

ERNST HAAS

COLOR PROOF

NOVEMBER 7 – DECEMBER 23, 2015

From Wednesday to Saturday, 2-7 pm and by appointment

Opening on November 6, 5-8 pm



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Living as we do in the digital age, it is difficult for us to imagine the number of photographers who found their calling after discovering the work of Ernst Haas. His publications and his retrospective at the MoMA in 1962 have influenced an entire generation. We've forgotten now, but colour film was difficult to handle. It was light years ago, in 1952, when the American magazine *Life* asked him use colour to work on the city of New York. Capa, at Magnum, was the only person who understood why he wanted to experiment with colour. After all, black and white was still king. But Ernst Haas was unperturbed. In order to understand his highly singular adventure, we must see it in its historical context. Born in 1921 to a family of Jewish origins, Haas lived through the trauma of the Second World War. Subsequently, in 1951, he emigrated to the United States, a country he had dreamed of since his youth. He was an optimistic man, with no professional strategy, for he himself had never asked anything of anyone. He was a free man.

Contact:

Françoise Morin

+331 78 94 03 00 – contact@lesdoucheslagalerie.com

COLOR PROOF

WILLIAM EWING

Ernst Haas was unquestionably one of the best known, most prolific, and most widely published photographers of the twentieth century. He is commonly associated with a vibrant color photography which, from the 1950s on, was much in demand by the illustrated press. This work, published by dozens of influential magazines in Europe and America, also fed a constant stream of book projects. These too, enjoyed great popularity.

But although Haas's color work earned him fame around the world, decade after decade, in recent years it has been derided by critics and curators for the very characteristics that made it so popular with magazine editors – its immediacy and accessibility. In a nutshell, Haas has been criticized for being “too commercial”, a sin in a field where every effort had (and has!) to be made to distance the supposedly fragile art form from contamination with crassly commercial endeavors. His work was also judged too simplistic, lacking in the complexities and ironies that marked the imagery of Haas's younger rivals, who were also busy forging a new language color. As a result, Haas' reputation has suffered in comparison with the leading lights of what came to be known as “the New Color”, notably William Eggleston, Joel Sternfeld, Stephen Shore, and Joel Meyerowitz.

Paradoxically, however, there was another side to Haas's work, an aspect that has escaped posthumous appreciation. This side shows him to be by no means inferior to his younger colleagues in innovation. For, parallel to his commissioned work, Haas constantly took pictures for his own pleasure, and as far as I can make out, without any particular intention to share them with others. These pictures show a very different aspect of his sensibility – they are far more edgy, loose, enigmatic, and ambiguous than his celebrated work. Most of these pictures he never even printed, let alone published, probably assuming that they were too difficult to be understood. These images are of great sophistication, and rival (and sometimes surpass) the best work of his colleagues (...).

It is one of those ironies in life that the distinguished curator, John Szarkowski, who exhibited Haas early on but then decided not to champion him, led me indirectly to the photographer's hidden work. Like other young curators of my generation, I had also dismissed Haas's work for the reasons stated above, as well as for what I considered an excessive sentimentality. And yet one of his color photographs gnawed away at me over the years, resisting this dismissive appraisal. It was a picture that Szarkowski had once reproduced in a Museum of Modern Art publication – a street scene with awnings and their reflections which could not help but evoke a Morris Louis painting. The billowing color of the awning rippled like flames, and I recalled the old adage, “where there's smoke, there's fire”. There had to be more where this came from! Then, many years later, as I was re-reading Szarkowski's thoughts on color, I was amused to find another appropriate metaphor. “As recently as the 1960s,” he wrote, “perhaps only Eliot Porter and Ernst Haas, among photographers then prominent, would carry from the proverbial burning house their color work before their black and white.” A dormant seed stirred in my mind.

Around 2006, I mentioned my thoughts to fellow curator Graham Howe, and found that he, too, had similar suspicions. We resolved to go to the Haas archive in London, and see if our instincts proved sound. We made a first foray, and decided that, indeed, there were smoldering embers which with a little oxygen might burst into flame. Although I went on to do the research alone, for practical reasons, over the next couple of years I managed to go through all 200,000 color slides – partly driven by the sheer visual excitement, and partly to assure myself that I wasn't “making up” this shadow Haas. I do not believe I was, and the imagery in this book is my best argument.

