALLERY

Zuleika Gallery, Woodstock open times

During Marilyn Stafford: Street Stories

Mon – Sat: 10am – 5pm

Sun: 11am – 4pm

Outside of Marilyn Stafford: Street Stories exhibition

Mon, Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat 10am – 5pm

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