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Books

Michel Haddi: Paris, the blue hour

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the article page. The browser's address bar shows the URL: www.loeildephotographie.com/en/2016/12/02/article/159928906/michel-haddi-paris-the-blue-hour/. The website header includes the logo 'L'OEIL DE LA PHOTOGRAPHIE' and a search bar. The main navigation menu contains: PHOTO DAILY NEWS, VIRTUAL GALLERY, MAGAZINE, PORTFOLIO, PHOTO CITY GUIDE. The breadcrumb trail is: HOME > MAGAZINE > PUBLICATION > BOOKS > MICHEL HADDI PARIS, THE BLUE HOUR. The article title is 'MICHEL HADDI: PARIS, THE BLUE HOUR' with a sub-header 'DECEMBER 2, 2016 - FRANCE, WRITTEN BY MICHEL HADDI'. Below the title are five image thumbnails, each with a copyright notice '© Michel Haddi'. The browser's taskbar at the bottom shows the date and time as 18:43 on 04/12/2016.



I am a Parisian. I can still recall the smell of Les Halles in the early 60s, where you could eat the rich beef stew pot-au-feu, or oysters at 3.am after dancing in a club and then, at 6a.m, watch the sun come up. Day and night, the upper classes mixed with the ruffians and the whores and you could get anything you wanted...

I was raised in a Convent and as a growing boy, dealing with nuns, attending mass, taking communion... these experiences impressed me and undoubtedly made me into the man I am. They gave me a different, particular view of life; a strict moral code that I live by to this day. Every time I come back to Paris I stop at the Café de Flore in Saint-Germain. Maybe I am like the salmon who swim back to their birthplace – I am always coming back to my roots, re-visiting time after time.

I am fortunate enough to know my city inside out, but there are still times when I discover new playgrounds; places that excite me and leave me breathless, as Paris can only do. I have a vivid memory of the city in August; it's always quiet then when all the Parisians have left for their holidays. I looked at the sky and it was the purest, most beautiful blue. Yves Klein blue. Guerlain, the perfumer, named a fragrance in homage to Paris and it's beautiful heavens: L'Heure Bleue. If you visit, remember to look up above you at L'Heure Bleue. The Blue Hour. You will never forget it.

Paris was always for me at the vanguard of arts and many intellectuals loved to debate about everything and nothing. Many years ago, I was working as a night manager in a hotel and early one morning in Montparnasse I had the pleasure of having coffee with Jean Paul Sartre. Another time I met Wim Wenders. It was the kind of place where you might see Miles Davis

having a romance with Juliette Greco or observe all these fabulous jazzman like Charlie Parker living the fast life and gaining respect... Only in a city like Paris could this happen.

My city is like a great girl: slim, tall, cool, smoking and drinking, and of course always in a bad mood, but we know how to deal with her. I am still fascinated by the Le Théâtre du Grand-Guignol in the late 1890s. Flabbergasted that scenes of murder, blood and horror could be seen on stage at that time! Looking at Notre Dame I cannot stop thinking that it took nearly 100 years to build it, but how romantic! A hunchbacked Quasimodo swinging from the bell tower trying to save his love Esmeralda.

My city is the place where Nijinsky for the first time showed *The Afternoon of a Faun*, where he simulated an orgasm at the end of the ballet – hard to believe that was in 1912, but then Paris always was radical.

Paris is a multi-cultural city. I recently had the privilege to photograph the Butoh Dance Group from Japan; to work with Marisa Berenson, a dear friend and an accomplished actor and Georgia May Jagger, daughter of Sir Mick Jagger.

In all fairness, I am the kind of Parisian who has lived most of my life outside of Paris: New York, Los Angeles and London, but wherever I am I always try to recreate a little bit of home: red wine, baguette, sausage... Quintessentially French things that always connect me to home.

If you want to know the city, just take a cab at night from Le Sacré Coeur going to Place De La Concorde – make sure you have a bird with you! I mean a girl that you want to seduce – after all, you are in the most romantic city in the world, so don't waste it. When the taxi drops you, all the Paris lights will be shining on the pavements; you will take a stroll around the embankment of the Seine and this beautiful girl holding your arm will kiss you like you never been kissed before – that is the magic of this city.

Don't be mistaken! Paris is a giver, she will give whatever she has like a woman in love, but don't betray her! I can assure you she will behave like a very jealous woman.

Michel Haddi

Michel Haddi: The legend / Paris, the blue hour

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