



HOWARD GREENBERG GALLERY

LEON LEVINSTEIN

Living in the Edge

29 October – 4 December, 2010



Untitled, c. 1965

Howard Greenberg Gallery is pleased to present **Living in the Edge**, a retrospective of work by **Leon Levinstein**, a master of classic American street photography.

With an idiosyncratic approach, Levinstein photographed obsessively, making graphic, raw images of the off-beat characters he encountered in New York and in his travels through Mexico, India, and Europe. He positioned himself in private spaces seemingly without the knowledge of his subjects. His graphic images excise people from their surroundings, often cropping out arms, legs, or even heads of figures, but never losing their relentless energy.

Born in West Virginia in 1910, Leon Levinstein moved to New York in 1946. For the next six years, he studied with photographer Lisette Model; the influential *Harper's Bazaar* art director Alexey Brodovitch, one of the earliest proponents of "street photography"; and Sid Grossman, a founding member of the Photo League and an advocate of social documentary photography. Levinstein established his own distinct style by the early 1950s, and his work from this period displays a remarkable affinity with photographers like Robert Frank, Louis Faurer and William Klein who were exploring similar themes and subjects. His work regularly appeared in photography magazines and books, but he rarely worked on assignment. However, his work was recognized with an award of a grant from the Guggenheim Foundation in 1975. Levinstein's photographs were included in nine exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art during the 1950s and 1960s, and he was given a solo exhibition, *Levinstein's New York*, at the Limelight Gallery the following year. Although he came to be recognized as a critical member of what is now known as

"The New York School," a group of photographers working in the 1940s-1960s consumed by the energy of urban life, his photographs remained lesser known than many of his colleagues. Levinstein earned his living as a graphic designer, not as a professional photographer, and remained a solitary figure, aloof from the art world. This lack of broader recognition, however, did nothing to slow Levinstein's voracious and unrelenting eye and he continued to photograph until his death in 1988.

Leon Levinstein's photographs are held in the permanent collections of the Art Institute of Chicago; the Center for Creative Photography, Tucson; the Hallmark Collection, Kansas City; the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; the Metropolitan Museum of Art; the Museum of Modern Art; and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. A retrospective exhibition catalog, *The Moment of Exposure: Leon Levinstein*, was published by the National Gallery of Canada in 1995, and the monograph *Leon Levinstein: Obsession* was published in 2000. This year, the Metropolitan Museum of Art featured Levinstein's photographs in an exhibition entitled, *Hipsters, Hustlers, and Handball Players: Leon Levinstein's New York Photographs, 1950-1980*.

For further information, or to request visuals for press, contact Ali Price at (212) 334-0010 or ali@howardgreenberg.com. Starting October 29th, the exhibition can be viewed at www.howardgreenberg.com