William Ewing

Curator and author

Introduction of *Ernst Haas Color Correction*, published by Steidl in 2011

ERNST HAAS

INGE BONDI

In my estimation we have experienced an epoch in photography. Here is a free spirit, untrammelled by tradition and theory, who has gone out and found beauty unparalleled in photography. . . .

Edward Steichen, 1962
Curator at The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Ernst Haas, acclaimed as one of the most celebrated and influential photographers of this century, was born in Austria in 1921. He attended medical school, but his strong artistic bent led him to the camera. He was without professional training, twenty six years old, when he shot into fame with his first essay, "Homecoming Prisoners of War," photographed in his native Vienna. "When I saw that first set of pictures, I knew I had stumbled upon a genius and I felt a chill up and down my spine..." its editor remembered decades later.

With this essay Haas set a new standard for delicacy of feeling and empathy in photojournalism. Its publication in 1949 brought Haas two invitations: one from Robert Capa to join Magnum, the year-old cooperative of international photojournalists; the other to join the staff of *Life* magazine, the most prominent popularizer of photography of the era. Haas chose Magnum, becoming the first photographer to be invited to do so by its founders, Robert Capa, Henri Cartier-Bresson, George Rodger, and David Seymour.

Within two years, in 1951, Haas was working in the United States. While photographing in black and white in the New Mexico desert, he experienced a great longing for color. Thus began a life-long odyssey of exploration of the uses and meaning of color in photography.

Haas's frustration with the limitations of technology pushed him at every turn to be slightly ahead of his time. He was a technological pioneer with the eye of a painter and the soul of a poet. It has been written that before Haas there was no color photography, only colored photographs.

Haas's first color essay was on New York, the city he would ultimately make his home. In 1953, when the editors of *Life* magazine saw it, they gave it an unheard-of layout of 24 pages and called it "Magic Images of a City". Essays on Paris and Venice followed.

In 1962, when the Museum of Modern Art held their first color retrospective, it was the work of Haas they chose to feature.

Though a Magnum photographer in the heyday of photojournalism, Haas was not interested in color as reportage. He was interested in the super-reality of dreams. To achieve this he gave commonplace objects and silhouettes new meaning. A reflection brought home the hidden depths underlying a conventional urban storefront; torn posters peeling off buildings shaped themselves into an art gallery. In his quest to produce feelings, he introduced hues and tones never before seen in printed color. And at all times his work was informed and enlightened by a guiding intelligence capable of great and quizzical humor.

Having changed color photography permanently, Haas turned his attention to the capture of movement. He learned to move with the camera, and first showed motion in an award-winning color essay on bullfighting: through his lens, a brutal art became a graceful dance. Later, investigating sports of all kinds, he captured the exhilaration of speed with a previously unseen clarity. He explained: "To express dynamic motion through a static moment became for me limited and unsatisfactory. The basic idea was to liberate myself from this old concept and arrive at an image in which the spectator could feel the beauty of a fourth dimension, which lies much more between moments than within a moment. In music one remembers never one tone, but a melody, a theme, a movement. In dance, never a moment, but again the beauty of a movement in time and space."

In 1958 an international panel of 243 eminent critics, teachers, editors, art directors and other photography professionals voted on the world's 10 Greatest Photographers for Popular

Photography magazine. They were: Ansel Adams, Richard Avedon, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Alfred Eisenstaedt, Ernst Haas, Philippe Halsman, Yousuf Karsh, Gjon Mili, Irving Penn, and W. Eugene Smith.

Haas later pushed the boundaries of still and motion photography even further, directing The Creation sequence (based on the book of Genesis) for John Huston's 1964 film, *The Bible*. His belief that a series of images seen together added up to more than the sum of their parts also led him to produce four monumental photographic books. The product of thirteen years of work, *The Creation* (1971) was the most successful color photography book of its time, selling over 350,000 copies. Commissioned for the bicentennial, Haas regarded his second book, *In America* (1975), as "a love letter" to his adopted country, a love affair that had begun when he was a boy in Vienna, his imagination aflame with stories of American Indians. *In Germany* (1976) represented a return to and investigation of his European roots, and *Himalayan Pilgrimage* (1978) showed his increasing concern with spiritual matters.

