

For Immediate Release

Barbara Morgan: *Leaps and Bounds – The Origins of American Modern Dance
Rare and Unseen Vintage Prints*
November 17 – January 5, 2002

Silverstein Photography is pleased to announce BARBARA MORGAN: leaps and bounds. This special exhibition features rare and unseen vintage photographs from Morgan's groundbreaking epic document of the American Modern Dance Movement, 1935 to 1944. During this period, Morgan produced deeply expressive modernist images of the dancers and performances that shaped the direction of American Modern Dance.

In the late 1920's Barbara Morgan (already an accomplished Modernist painter who had exhibited in many museum shows including The Los Angeles Museum (1923, 1929) and The Fine Arts Gallery of San Diego (1926, 1927)), was first introduced to photography. During this time, while vacationing in the American southwest, she became enchanted by native dance rituals of the Native Americans and began to use a camera to record their dances. In 1935, while she attended a performance of Martha Graham's company, Morgan was deeply moved by the connection she felt existed between Graham's choreography and the Native American dance rituals. Later, a friend introduced Morgan to Graham, and Graham acknowledged that Native American dance had been "one of the greatest inspirations of my life". This conversation was the genesis of a life long friendship with Graham and the origin of Morgan's association with what would later become the American Modern Dance Movement.

"Barbara Morgan's work is pure genius. She is the single most important photographer of the modern dance movement. This monumental exhibition explores the roots of Modern Dance, including stunning images of the most legendary dancers engaging in historically important performances. Thankfully, included in this show are rare images of major performances and their props; some of which serve as the sole visual evidence of their existence. For this, at minimum, all lovers of dance are indebted to Barbara Morgan." Mikhail Baryshnikov, October 13, 2001

Morgan's images not only documented dancers, such as Martha Graham, José Limón, Pearl Primus, Merce Cunningham and Doris Humphrey, but also captured the "essence" of their unique dance movements and performances. Morgan stated, "I continually sought to discover the fluid relationships of light-time-motion-space-spirit by which I could release - not the mere record - but the essence of dance into the photographic image." It was this process that enabled Morgan to both document another art form and at the same time create her own art. Images of Merce Cunningham leaping solitarily in the air, and Martha Graham seemingly levitating while contorting her leg to form a fan, were meant to be photographic interpretations, as well as, documentations of a medium rarely recorded during the period. Both Morgan and the dancers worked in collaboration to insure images that truly reflected the values of the movement.

Barbara Morgan is responsible for introducing countless Americans to their first images of Modern Dance. From 1938 to early 1943, a watershed exhibition of her dance

photographs traveled to over 150 colleges, museums and galleries across the country. Silverstein Photography is pleased to feature some of these actual prints in this special exhibition.