

ERNST HAAS

VISIONARY COLOUR

OPENING ON SEPTEMBER 5TH FROM 6 TO 9 PM

FROM SEPTEMBER 6TH TO NOVEMBER 9TH, 2019



© Ernst Haas Estate / Courtesy Les Douches la Galerie, Paris

Les Douches la Galerie is pleased to present its second exhibition of the singular works of Ernst Haas. The nearly forty prints that make up *Visionary Colour*, most of which have never been exhibited before, testify to the timelessness of his work. Taken between 1952 and 1981, the photographs presented here display an ambiguity bordering on the abstract, shot through with superimpositions, off-centered framing and blurriness.

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From Wednesday to Saturday
From 2 to 7 pm
or by appointment

ERNST HAAS, VISIONARY COLOUR

PRESS RELEASE

If we go by what most histories of photography claim, 1976 is the year that colour photography entered museums. And yet, fourteen years before William Eggleston and Stephen Shore, Ernst Haas had put together an exhibition explicitly subtitled *Color Photography* at New York's Museum of Modern Art. Encompassing some eighty images, Haas' exhibition was the first monographic exhibition in colour organised by the institution and a new accolade for the photographer. Born in Vienna in 1921, Haas began working at Magnum in 1949 and settled in New York in 1951. He published the first entirely colour portfolios for *Life* magazine, in 1953, and participated in numerous group exhibitions at the MoMA, including *The Family of Man* (1955) and *The Sense of Abstraction* (1960). So how is it possible that *Ernst Haas, Color Photography* is not considered an historical milestone and that the photographer has lost his rightful place in the history books to a subsequent generation of photographers, comprising William Eggleston, Stephen Shore and Joel Meyerowitz?

The exhibit was held in the fall of 1962. John Szarkowski had just become director of the MoMA's photography department and was setting up the last exhibitions that his predecessor Edward Steichen had planned. In 1963, Szarkowski's first initiative, *Five Unrelated Photographers* would set the tone and confirm that photography's artistic ambition was inseparable from black and white. For Steichen, that was apparently not the case as he dedicated group exhibitions to colour (*Color Photography* in 1950) and abstraction (*Abstraction in Photography* in 1951). Steichen himself was less concerned with art and, as a photographer who had tried his hand at everything, he merged the uses of photography, be they documentary, scientific, creative, experimental or even commercial. So, although he brought colour photography into the museum, Steichen was still able to comfort the established hierarchies that saw black and white as a creative tool for interpretation, and relegated colour, with its supposed realism, to a mimetic role.

It would take the exhibitions by Eggleston and Shore for this hierarchy to be blown to bits, even though Haas' colour works show that they were a priori unfounded. While he had begun his career in photography with a black and white reportage on post-war Vienna, he quickly turned toward colour in response to growing requests from magazines, but also in order to develop a more subjective approach that was more concerned with disturbing rather than duplicating reality.

Through his use of close-ups and off-center compositions, chiaroscuro, out of focus effects and reflection and superposition, colour helps to alter perception. Haas never uses it for its descriptive value. On the contrary, it is possible to see in his use of it a nod to the painting of his time. His coloured, generally diaphanous flat tints bring to mind Color Field Painting. But that would be unjust to colour photography and its capacity for derealisation which, unlike abstraction and its divorce from reality, creates the often irresolvable ambiguity that Haas was looking for. Indeed, his finesse in using colour is what gives *Western Skies Motel, Colorado, USA* (1978) its surprising quality.

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But it would be a mistake to reduce Haas' colour works to a single intention. The body of work that we are now presenting at Les Douches la Galerie intentionally includes only a few well-known images that were published or exhibited during the photographer's lifetime. It is true that one of them, *3rd Avenue, Reflection, New York City, USA (1952)*, was published in *Life* in 1953 and shown in the 1962 MoMA exhibition. But while the earlier exhibition emphasised images laded with motion blurs, which later became Haas' trademark, ours eschews this gimmick in favour of more varied and renewed inspirations.