In his quest for a more visually attuned world, he created the four part television series *The Art of Seeing*. He felt equally strongly about his black and white photography as about his color; each was suitable for different modes of expression.

In person, Ernst was a delightful man, quick-witted and funny. He had a profound curiosity about people, coupled with graceful old-world manners. Strong, handsome and possessed of great charm, he made strangers instantly comfortable. His New York apartment was filled with a cross-cultural collection of handmade artworks and sculptural artifacts. (...)

Ernst Haas died in New York of a stroke at age sixty-five. During his life, his work was shown in more than thirty solo exhibitions in the United States, in Europe, in Japan and in South America. Almost every year of his photographic life he was awarded an honor.

About the nature of poetry and photography, he wrote:

I see what I think

I see what I feel because I am what I see

If there is nothing to see and I still see it,

That's poetry

If there is something to see and everybody sees it

That's photography.

Inge Bondi

Took part in the New York Magnum adventure in 1950.

Alternately secretary, Magnum member, journalist, writer, Inge Bondi took a generation of photographers and especially Ernst Haas under her wing. Currently working on his biography.

ERNST HAAS

SELECTION OF WORKS

"Third Avenue Reflection", New York City, USA, 1952

1952

C-print, 2015

Print size: 30 x 40 inches



Route 66, Albuquerque, NM

1969

C-print, 2015

Print size: 20 x 30 inches



« One », USA

1968

C-print, 2015

Print size: 20 x 30 inches

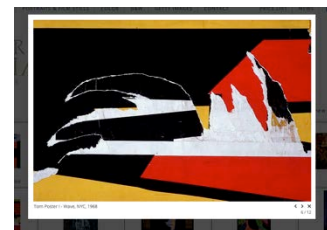


Torn Poster I - Wave, NYC

1968

C-print, 2015

Print size: 20 x 30 inches



« Frigidaire », Paris

1954

C-print, 2015

Print size: 16 x 20 inches



New York

1978

C-print, 2015

Print size: 16 x 20 inches



New York City, USA

1962

C-print, 2015

Print size: 16 x 20 inches



New York

1955

C-print, 2015

Print size: 16 x 20 inches



Traffic, Mexico City

1963

C-print, 2015

Print size: 16 x 20 inches



Street Market, Paris

1955

C-print, 2015

Print size: 16 x 20 inches



ERNST HAAS

SOLO EXHIBITIONS (SELECTION)

- 2015 *Reconstructing Londres: Visions of the City after World War I.* Atlas Gallery, Londres
- 2012 *Ernst Haas: Classics.* Duncan Miller Gallery, Bergamot Station, Santa Monica, Californie
Ernst Haas: Color Correction. Christopher Guye Gallery, Zurich, Suisse
- 2011 *The Creation.* Portland Museum of Art
The Creation. Weston Gallery, Carmel, Californie
Ernst Haas. Galerie Basia Embirico, Paris
Color Correction. Atlas Gallery, Londres
Ernst Haas: A Photographic Retrospective: Post War Vienna 1945–1948. Museum der Moderne Salzburg.
- 2010 *Color Correction.* Arles photo festival
- 2009 *Force Of Nature.* Danese/Corey Gallery, New York
Ernst Haas: Color Correction. New York Photo Festival
- 2009 *Force Of Nature.* Danese/Corey Gallery, New York
Ernst Haas: Color Correction. New York Photo Festival
- 2006 *Ernst Haas: Hollywood.* Farmani Gallery
Ernst Haas: Total Vision. Atlas Gallery, Londres
- 2002 *Ernst Haas: A Re-Creation* part 1 and part 2. Bruce Silverstein Gallery, New York
- 2000 *Ernst Haas : New York.* Soho Triad Fine Arts, New York
- 1996 *Ernst Haas (1921–1986) Photographien.* Neue Galerie der Stadt Linz, Autriche
- 1994 *Ernst Haas In Black And White.* Kathleen Ewing Gallery, Washington, D.C
- 1992 *Ernst Haas in Black and White.* International Center of Photography, Midtown
American Photographs 1950–1975. Howard Greenberg Gallery, New York
- 1987 *Ernst Haas.* Gothenborg, Sweden. Rshska Konstslsjudmuseet
- 1976 *Ernst Haas.* Space Gallery, New York
Ernst Haas: An American Experience. International Center of Photography, and Port Washington Public Library, New York
- 1975 *Ernst Haas: Postwar Photographs 1945–1949.* Institut autrichien, New York
- 1971 *The Creation.* Rizzoli Gallery, New York
- 1968-71 *Angkor And Ball: Two Worlds Of Ernst Haas.* Asia House Gallery, New York. Under the auspices of The American Federation of Arts traveled to Grand Valley State College, Allingdale, MI; Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto; Stephens College, Columbia, MO; University of Manitoba, Canada; Kent Boysō School, Kent, CT; University of Arkansas, Fayetteville
- 1965 *The Art Of Seeing.* An exhibition organized by Kodak that traveled to Mexico, England, France, Germany, Autriche, Espagne, Holland, Belgium, Finland, Southeast Asia, Japan, and Brazil
- 1962 *Ernst Haas: Color Photography.* The Museum of Modern Art, New York

