

HEINRICH KUEHN

Viennese Photo-Secessionist

Howard Greenberg Gallery Two

From May 23, 2012



Untitled, c.1906-10

Howard Greenberg Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of photographs by the Viennese photographer, Heinrich Kuehn. The exhibition coincides with the Neue Galerie's current exhibition: *Heinrich Kuehn and his American Circle* and a second exhibition entitled *Heinrich Kuehn and the Photo-Secession: Selected Works* at Hans P Kraus Jr. Fine Photographs at 962 Park Avenue, NYC from May 23rd.

The photographs in this exhibition, from the collection of the artist's family, illustrate the tremendous influence Kuehn had on European Pictorialism and the Photo-Secession. The intent of Pictorialism—to assert the legitimacy of photography as an art form—is clearly evident in the painterly quality Kuehn achieved in his works through the use of elaborate printing techniques, specifically the gum bichromate print, a transfer technique developed in the mid-nineteenth century that allowed him to control color through monochromatic gradations of tone.

Born in 1866, Heinrich Kuehn lived for most of his life in Innsbruck and then in Birgitz in the Tyrol. The Tyrolian landscape, with its rolling hills, meadows and deep valleys, became a frequent subject and setting for many of his works. Family members and friends, often paired in small groups, appear in many of the images, providing opportunities for Kuehn to explore the use of photographic innovations such as birds-eye-views, foreshortening of figures and shadow play. By photographing outdoors Kuehn was able to maximize the effects of sunlight on his subjects, attaining a certain level of abstraction while doing so. In his 1921 book, [Techniques of Image Making through Light](#), Kuehn wrote that to him photography was "a visual depiction in tones that flow seamlessly together, caused by or conveyed by the effects of light." In domestic interiors, where Kuehn frequently photographed his children, he demonstrates his meticulous control of light, cropping and composition, yielding portraits that are at once deeply psychological and aesthetically sophisticated.

The Vienna Camera Club exhibited Kuehn's work in 1894 and he became a member in 1895. The following year he was invited to join The Linked Ring, Britain's exclusive amateur photographic society, and that same year his work was shown in Berlin at the *International Exhibition of Amateur Photography* where he received rave reviews. By 1898, when his work was included in *The First International Elite Exhibition of Pictorial Photographs*, his reputation in Europe was firmly established.

In 1904 Kuehn met Alfred Stieglitz in Tyrol and an enduring friendship followed with the two men corresponding extensively about exhibitions, techniques, and politics as well as personal matters. In 1906, Stieglitz exhibited Kuehn's work in his Gallery of the Photo-Secession at 291 Fifth Avenue in New York and twice included his work in the seminal quarterly publication, *Camera Work*. It was through Stieglitz that Kuehn met Edward Steichen and they too formed a bond.

The friendship between Kuehn, Stieglitz and Steichen led to a fascinating cross-cultural dialogue about many of the issues that were at the forefront of photographic thought at the turn of the 20th century. Our show will also include a small selection of works by Stieglitz and Steichen that will further illustrate the aesthetic dynamics of this circle. Howard Greenberg Gallery represents the Estate of Edward Steichen.

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