

ERNST HAAS

Press Packet

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Ernst Haas Chronology

1921

Born on March 2 in Vienna, Austria second son of Frederika and Ernst Haas, a high official in the Austrian government. His mother, inspired by the arts, encourages him from early childhood to pursue creative endeavors. She maintains a lifelong correspondence with him, mainly about artistic and aesthetic aspects of life. His older brother and best friend Fritz is supportive and sympathetic.

1935-39

Attends high school at the LEH Grinzing in Vienna from 1935 to 1938, when it closed due to the invasion of Austria by Germany. Receives diploma from the Rainier Gymnasium, Vienna 1939.

1940

Father dies. Begins printing from old negatives.
Studies medicine but is prohibited from continuing due to Jewish ancestry.

1941

Enters the Graphische Lehr und Versuchsanstalt (Graphic Arts Institute) in Vienna to study photography but leaves after one semester. Shoots photographs for the Reinhardt film seminar in Berlin.

1943-45

Works on and off in photographic studio in Vienna. Makes his first abstract photographs. Teaches photography at the American Red Cross. In their library he discovers *The Poet's Camera*, edited by Bryan Holme, which influences him on poetry in photography. In this book he sees photographs by Edward Weston whose ability to transform an object from the real to the unreal profoundly affects him.

1946

Acquires his first camera, a Rolleiflex, on the black market with 10 kilograms of margarine received for his 25th birthday. Travels to Switzerland to meet Arnold Kubler, editor of *DU* magazine, where he is exposed to the photography of Werner Bischof. Bischof later becomes a close friend and associate at Magnum.

1947

Inge Morathe discoverd Haas' work and showed it to Warren Trabant, editor of *HEUTE* in Munich.

1949

Begins work for *HEUTE* with correspondent Inge Morath.
First feature article on Viennese homecoming prisoners is published in *HEUTE* and later picked up by *LIFE*. On the basis of this story, Wilson Hicks picture editor of *LIFE*, offers him a job as staff photographer, which he declines.
At the invitation of Robert Capa, he joins Magnum, which he believes will offer him independence as a photographer. Also becomes a shareholder in Magnum. During this time he develops close associations with Capa, Bischof, and Henri Cartier-Bresson. In particular Capa encourages him to pursue his own vision. Begins shooting with a Leica and experimenting with the first color films.

1951

Marries the Countess Antoinette Wenckheim. Visits the United States for the first time on assignment from Robert Capa. Appointed vice president of Magnum's American operations.

1952

Hitchhikes throughout New Mexico working on "Land of Enchantment" for LIFE, inspired by his childhood fascination with the Southwest and American Indians.

1953

LIFE publishes its first major color essay, "Images of a Magic City" (New York). Travels to Asia to cover the Vietnam War. Free-lance stories included in LIFE, LOOK, VOGUE, and HOLIDAY.

1953-54

In his personal letters begins to question photojournalism assignments, the conflict between editors and photographers, and what he hopes to achieve in life.

1954

Robert Capa and Werner Bischof are killed while on assignment. Upon their death becomes a member of the Board of Directors at Magnum.

1955

Travels to Indonesia.

1955-56

Photo-essays published in LIFE include "land of Tranquility" (South Africa, 1954). "The Glow of Paris" (1955), and "Mirror of Venice" (1956).

Shoots movie stills for LAND OF THE PHARAOHS (1954), MOBY DICK (1956), and THE PRIDE AND THE PASSION (1956).

1957

LIFE publishes "Beauty in the Brutal Art," photographs of the bullfight in Spain. Marks the beginning of his motion studies and the first time this type of color photography is published. Serves as Member of the Executive Committee at Magnum.

1958

Featured in POPULAR PHOTOGRAPHY article, "The World's 10 Greatest Photographers." LIFE publishes "The Magic of Color in Motion," an essay that explores the possibilities of mixing colors by using slow shutter speeds. Described as "painting with the camera" by critics.

1959

Elected president of Magnum. Edits and designs the exhibition "The World as Seen by Magnum Photographers."

Begins assignment for General Dynamics. Travels to Norway for HOLIDAY.

1960

Shoots movie stills for THE MISFITS.

Takes a series of motion photographs for the Lincoln Center Ballet, New York, from which a movie is made. Photographs the Olympics for LIFE.

Takes up residency in New York and opens his first studio on East 71st Street.

1962

Travels to Greece for HOLIDAY, England for QUEEN, Argentina to shoot movie stills for TARAS BULBA, and Tennessee to photograph a story on James Agee for LIFE.

Solo exhibition at the MOMA.

PBS commissions "The Art of Seeing" a four-part installment feature written by Haas, with Haas featured as the Raconteur.

