

Beyond Stereotype

By Ellen Feldman

WRB's Photography Editor, **Ellen Feldman**, spent the spring in Paris, photographing street life and exploring the Paris photography scene—especially women's photography. We're devoting this year's photography feature to the wonderful work she discovered.

Anne Rearick, the photographer we feature in this issue—interviewed by Ellen—is represented by the renowned Paris photography agency, *l'agence VU'*. In 1990, Rearick received a Fulbright grant, which she used to photograph life in the French Basque country, called *Iparralde*, in northern France. (*Iparralde* means "north side" in the Basque language.) She calls this series *Basqueland: Finding Family*.

Ellen Feldman: Let's begin with how your interest in the Basque people began.

Anne Rearick: I am from Idaho, and as a child I... was amazed by their annual picnics in Boise's park with traditional dance and music—so much livelier than any of the church and family picnics I attended. Later on, I learned about ETA [the Basque separatist movement in Spain] and its violent actions against [the Spanish dictator Francisco] Franco's brutal oppression of the Basque people.

EF: You spent a year in Basque country, photographing everyday life. What did you hope to learn about the region and its people?

AR: I wanted to live in a small Basque village to get beyond the folkloric and stereotypical as well as the media's one-dimensional portrayal of the Basques as terrorists. I was also intrigued by the stereotype of the Basques as keeping to themselves and wary of strangers.

EF: That sounds like quite a challenge, not just for a stranger, but a photographer as well!



Untitled-Vallée D'Ossauf



Richard and Virginie



Farmer

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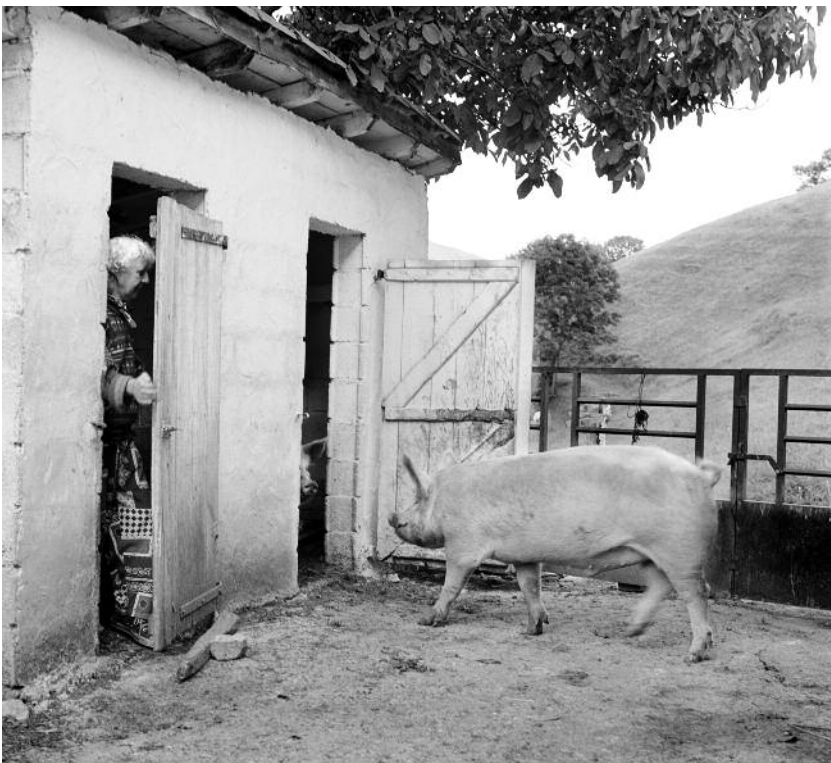
AR: True, but soon after my arrival in St. Jean Pied de Port, an elderly woman approached me and asked what I was doing in St. Jean. After I explained that I was a photographer spending the year there, she invited me to visit any time. The following Monday, while I was photographing farmers buying and selling sheep at the livestock market, it began to pour. Soaking wet, I thought it seemed a good time to knock on Madame Hatoig's door. She welcomed me in, offered me tea and madeleines, and this marked the beginning of our long friendship.

For the past 25 years, I have experienced breathtaking openness and generosity as I witness and participate in the villagers' everyday lives, almost as if they and their land had been holding a space for me.

