

ALLEZ LE TOUR!

by Nicola Mesken Photography 



The project “ALLEZ LE TOUR!”

www.allezletour.com



ALLEZ LE TOUR! is not about winners or jerseys. It is about anticipation, boredom, devotion, chance encounters, and the strange poetry of waiting. (2005 - 2025 and ongoing)

Over the years, the project has been shown in exhibitions in Brussels and Düsseldorf, and it continues to evolve with every new edition of my book ALLEZ LE TOUR! and with each new journey along the race route.

There is a special excitement in knowing that the Tour de France will celebrate its Grand Départ in Barcelona in 2026 – a city that has been my home for two decades and a place where my professional and personal worlds meet. For me, this feels like a quiet full circle.

This project is both an archive and a living project. My photography is driven by love for the medium, respect for its traditions, and a desire to question speed, spectacle, and perfection. I believe photographs should breathe, endure, and reward those who take the time to look.

Progress over the years

2005
First year at Tour de France

The first year at the Tour de France started as a personal project and resulted in a publication in the STERN – which for me was an incredible achievement, as I had just finished my training as a photographer.

2005-2014
Consistency is key

I returned to Tour de France over the next 10 years, as I knew, that analog photography was becoming more and more abandoned and I wanted to keep it alive for myself as a nice contrast to digital work – which had taken over my worklife by now.

2014
First book – Digitalisation

Self editing was becoming a thing and I had collected 10 years of material. I brought out a first edition – very limited as still self publishing was something incredibly expensive.

2017
First time showing big!

2017 was the Grand Depart in Düsseldorf. I sent my expose and the first draft of the book to the NRW Forum where I had my first and very important exhibition among exhibits of Robert Capa, Andreas Gursky and others. A big leap for ALLEZ LE TOUR! Check out how it went here.

I worked with translators to bring out the book into 4 languages and a lot of research went into where to print and how to ship everything, to still make a version that would be affordable to the public and visitors.

2019
More exhibitions – Brussels

I had found my goal for this year and travelled to Brussels. Roaming the city I found the perfect place to exhibit for 2019. Les Halles Saint Gery, open to public and a beautiful building in the heart of Brussels was the place to be. A lot of work, sweat and love went into this exhibition – by all people involved. 8.000 visitors were counted by the end of this exhibition. Of course the book was updated for this event and showed now 14 years of Tour de France.

2021
Presenting in my home town

The pandemic had us all pinned down but I was able to continue my project of the Tour de France. When everything went back to normal, I was so happy to get invited to my hometown in NRW to present my work there as well one summer.

2021-2026
Collecting more material

Right now I am in the process of selecting more material that will be in the next edition of the book and quite some of it is already in the process of digitilising. This is a process I really enjoy, but it does take a lot of time as well and has to be done next to all other work – so sometimes its challenging to prioritize. But I do hope to get everything ready soon, as the next Grand Depart is in Barcelona.



*Extract from contact sheets 2024 Nice, France
(in process of digitalisation)*

About the photographer



I was born in 1972 in Münsterland, North Rhine-Westphalia, and photography has been my way of understanding the world for two decades now. In 2005, I moved to Barcelona, a city whose light, rhythm, and contradictions continue to shape both my life and my work.

I work as a freelance photographer, specialising in portrait photography, and since opening my own photo studio in Barcelona in 2010, I've had the privilege of working closely with people, faces, and stories. Photography, to me, is about time – taking it, giving it space, and allowing something real to surface. In an increasingly fast and image-saturated world, I value attention and craft.

Alongside my commissioned work, I have been developing over the years this **long-term analog personal project “ALLEZ LE TOUR!” - starting in 2005**. It began on the roadside of the Tour de France and has grown into an ongoing visual archive of everything that happens just outside the frame of the race itself. I photograph exclusively on black-and-white 35mm analogue film – a conscious decision to slow down, to trust experience, and to stay connected to the physical act of photography.



photographs from different years between 2005-2025



Video & Podcast

[Link Video: Exhibition Düsseldorf \(1min.\)](#)

[Link Video: ALLEZ LE TOUR - The project \(8min.\)](#)

[Link Podcast: ALLEZ LE TOUR - The project \(1h 20min.\)](#)



contact me



NRW Forum, Düsseldorf

Exhibition Düsseldorf

[Link: Exhibition Düsseldorf](#)

A Cultural Moment at the Grand Départ

In spring of 2017, as Düsseldorf prepared to host the Grand Départ of the Tour de France, I was invited to participate in the international group exhibition “Mythos Tour de France” at the NRW-Forum Düsseldorf. The show, curated by Alain Bieber, ran from May 19 to July 30, 2017, and brought together more



than 120 works by 20 international artists, spanning over 80 years of Tour history. Among them were some of the most renowned names in cycling imagery, including Robert Capa, Andreas Gursky, Harry Gruyaert, Guy Le Querrec, Bruno Barbey, and Graham Watson.