1963

Travels with Henri Cartier-Bresson to Mexico on assignment for the Mexican government tourist bureau.

Embarks on a landmark advertising campaign for Volkswagen with art director Rolf Gilhausen.

1964

Works as second director for the movie THE BIBLE, produced by Dino de Laurentis, with John Huston as director. Responsible for the photography on "The Creation" section, the beginning of his photographic interpretation of Genesis. This movie takes him to the Galapagos Islands, Iceland, and Italy.

1965

Moves to studio on Seventh Avenue, where he lives for the remainder of his life.

1966

Changes Magnum status to contributing photographer.

1967

Slide presentation of creation photographs is shown at Eleventh Miami Conference of Photojournalists.

Photographs in Monument Valley for HOLIDAY.

1968

Travels to India upon invitation from the government, where he observes the plight of the Tibetan refugees and becomes fascinated by Buddhism and mysticism of the Himalaya.

1969

Shoots movie stills for LITTLE BIG MAN. Prepares photo-essays for HOLIDAY and ESQUIRE on American Indians.

1970

Travels to Kenya to photograph animals for his book THE CREATION.

1971

Publishes first edition of THE CREATION (Viking), which would eventually sell over 350,000 copies. Excerpts are printed in major photographic magazines. Photographs the Grand Canyon and the Southwest for Time-Life Books.

1972-74

First assignment for Marlboro cigarettes, an account that would continue for twelve years. Invited to The Maine Photographic Workshops, the beginning of a long involvement teaching workshops throughout the world. Photographs extensively in Germany for an upcoming book on that country. In 1972 travels to Rajasthan, India, for STERN and to Sikkim; Darjeeling; travels to Dharmasala in 1973.

The Smithsonian Institute sponsors his trip to Bhutan to cover the coronation (1974).

Early 1970's

Begins working on audio-visuals with a dissolve unit and music in an effort to transform the still image into another form of expression.

1975

Photographs extensively in Venice for the Time-Life Books Series THE GREAT CITIES. Publishes his second book, IN AMERICA (Viking). Travels to Ladakh for GEO.

1976

Publishes in DEUTSCHLAND. American editions, IN GERMANY, published 1977 (Viking). Travels to Nepal for his upcoming book on the Himalaya.

1977

Eastman Kodak Company produces an 18x60 feet print of "Impalas Grazing" at Grand Central Station in New York. Until then, the largest color print ever produced.

1978

Publishes HIMALAYAN PILGRIMAGE (Viking), with text by Gisela Minke.

1979

Participates in Venezia'70. La Fotografia: teaches a workshop, exhibits his photographs, and gives audio-visual presentations on Venice and Abstracts. Covers the Jazz Festival and Mardi Gras in New Orleans for GEO.

1980

Publishes "The Creation," a limited-edition portfolio of dye transfer prints with Daniel Wolf Press. Travels to Japan for Fujitsu Limited. Begins working on book devoted to that country with Takiko Kawai.

Photographs the Lake Placid Winter Olympics.

Begins a project illustrating the poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke, whose writing inspired him throughout his life.

1980-81

Creates the educational audio-visual, "To Dream with Open Eyes," and "Expanding Photographic Vision: The Sight and Insight of Ernst Haas" produced by the Media Loft, Inc.
Shoots movie stills for QUEST FOR FIRE and HEAVEN'S GATE in 1981.

1982

Mother dies in Vienna.

1983

Produces audio-visual "Flower show" for the St. Louis Arboretum. Publishes "Flowers," his second limited-edition portfolio of dye transfer prints.
Publishes revised edition of THE CREATION (Viking).

1984

Photographs the Summer Olympics in Los Angeles for a Chrysler Corporation advertising campaign. Travels to Japan for a workshop and photographs extensively for his upcoming book.

1985

"Focus on New Zealand" trip sponsored by New Zealand Center for Photography and the Brooks Institute in Santa Barbara.

1986

Completes his last audio-visual slide show, "Abstracts."
Participates in the Ansel Adams Workshop in Yosemite.
At the First International Photography Congress in Rockport, Maine, conducts the opening and closing ceremonies stressing the importance of poetry in photography. "Abstract" audio-visual show presented in its most complete form.
Dies of a stroke on September 12 in New York.

1987

ASMP establishes the Ernst Haas Award for Creative Photography as part of its annual awards.

1988

The Maine Photographic Workshops awards The Ernst Haas Photographers Grant, funded by an Anonymous Donor.

1998

The Ernst Haas Studio's entire archive is sent to London and housed at the Hulton Getty Picture Library as part of a licensing agreement with Getty Images.

1999

The Ernst Haas Memorial Collection is established at Portland Museum of Art, Maine.

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53 STREET, NEW YORK 19, N.Y.

TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900

No. 96

FOR RELEASE:

August 4, 1962

ERNST HAAS – COLOR PHOTOGRAPHY, a 10 year retrospective, will be on view at the Museum of Modern Art. 11 West 53rd Street, New York, from August 21 through October 28. Approximately 80 prints will include color essays of New York, studies in motion – bull fighting, water skiing, sailing, the rodeo, car racing and football – and his current series on the American landscape and elements in nature. A small number of prints will exemplify his work in black and white. The exhibition, directed by John Szarkowski, Director of the Department of Photography and Grace M. Mayer, Curator, will be installing in the Auditorium Gallery by Herbert Migdoll.

For Haas, color photography is a new “philosophy of seeing”; it is not journalism, but a visual poetry. As Mr. Szarkowski writes, “The color in color photography has often seemed an irrelevant decorative screen between the viewer and the fact of the picture. Ernst Haas has resolved this conflict by making the color sensation itself the subject matter of his work. No photographer has worked more successfully to express the sheer physical joy of seeing.”

Haas’ interest in exploring the use of color as the dominant medium began in 1951. He had recently come to the United States with Magnum, the international photographers’ cooperative; he originally joined Magnum in Paris in 1949, following the widespread publication of his memorable photo story in black and white of the homecoming of the Austrian Prisoners of War.

Haas’ first major color essay, NEW YORK, and later, studies of PARIS, VENICE, and the experimental COLOR IN MOTION, including the “Bull-fight” series, have all been published in LIFE. His works have been shown at the Venice Biennale and many museums, including the Museum of Modern Art, where examples of his works are in the permanent collection. Currently, he has two one-man shows traveling abroad: one which opens at Photokina in 1960 and another which opened in Tokyo in July and will later tour Japan. A book on his studies of the elements of nature will be published in 1963 by Edita in Lausanne and the Macmillan Company in New York.

The photographer was born in Vienna and is now a New Yorker.

Photographs and further information available from Herbert Bronstein, Associate Publicity Director, Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53rd Street, New York 19, New York. Circle 5 8900.

Ernst Haas - reCREATION
April 9 - May 7, 2005

Silverstein Photography is pleased to announce the exhibition Ernst Haas, reCREATION. This show is a re-presentation of the groundbreaking, first solo color photography show held at the Museum of Modern Art, New York in 1962. On display will be the original dye transfer prints from the exhibition.

The legacy of Ernst Haas to 20th century color photography is immense and highly influential. This show seeks to position Haas as the rightful precursor to William Eggleston, who is often mis-labeled as the first innovator of color photography.

As an artist, poet and philosopher, Haas was free, undeterred by tradition and theory. Haas began experimenting with color photography in 1949, at the infancy of the medium. Having mastered the formal structures and style of photojournalism and street photography, Haas increasingly became interested in using color film as a tool for the metaphorical language of the image. After living through the nightmare of World War II in Europe, Haas embraced color for its pure emotional joy and physical richness, a relief from the scarred grey landscape of war. In 1951, while on assignment for Magnum, Haas immigrated to New York City, and began photographing "Images of a Magic City". Two years later, Life magazine published the work as the magazine's first color essay - an unprecedented 24 pages over two issues.

Haas also pioneered the use of the deliberate blur; the concept of time exposure against a continuous color background, creating a blur that can be controlled.

Today his innovations can be felt in contemporary art, perhaps influencing Gerhard Richter's Ferrari, 1964 and having shot the first Marlboro cigarette campaign famously appropriated by Richard Prince.

Ernst Haas - Part II
May 14 - June 11, 2005

Silverstein Photography is pleased to announce Ernst Haas, PART II, the second of two exhibitions dedicated to the work of this highly influential photographer. For this exhibition the gallery has made a selection of important photographs that demonstrate the versatility of Haas' oeuvre.

An Indecipherable Blur and a Bit of Genius

Photography

BY WILLIAM MEYERS

April 21, 2005

One day last year I was in the library at the International Center of Photography when someone I took to be a senior instructor wandered in and started flipping through a book among the new arrivals on the counter. "Gee," he said to the librarian, "I really liked Ernst Haas until he started shooting in color." I was shocked. To me, Ernst Haas was color, and I remember the excitement in the 1950s and 1960s when his color work was just becoming known. The first photo essay in color to run in Life magazine was the 24 pages they gave to "The Magic City," his love poem to New York. The first exhibition of color photography at the Museum of Modern Art in 1962 was devoted to his work. What was this guy talking about?

