



^ Pont Neuf

THE GLOW OF PARIS

As seen in *The High End Magazine*
[Unique Homes Luxury Media], by Stacey Staum

CROSSING THE SEINE AT NIGHT

Author/Photographer Gary Zuercher brings Paris to life in his book "The Glow of Paris," which highlights the city's 35 bridges.



^ Passerelle Simone de Beauvoir

Sometimes in life, tiny mistakes turn into tremendous opportunities. Such is the case for photographer Gary Zuercher, as a slight error in the processing of a single photograph led to an unprecedented Parisian photography project.

Zuercher explains, “The project itself came from a mistake. I overexposed a photograph and what I ended up with was a beautiful photo of Pont Alexandre III. Having been swept away by the photo, I thought I’d just do all of the bridges that cross the Seine.” That first overexposed photograph evolved into “The Glow of Paris,” a stunning, first-of-its-kind book that captures all 35 of Paris’s bridges in striking black and white photos. The book won a prestigious Independent Publishers Book Award in 2015.

Zuercher’s love of Paris began in Mexico, where he met Dominique, a young French woman who would later become his wife. In conjunction with his successful career developing waterpark technology, Zuercher honed his skills as a photographer for over 30 years, stating that “Yes, it’s been a passion, but I did it simultaneously

with my involvement in business.” The expertise that he developed behind the lens through his advertising work provided him with the skills to create a visually stunning collection of photographs in this unique project.

The project itself took Zuercher longer than he had originally anticipated. “I told myself not to be in a hurry, and it ended up taking five years. I had to shoot only in the winter because the sun doesn’t go down till about 11 in the summer.”

Over the course of these five years, the production process made for some interesting experiences for Zuercher. He recounts, “Paris is an unusually safe city at night for the size of the city. I would shoot from 9 PM to sometimes as late as 2 AM. One evening a group of kids, around 17 to 20 years old, were out raising hell and I was at one of the bridges. They were coming at me, and they were loud and menacing. I said to one of them, ‘Do you want to take a look?’ So he took a look through the finder and liked what he saw. I offered to take their picture. I said, ‘Give me your email’ and I sent it to them!”

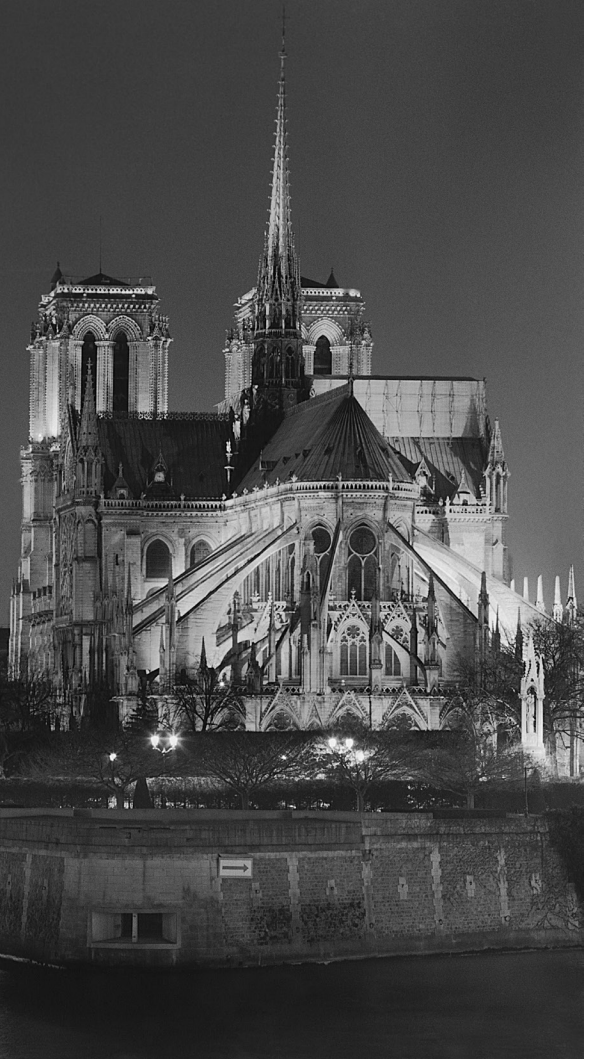
Another fascinating story from the production process of “The Glow of Paris” relates to the cover photo, a gorgeous shot that captures much of the city and the Eiffel Tower, which is Zuercher’s favorite photo from the project. He shares, “It was the most difficult to take, because I needed a location scout. I told her I wanted to shoot from the top of the Church of San Gervais, and she went to get approval, but because the nuns sleep there, no men were allowed to go there at night. So, within 24 hours, she got approval to shoot from the top of city hall. I had to rent mountain climbing equipment and shoes, and we had to go out from the second floor and climb up the building. It was a real adventure getting up there, and then I shot there for four hours that night.”

Perhaps as intriguing as the photos themselves are the historical accounts of each bridge that Zuercher shares to complement the photography. The process of finding information was a rigorous one. Zuercher explains, “The research was difficult, as it was in French. So I’m reading in French, writing in English and translating.

I spent a year researching, writing, correcting, then editing, and afterwards, a French editor re-edited the whole thing. The information was found in books, articles, library research and the military archives.

“There’s so much information on the Internet that’s incorrect and everyone repeats. You have to validate the dates and the actions, and that’s how you find how feeble some of the information out there really is.” The accounts that Zuercher provides develop the book into more than just a book of photography; the stories transform the book into an anecdotal history of Paris itself.

The bridges themselves reflect the history of the city through the tales Zuercher tells in the book. According to Zuercher, “The Pont Neuf was opened in 1607 and its design is the same as it was then. It’s had maintenance and updating, but it’s basically the same bridge. The mascarons are said to be the faces of the men who were the husbands of women that Henry IV slept with. When the bridge was being built, a number of workers fell from the scaffolding to their deaths and a worker told Henry IV to be careful, that people had died there, and he retorted ‘Ah, but they weren’t kings!’” The aesthetic appearances of the bridges are testaments to stylistic conventions of days gone by.



^ Pont de l'Archevêché

Pont Neuf

The stories Zuercher shares in “The Glow of Paris” also reveal some of the cultural traditions of Paris long since forgotten. He tells the story of a grieving woman in 1718 who caused an even larger tragedy when he describes the Petit Pont, which has been destroyed and rebuilt many times over the years. Zuercher explains, “her son drowned in the river, and the superstition at the time was that if she put a lit candle and bread in a wooden bowl and released it in the river, it would stop where her son’s body could be found. The candle rested against a boat and it caught fire.”

“The owners of the other docked boats cut the boat loose from the moor to protect their own goods and it floated along and stopped at the Petit Pont. The bridges were wooden at that time and had houses built on them. In this instance, the boat caught everything on fire and everything burned and fell into the river; sadly, 20 or 30 people lost their lives.”

The stories retold about the bridges crossing the Seine in “The Glow of Paris” are truly stories of Paris itself, as cultures and traditions that have long lost their influence come to life in Zuercher’s work.





▲ Pont Royal