GROUP SHOWS (SELECTION)

- 2015 *Fatal Attraction: Piotr Uklanski Selects From The Met Collection.* Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
New York. Les Douches La Galerie, Paris
- 2014 *Magnum Photos: Contact Sheets.* Capa Kozpont (Capa Center), Budapest
- 2013 *Flowers And Mushrooms.* MdM Salzburg, Autriche
Suddenness And Certainty. Robert Miller Gallery, New York

- 2012 *New York In Color*. Howard Greenberg Gallery, New York
- 2011 *History's Big Picture*. Monroe Gallery, Santa Fe, NM
- 2010 *Photographs from 1950 to 2010*. Picto, 60th anniversary
Beyond Color: Color In American Phototgraphy. Bruce Silverstein Gallery, New York
- 2009 Magnum's First: A Re-Discovered Photo Exhibition. Monroe Gallery, New York
- 2007 *Easy Rider: Road Trip across America*. Yancee Richardson Gallery, New York.
First Contact: A Photographer's Sketchbook. Bruce Silvertein Gallery, New York
Marilyn Monroe: Life as a Legend. The Dayton Art Institute
- 2005 *Coney Island*. Howard Greenberg Gallery, New York
- 2000 *Photographing Maine: 1840–2000*. Maine Coast Artists, Rockport, Maine
Photographing Autriche. Leica Gallery, New York
Reflections in a Glass Eye: Works From The International Center Of Photography Collection. International Center of Photography, New York
Photographs of New York. Brooke Alexander, New York. Included in the partial recreation of the Family of Man Exhibition. Whitney Museum of Art, New York
- 1999 *Ernst Haas and W.Eugene Smith*. Ann Shanks Gallery, Sheffield, MA
- 1997 Masters in Photography: Alfred Eisenstaedt, Ernst Haas, Andre Kertesz, Eugene Smith, Roman Vishniac. Uma Gallery, New York City
- 1995 Postwar Europe, 1945–1965. Art After The Flood. Barcelone, Espagne
- 1994 *Magnum and the Cinema*. Paris et Londres
Magic Moments, 40 Years of Leica Photography. USA and Europe
Appeal to this Age: The Photography of the Civil Rights Movement, 1954–1968. Howard Greenberg Gallery, New York
- 1987 Le temps d'un mouvement : aventures et mésaventures de l'instant photographique. Palais de Tokyo, Paris
- 1982 *Color as Form: A History of Color Photography*. Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House, Rochester, New York
- 1978 Mirrors and Windows: American Photography since 1960. The Museum of Modern Art, New York
- 1967 *Photography in the 20th Century*. The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
- 1964 *Weltausstellung Der Photographie* (World Exhibition of Photography). Kunsthallen und Kulturinstituten, Hamburg
The Photo Essay. The Museum of Modern Art, New York