

Marcel Bascouard

This French artist, who was born in Bourges in 1913, spent his adult life on the outskirts of the medieval city, living in a shanty constructed from an abandoned truck. He provided for himself (and his rescued cats) by selling souvenir landscape drawings and paintings. The captivating exhibition “Being Marcel Bascouard,” at the Andrew Edlin gallery, focusses on the artist’s noncommercial output—his photographic self-portraits. In these small, vintage, black-and-white works, Bascouard is usually seen in a dress; because the pictures were taken across three decades, beginning in the nineteen-forties, they offer a portrait of aging. In one early studio shot, Bascouard has a dark, chin-length bob and wears what looks like a simple, nineteenth-century taffeta gown; in “Pose 4, 29 mai,” from 1971, he is seen outdoors, his hair now going gray, wearing a more glamorous, if less describable, costume. Bascouard paid a tragic price for his unconventional life: he was arrested for cross-dressing during the Nazi Occupation, and again, later, by the French police, and was murdered in 1978 by a group of youths—realities that feel a world away from the confident bearing and defiantly pleased expression he presents to his camera here.

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Marcel Bascouard / Par Johanna Fateman

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