Haas (1921-86) was a great black-and-white photographer, with a European visual sophistication similar to that of Henri Cartier-Bresson or Werner Bischof or Andre Kertesz, and the man passing time in the ICP library was certainly entitled to his opinion. But you can see what Haas wrought in color at ReCREATION, the Bruce Silverstein gallery's remounting of the MoMA exhibition. These are the original prints from the show, and some of them have sustained damage over the years, little nicks and dings. The color of the dye transfer prints may not be as saturated as that available with contemporary techniques, but their beauty is undiminished. This is very attractive work, not less so for being so often imitated.

The first series of pictures features work in which Haas turned one of the liabilities of the early color film, its slow speed, into a positive advantage. In "Football, U.C.L.A., Los Angeles" (1961), a long shutter exposure let him follow a play down the field. Much is indistinct in the resulting image: The crowd is a totally indecipherable blur, the field markings are white smudges on the green grass, and although the torsos and helmets of the players are relatively clear, their running legs are a flurry of uniforms, socks, and cleats. It may not be possible to tell exactly what is happening here - an important criterion for the sports photography of the daily papers - but the excitement of the powerful bodies in motion is impossible to miss. We get the feel of the game, if not a narrative.

The same technique was used in "Sailboats, Regatta, California" (1957); "Cowboy and Bronco, New York" (1958); "Sea Gulls, Norway" (1959); and, most famously, in his pictures of bullfighting in Spain, three of which are on display. Picasso, a connoisseur of this blood sport, admired these pictures. Here the slow speed emphasizes the black mass of the bull, the speed of the lithe toreador, and the gorgeous colors of his twirling cape. "Toro, Pamplona, Spain" (1956) shows just the head and shoulders of the wounded bull against the golden sand of the ring, but the sun glistens sensually on the streaming red blood highlighting the passion of this ritualized Mediterranean spectacle that Americans are not expected to enjoy.

The rest of the exhibition, with the exception of some pictures of bodies of water, is of static objects. Haas showed himself a contemporary of the Abstract Expressionists in these studies of color and shape: The subjects are subsumed and gloried in the designs he made of objects taken both from nature and the discards of civilization. "Two Crushed Cans" (c. 1962) is a 20-by-31-inch print filled with two flattened soda or beer cans, their naked metal bluish gray against a yellow background, possibly the center stripe down a highway. This heralds much of what was to become Pop Art, although it is not cute but exquisite. This is even more so with "Holy Underwear, California" (1957), a rumpled, weathered pair of underpants against a rock.

Haas, his English not free of his Austrian background, described this photograph, "'Holy Underwear' is the very, very typical double-eight composition. It's an underwear. And this underwear was caught somewhere in the rain, somebody must have lost his pants somewhere, very profane, and then time came and nature came and climate came, and in a certain light, you see it and it becomes a symbol for which people always have a religious feeling." Most people see it as a crucifix: The "double-eight" is, I think, a complex knot with mystical connotations. Haas frequently went out of his way to photograph sacred sites, but his spiritual longings did not need cathedrals, temples, or stupas for its expression; anything with color would do.

"Green Wave, Mazatlan, Mexico" (1963) shows the point where a pale green ocean current meets a pale blue one: There are just the two colors and the different patterns of their waves. In "Eternity Stone, Utah" (1961), the piled strata of a golden rock are photographed from above with no reference to give a sense of scale. "Adam-Rock, Point Lobos, California" (1962), has a bluish cast, to which the setting sun gives yellow highlights: The figure is probably the accidental result of erosion, but Haas's picture imbues it with the power of a prehistoric totem. "Ice and Rock" (c. 1963), "Bark of Tree" (c. 1960), "Drops in a Place of Coral" (1963), "Torn Poster - Red Bird, New York" (1960): The titles give you an idea of how prosaic his subjects were but not how startling the results.

There was plenty of precedent for Haas's nature photos in the work of Edward Weston and Minor White, for his shredded posters in the work of Walker Evans, and for his close-ups of incidentals in the work of Aaron Siskind. But color transformed them. John Szarkowski, of the Museum of Modern Art, explained at the time, "The color in color photography has often seemed an irrelevant decorative screen between the viewer and the fact of the picture. Ernst Haas has resolved this conflict by making the color sensation itself the subject matter of his world. No photographer has worked more successfully to express the sheer physical joy of seeing."

Tastes being what they are, there was no point in my quibbling in the ICP library with someone because he preferred Ernst Haas's black-and-white photography. But I remembered that when I first saw his color, my response had been to shoot many, many a roll of Kodachrome.

Until May 7 (535 W. 24th Street, between Tenth and Eleventh Avenues, 212-627-3930).

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★ **Ernst Haas**

A re-presentation of this color photography pioneer's 1962 MoMA show, featuring the original dye transfer prints; through 5/7.
Bruce Silverstein, 525 W. 24th St., nr. Tenth Ave. (212-627-3930).