

AFP INAUGURATES PHOTO GALLERY IN PARIS WITH EXCLUSIVE LIBERATION EXHIBITION

Agence France-Presse (AFP) is set to open its first photography gallery on September 12, debuting with an exclusive exhibition highlighting the liberation of Paris, marking the 80th anniversary of the historic event.

The AFP Gallery, located at 9 Place de la Bourse within the news agency's headquarters, will offer free exhibitions three times a year, with the aim of delivering museum-quality events to the public.

The inaugural exhibition, titled "Paris 1944, a Week in August," features a compelling mix of professional photographs from AFP's extensive archives and amateur images captured by Parisians during the city's liberation, drawn from the Fournier-Eymard Collection.

These two perspectives come together to "archive reality" with a profound emotional impact, "allowing viewers to engage with history," says photography historian Gilles Mora, who wrote the preface for the exhibition catalogue.

The liberation of Paris stands out as one of the most visually documented events of the Second World War.

Several media professionals, including war correspondents and agency photographers, dedicated themselves to documenting the final battles in the heart of the capital. Many of them began working with AFP in its early days. Formerly known as Havas, the agency was placed under German supervision in 1940, subsequently taken over by the insurgents on 20th August 1944, and renamed *Agence Française de Presse*. They rallied around Henri Membré, who skilfully coordinated his colleagues' reports while wearing an armband denoting his affiliation with the French Forces of the Interior (FFI). After the Liberation, he established AFP's photography department.

At the same time, Parisians brought out their bellows cameras, which had been stored away since a German ordinance on the 16 September 1940 which banned outdoor photography. Despite the danger posed by rooftop snipers, those who still had film left risked their lives to document the moment.



Members of the French Forces of the Interior (FFI) in position with a British Bren light machine gun in a Parisian apartment. © AFP



Arrest of a rooftop sniper on 26th August. © Fournier-Eymard Collection / AFP

These photos, often blurry, taken from afar, and not always well-framed, capture the exhilaration of a moment they knew to be historic. Several hundred of these images ended up in the extensive collection of Alain Eymard and Laurent Fournier, two dedicated scholars renowned for their profound understanding of the Leclerc division and the liberation of Paris.

"By establishing this photo gallery within our headquarters, AFP continues its outreach to the general public and collectors, which began in 2021 with auction sales of collection prints," notes Marielle Eudes, Director of Special Photo Projects.

The gallery will showcase the work of celebrated photographers who have contributed to AFP's reputation over the years. Most of the photographs on display will be available for purchase.



The inaugural exhibition "Paris 1944, a Week in August" has been awarded the national designation *80th Anniversary of the Liberation*.

Visitor Information

Exhibition: Paris 1944, a Week in August

Dates: 12th September to 2nd November 2024

Location: AFP Gallery, 9 Place de la Bourse, Paris 75002

Opening Hours: Wednesday to Saturday, 11am to 6pm

About the Fournier-Eymard Collection

Alain Eymard and Laurent Fournier are specialists in General Leclerc's 2nd Armoured Division and the liberation of Paris. They began assembling their collection of photographic materials in the late 1990s. Today, their collection features over 1,500 photographs documenting the liberation of Paris, including 350 meticulously catalogued images of barricades.

About AFP

The former Havas agency, which came under the control of German troops in 1940 and became the French Information Office (OFI) in 1942, was taken over from the Vichy government on 20th August 1944. It was renamed Agence Française de presse (later Agence France-Presse) and published its first dispatch "to all free newspapers in Paris." Today, AFP operates in 150 countries with 1,700 journalists, including more than 450 photographers worldwide. Its photographic archive holds nearly 20 million documents, with 6 million being silver-based images (including 350,000 glass plates) dating back to the early years of photography.

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