

## Peter Sekaer: An Untold Story

14 September – 23 October, 2010

Reception & Lecture  
Thursday, 30 September, 6 – 8pm



Election Posters, 10th Avenue, New York, c. 1935

Howard Greenberg Gallery is pleased to present "**Peter Sekaer: An Untold Story**", a poignant photographic record of Depression-era America. Sekaer belongs to the generation of social documentary photographers of the 1930's who sought to capture the real world through pictures, combining their personal commitment to social change with artistic expression. Having fallen into relative obscurity after his premature death at age 49 in 1950, Sekaer's work has experienced a resurgence in interest with the current retrospective at the High Museum of Art, Atlanta and the accompanying book, edited by curator Julian Cox and John T. Hill.

Born in Copenhagen, Denmark in 1901, Sekaer immigrated to New York in 1918. By 1922, he owned a successful silk screening business in New York City, producing posters, advertisements, and window exhibits. In 1929 he enrolled in The Art Student's League where he became acquainted with Ben Shahn and Walker Evans. Eventually, he devoted himself exclusively to photography, studying with Berenice Abbott at The New School for Social Research. In 1935, Walker Evans hired Sekaer to print portfolios of Evans photographs of The Museum of Modern Art's African art collection. When the project finished and with no photography jobs available, Sekaer accompanied Evans on an assignment for the Resettlement Administration (later to become the F.S.A.) For two months, Evans and Sekaer travelled throughout Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina. The experience was a turning point for Sekaer as he emerged a stronger photographer with a further defined personal style. Undoubtedly, both photographers influenced each other. They photographed many of the same subjects and occasionally shared cameras -- each producing some of the finest work of their careers.

Sekaer's vision and ideals were different from Evans', whose cool, detached and more formal images contrast with Sekaer's more warm and poignant style. Sekaer sought to capture people in their cultural environments, showing their strength, humanity and nobility. His pictures demonstrate his strength as a graphic artist and his commitment to

the understanding that without an intrinsic quality of design or emotional force, his message would fail.

From this point until 1942, Sekaer continually worked for various government agencies including – the Rural Electrification Administration (R.E.A.); the United States Housing Authority (U.S.H.A.); the Office of War Administration (O.W.A.) and the Office of Indian Affairs (OIA), among others. By 1945, he was ultimately frustrated by the propaganda dictated by government agencies and shifted his attention to commercial work. Despite his heavy work load and constant travel, Sekaer was able to get his work published and exhibited in his lifetime. His work was published in six volumes of *US Camera* and two issues of *PM's Weekly*. In 1941 three of his photographs were awarded prizes and chosen for inclusion in MoMA's exhibition, *Images of Freedom*. A 1990 exhibition and catalog at the Royal Library in Copenhagen and an exhibition at the Addison Gallery of America in 1999 furthered Sekaer's reputation.

For further information, or to request visuals for press,  
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Starting September 15<sup>th</sup>, the exhibition can be viewed at  
[www.howardgreenberg.com](http://www.howardgreenberg.com)