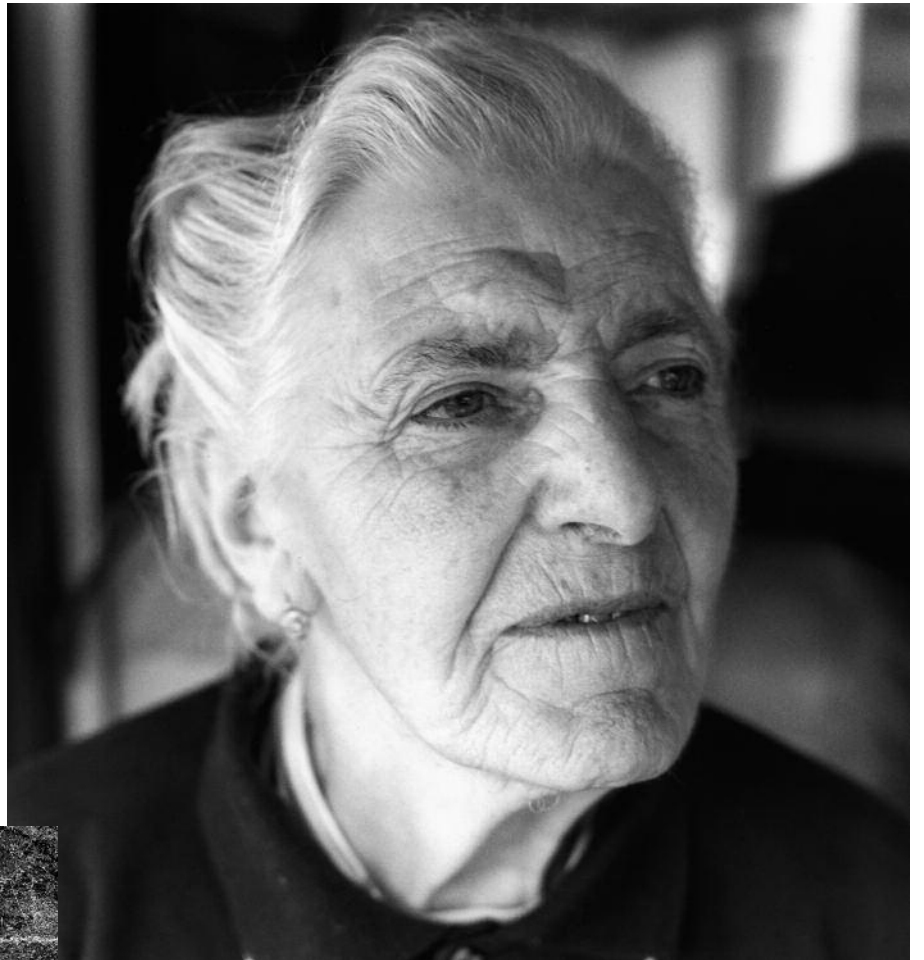
At first, I think many expected me to photograph men in berets, picturesque whitewashed houses with red trim, and *pelota* matches. Instead I photograph the people I formed friendships with.

EF: How did your experience of the Basque people change as you got to know them?

AR: I have gained a fierce respect for the Basques, and *Iparralde* has become my second home. The people's strength is tied to their close identification with homestead and land as well as a commitment to keeping the Basque language and culture alive. 🌱



Marguerite and her Pig



Madame Hatoig



Sisters



Carine



Gilen and Domingo

Anne Rearick has worked as a photographer and teacher for the past 25 years. Her awards and grants include a Guggenheim fellowship, the European Mosaïque prize, and two New England Foundation for the Arts/Mass Cultural Council grants. For her Basque project, she received the Fulbright/Annette Kade fellowship; her book on the subject, *Anne Rearick's Eye*, was published by Editions Atlantica, France, in 2004.

Rearick's work is in public collections including at the *Bibliothèque Nationale* in Paris, the *Centre Nationale de L'Audiovisuel* in Luxembourg, and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. A monograph of Rearick's South Africa photographs will be published by Editions Clementine de la Feronniere, Paris, in late 2016. Rearick holds an MFA from the Massachusetts, College of Art; her photos are distributed internationally by l'Agence VU', Paris. Visit her website at www.annerearick.com

Ellen Feldman, WRB's photography editor, is a photographer and writer with a PhD in cinema studies from New York University. She has a solo exhibit of French street photos in September at the French Cultural Center (Boston, MA).