

# On the Practical Significance of Photography from Eugene Ajie's Paris Series

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**ABSTRACT.** *Photography, once popular as a substitute for portrait painting, has paid a heavy price for it. Technological innovation and theoretical progress have failed to make it quickly step into the threshold of art. For a long time after the invention, its main function has been to record, not to elaborate and express. However, today, it has been everywhere, it can be said that it has been involved in our life, that long-standing proposition is no longer concerned, it has even protested with the once wanted to attach to the art chamber. Today, the development of photography can't prevent it from expanding to a wider field. Just like countless photography works, the time and energy left for shooting is only a small part, and more time is given to the complex conception and decoration in the early stage, the complex correction and perfection in the later stage. It has changed from simple record to expression. There are still many practitioners who continue to practice Bresson's "decisive moment" capture and convey to us, as observers and recorders, the stories of every moment in every corner of the world. However, no matter how it changes, the masterpieces of early photographers, such as Eugene Ajie, are still popular today.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Eugene ajie, Photography, Paris series, Elaboration and expression*

## 1. Introduction

Eugene Ajie, who had his own style, always insisted on the creation of his own documentary style silently. Eugene Ajie's life is tragic. He was born in liborn, France in 1857. His parents died when he was young, and he was raised by his uncle. In 1879, he entered the National Academy of drama and art in Paris, and then played a small role in the tour troupe, and he never made a great progress in his acting career. In 1897, he tried to paint and failed to become famous. The next year, when he was 40, he began to work in photography. However, until the later years of Ajie's life, his works were still not concerned by the world. In 1927, Ajie died and his works were published by a friend in the circle. It attracts social attention and is recognized and appreciated by many people. After Ajie's death, his works were exhibited in modernist works, and his first photo album was published in 1931. In 1969, the New York Museum of modern art, which collected Ajie's works, held an important retrospective exhibition for him, which really established Ajie's position in the history of modern photography.

Looking at the photos of Ajie, you can see that he really recorded everything he saw, without any symbolic logo, no deliberate design of meditation, simple and plain in vision, and what kind of state things present, then he went to show them in the original. Ajie's works had a great influence on the later documentary photography, so it was known as the originator of street photography. In my opinion, Ajie's works have no gorgeous pictures or superb skills. They are just a lintel, a window, a tree, or a sculpture in the park, a peddler in the street, or a bed in the room. If we don't know a lot about the background of Ajie's photography at that time, it's easy to ask: what's the meaning of his photos? What's the good about his photos?

## 2. Eugene Ajie is Not the First Photographer to Shoot Paris Systematically. in the Era of Wet Edition, His Outstanding Predecessor Charles Marvell Once Shot the Streets of Old Paris.

But Ajie is still in love with this rich city. It can be imagined that he is carrying heavy photographic equipment to shoot Paris almost door-to-door, street by street, in countless mornings with light and few pedestrians. There is livelihood in it, but who can deny that there is no deep love? Otherwise, why did you shoot for more than 30 years? Thanks to Ajie's tireless efforts, museums, galleries, collectors and painters have the most abundant materials in Paris. Many painters, including Andre Deland, Henry Matisse, George Blake and Picasso, have bought Ajie's works, so that he was later called "simple genius" by Surrealists in the 1920s. The reason why Ajie's works are so exciting is not that he avoids emptiness and superficiality, but that he shows us a

strange world, which is full of rhythm and resonance that we have never heard of, and allusions to the experiences that we almost forget.

After a hundred years, we will watch Ajie's works to explore their significance. They are empty, quiet, rigorous, clear and even solemn. However, no matter whether it is documentary, landscape, typology or surrealism, we can find the original shadow in his works. According to John sakowski, "he used a better quality 'sieve' to screen out a different 'precious metal' from the ore." This "precious metal" is not only the real Paris that Ajie presented a hundred years ago, but also the spirit that he loved to record the city for thirty years. Ajie creates photography in the way of film director shooting, shooting close-up shots, telephoto shots, details, and shooting from different angles, times and light environments. The two-dimensional world in his lens can experience the test of years and time. He has created more than 10000 works, including shop windows, building entrances, arcades, street views, public places and private gardens, as well as the surging crowds on the streets and workers engaged in daily work, or the life of the upper class. The Paris dream in his works is also illusory, but it is absolutely true. Moreover, in Ajie, documentary photography and art photography are not antagonistic, but perfectly integrated, or even inseparable from each other. This can be seen from the 100 works of the newly published book Eugene Ajie, and the documentary images are not without elegance. It's hard to imagine how he carried this big guy to take photos every day. In his 30-year photography career, Ajie took nearly 10000 photos. Ansel Adams once wrote in 1931: "the charm of Ajie lies not in his skillful use of the back plate and photo paper at that time, nor in the beautiful clothes, buildings and figures shown in his photos, but in his just and kind views His work is a concise revelation of the appearance of the simplest things around him His photos may be the earliest expression of pure photography

Ren Yue, a photographer, once said in an interview: "with the passage of time, when the functional things originally carried by news photos are weakened and the ideological value of photos is gradually presented, it is more likely to become a work of art, especially those photos with multiple levels of significance, it will gradually release its value.". Eugene Ajie's archival photos at that time were originally used by painters to copy. They were meant to keep archives for Paris. He did not expect that they would become works of art later. He is a very important documentary photographer, but his photos make surrealist school love it. This is because his photos have a huge amount of information, and the shooting is not so utilitarian, so that viewers can constantly find many things in them. "This last sentence is the most precious legacy left to us by Eugene Ajie, which is still very lacking in today's photography.

If Eugene Ajie's works opened the history of photography, the most precious legacy left to us must be his own "photographic consciousness". Ansel Adams once said: "the charm of Eugene Ajie does not lie in his skillful use of the floor and photo paper at that time, nor in the beautiful clothes and ornaments, buildings and human nature shown in his photos, but in his kind point of view and justice. Bao Kun, a famous photographer, thinks that Eugene Ajie is the first one who can use the word "documentary" in his book the essence of documentary photography is humanistic care. Of course, from the perspective of Western documentary photography, most of Eugene Ajie's works only pursue documentary, and other attached humanistic spirit and photography philosophy are not clear.

### **3. Ajie Said, "Photography is the Fingerprint of Civilization".**

I quite agree with the metaphor. The invention of photography is a great progress of modern human civilization, because it is deeply branded with the brand of "civilian".

Photography is the freeze frame of real image moment, which is destined to be different from other arts in essence. Photography is a matter of time. Eugene Ajie's documentary photography fully expresses this point - the charm of photography lies in its reality, in its instant. The story behind the photo, the thought after the moment. This is also the practical significance of photography.

### **References**

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