The variety is due in no small part to locations. Haas travelled frequently for commissions and reportages and his photographs clearly show that the streets of Paris evoke different images – like the market scene from 1954 – than do the streets of New York whose singular energy made the city the capital of street photography.

The renewal, on the other hand, is a question of subjects. The dates of the shots indicate that, especially beginning in the 1970s, Haas increasingly favoured the motif of the image within the image. Examples in the exhibition include a portrait of Marilyn Monroe and a poster of a couple kissing. Obviously the photographer was interested in the interactions between the images and their context – the city's reflection that interferes with the image of the star, the fence that imprisons the embrace. But he was also undoubtedly noting the increasing presence of images in daily life and, in particular, of the televised images, also increasingly dominated by colour, that represented such stiff competition to *Life*, contributing to the magazine folding in 1972, an event that was surely not a matter of indifference to the photographer.

In fact, Haas photographed numerous colour television screens in the 1970s. He seemed to want to inventory the signs of contemporary America and its political, diplomatic, scientific, sporting and cultural mythologies, but also its dark side, embodied by the figure of Charles Manson. He also seemed to want to capture these new images in their technical materiality. Actually, this time, Haas did not go for collage or montage effects. The television image is delivered up as is. Nothing interferes with it except its definition and colours in all of their approximation and unreality, which could not but have caught his eye.

Étienne Hatt

Art Critic

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VISUELS

Ernst Haas

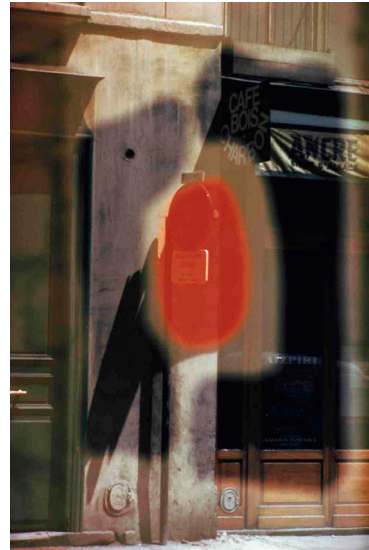
Caen, France, 1976

Chromogenic print, posthumous

Print size: 16 x 20 inches

© Ernst Haas Estate

Courtesy Les Douches la Galerie, Paris



Ernst Haas

The Swimmer, Greece, 1972

Chromogenic print, posthumous

Print size: 20 x 30 inches

© Ernst Haas Estate

Courtesy Les Douches la Galerie, Paris



Ernst Haas

California, 1975

Chromogenic print, posthumous

Print size: 16 x 20 inches

© Ernst Haas Estate

Courtesy Les Douches la Galerie, Paris



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ERNST HAAS, VISIONARY COLOUR