A Milestone Beyond the Museum

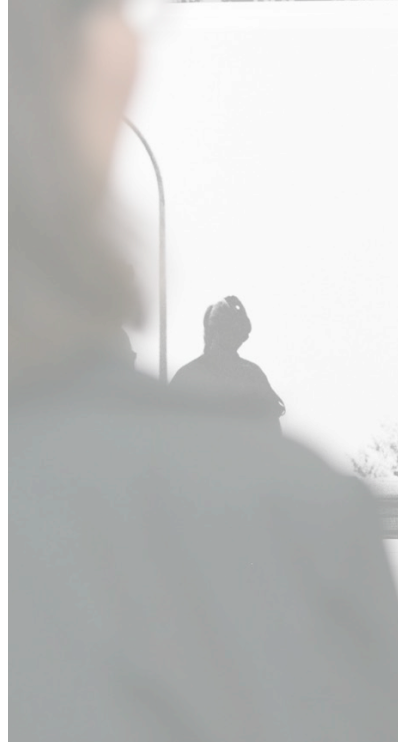
The Düsseldorf exhibition was a turning point: it placed my work in dialogue with some of the most important photographers of the Tour de France, while at the same time introducing Allez le Tour to a wider audience.



A first public moment

For me, Düsseldorf marked a major first. It was the first time my project Allez le Tour was shown to the public in such a prestigious setting. Fourteen years of my analog black-and-white photography, from 2005 to 2018, were presented in chronological order, with four prints from each year. My work brought the perspective of the fans into focus — their rituals, gestures, and presence along the roadside — providing a human counterpoint to the more monumental depictions of the race.

This exhibition also coincided with the release of my first book, which brought together images from 2005 to 2016. Publishing and presenting it at the NRW-Forum gave the project a tangible form beyond the walls of the museum and marked its establishment as a long-term cultural document of the Tour de France.





Les Halles Saint Géry, 2019

Tour de France Photography Exhibition in the heart of Brussels



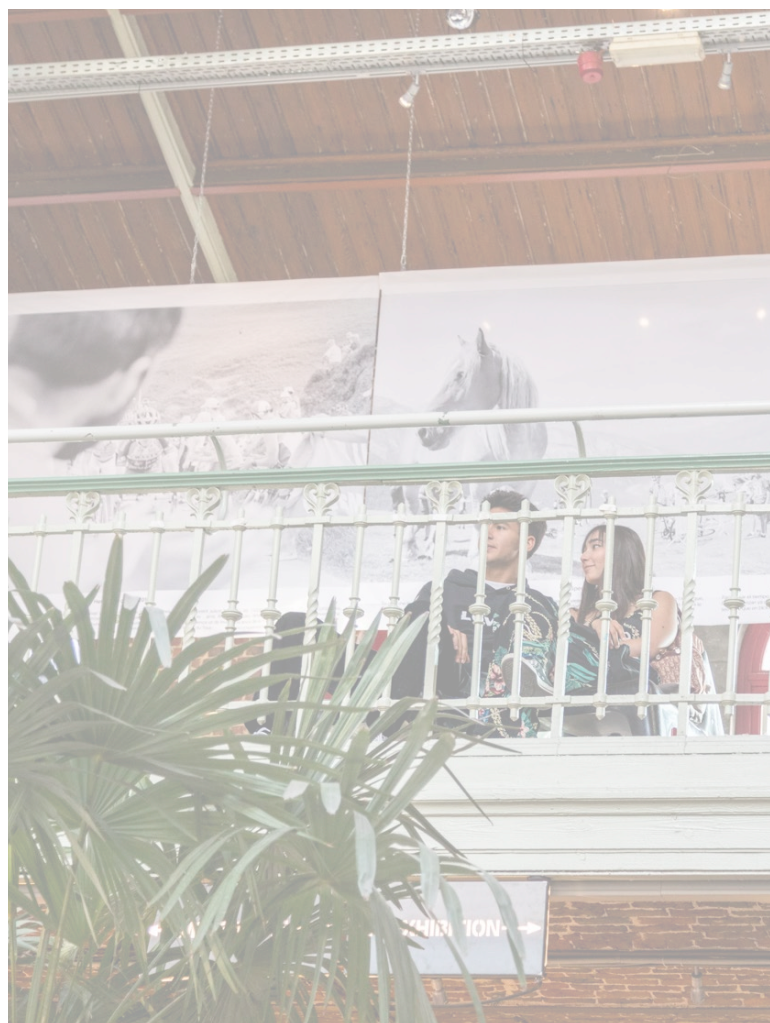
Brussels, 2019

From July 4 to August 25, 2019, Allez le Tour took over the historic Les Halles Saint-Géry in Brussels with a large-scale exhibition that resonated with cycling fans and art lovers alike. Timed to coincide with the Grand Départ of the Tour de France, which began in Brussels on July 6, 2019, the exhibition became a cultural highlight in the Belgian capital during the summer months.



Organized and curated in collaboration with Cyril Menio-
lle de Cizancourt, then director of Les Halles Saint-Géry,
the show attracted around 8,000 visitors over its three-
month run. The venue itself, a UNESCO-protected cov-
ered market from the late 19th century, provided a strik-
ing architectural backdrop to the photographs, blending
cultural heritage with the living history of the Tour de
France.

Tour de France
Photography
Exhibitions
showcases
14 years of
analog
black-and-white
work by Nicola
Mesken.



ALLEZ EL TOUR!



The exhibition presented the analog black-and-white photography of ALLEZ LE TOUR, tracing my project Allez le Tour from its beginnings in 2005 through to 2018. In chronological order, visitors encountered four prints from each year, together forming a visual narrative of fourteen years spent on the roadside of the world's most famous cycling race.

Adding to the immersive experience were large-format prints measuring 200 × 160 cm, which hung dramatically from the walls of Les Halles. These monumental works gave the exhibition a sense of scale and atmosphere that echoed the grandeur of the race itself, while the smaller prints provided intimate glimpses into the faces, gestures, and moments of the Tour's devoted fans.