IMAGES

Ernst Haas

London, c. 1960

Chromogenic print, posthumous

Print size: 16 x 20 inches

© Ernst Haas Estate

Courtesy Les Douches la Galerie, Paris



Ernst Haas

Third Avenue Reflection, New York City, USA, 1952

Chromogenic print, posthumous

Print size: 30 x 40 inches

© Ernst Haas Estate

Courtesy Les Douches la Galerie, Paris



Ernst Haas

Western Skies Motel, New Mexico, USA, 1978

Chromogenic print, posthumous

Print size: 20 x 30 inches

© Ernst Haas Estate

Courtesy Les Douches la Galerie, Paris



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VISUELS

Ernst Haas

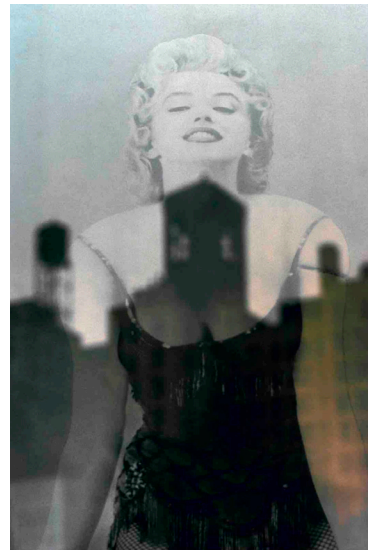
New York, 1978

Chromogenic print, posthumous

Print size: 16 x 20 inches

© Ernst Haas Estate

Courtesy Les Douches la Galerie, Paris



Ernst Haas

New York, 1975

Chromogenic print, posthumous

Print size: 16 x 20 inches

© Ernst Haas Estate

Courtesy Les Douches la Galerie, Paris



Ernst Haas

USA, c. 1970

Chromogenic print, posthumous

Print size: 20 x 30 inches

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BIOGRAPHY

Ernst Haas (1921–1986) is acclaimed as one of the most celebrated and influential photographers of the 20th century and considered one of the pioneers of color photography. Haas was born in Vienna in 1921, and took up photography after the war. His early work on Austrian returning prisoners of war brought him to the attention of *Life* magazine. He declined a job offer as staff photographer in order to keep his independence. At the invitation of Robert Capa, Haas joined Magnum in 1949, developing close associations with Capa, Henri Cartier-Bresson, and Werner Bischof.

Haas moved to the United States in 1951 and soon after, began experimenting with Kodachrome color film. He went on to become the premier color photographer of the 1950s. In 1953 *Life* magazine published his groundbreaking 24-page color photo essay on New York City. This was the first time such a large color photo feature was published by *Life*. In 1962 a retrospective of his work was the first color photography exhibition held at New York's Museum of Modern Art.

Throughout his career, Haas traveled extensively, photographing for *Life*, *Vogue*, and *Look*, to name a few of many influential publications. He authored four books during his lifetime: *The Creation* (1971), *In America* (1975), *In Germany* (1976), and *Himalayan Pilgrimage* (1978).

Ernst Haas received the Hasselblad award in 1986, the year of his death. Haas has continued to be the subject of museum exhibitions and publications such as *Ernst Haas, Color Photography* (1989), *Ernst Haas in Black and White* (1992), and *Color Correction* (2011).

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C.V.

SOLO SHOWS (SELECTION)

- 2019 *Realms of Color: The Creation by Ernst Haas*, Fujifilm Square, Tokyo
Marilyn and The Misfits: Fotografie di Ernst Haas, Ono Arte, Bologna
- 2016 *Ernst Haas*, International Photography Hall of Fame and Museum, St. Louis
- 2015 *La couleur à toute épreuve*, Les Douches la Galerie, Paris
Reconstructing Londres: Visions of the City after World War I, Atlas Gallery, Londres
- 2012 *Ernst Haas: Classics*, Duncan Miller Gallery, Bergamot Station, Santa Monica
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
Ernst Haas: Color Correction, New York Photo Festival
- 2006 *Ernst Haas: Hollywood*, Farmani Gallery
- 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, Rshsska 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*, exhibition organized by Kodak, 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

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GROUP SHOWS (SELECTION)

- 2019 *Pittura/Panorama. Paintings by Helen Frankenthaler, 1952–1992*, Museo di Palazzo Grimani, Castello, Venice
- 2017 *Magnum Analog Recovery*, Le Bal, Paris
The Immigrants, Howard Greenberg Gallery, New York
Lines, Spheres, And Glyphs: Fontana, Giacomelli, Haas, Kepes, Siskind. Robert Klein Gallery, Boston.
- 2016 *Who shot sports: a photographic history, 1843 to the present*, Brooklyn Museum, New York
- 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
- 2012 *New York In Color*, Howard Greenberg Gallery, New York
- 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 Silverstein 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
Reflections in a Glass Eye, 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
- 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
- 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

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