

Homer Page

In Between New York 1949

8 January – 20 February, 2010

Opening reception
& lecture with Keith Davis
Thursday, 7 January, 6-8pm



New York, July 22nd, 1949

Howard Greenberg Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of photographs by Homer Page – a gifted but overlooked artist – who actively worked in the 1940s and 50s. The exhibition focuses on an extraordinary body of New York City images which Page produced with funding from a Guggenheim Grant, awarded in 1949. In a 1950 lecture entitled "What Is Modern Photography?" Edward Steichen, the then MoMA curator of photography, invited Homer Page to participate in a symposium along side 10 prominent photographers including Walker Evans, Irving Penn, and Aaron Siskind. Today, sixty years later, his vintage prints appear remarkably fresh, originally seen, and deeply felt.

Born in California in 1918, Page studied art and social psychology at UCLA from 1936 to 1940 and worked in the San Francisco Bay Area shipyards during WWII. He began to focus on photography in 1944 with encouragement from his mentor, Dorothea Lange. Persuaded by Lange, Page sent photographs from his project "The Question of Kids" to Nancy Newhall at the Museum of Modern Art, who subsequently included several of them in a show of 17 young artists at the museum in 1946. Over the next few years, Page expanded his personal work photographing white collar workers walking to and from their jobs and a series of portraits of longshoremen loading cargo vessels. By 1947, he was teaching part time at the San Francisco Institute of Art and continuing to be featured in exhibitions at MoMA. Page had now developed a personal friendship with Edward Steichen who was instrumental in his move to New York in the fall of 1948. He worked part time for Steichen as an exhibition assistant, while applying for the distinguished Guggenheim Fellowship. With recommendations from Edward Steichen,

Dorothea Lange, and Beaumont Newhall, Page was awarded \$3,000 and began his year long photography project of New York on April 26, 1949.

This body of work represents a fascinating look at New York in the 1940s, revealing the complex character of the quintessential New Yorker. Through his unique fusion of documentary and fine art photography, Page adeptly captures the zeitgeist of post war New York: commuters in transit, advertising expressed in signage, consumer culture, and isolated figures resting and watching. Page sought and documented the tell-tale moments and connections that were so ingrained in everyday life. Keith Davis, curator of photography at The Nelson Atkins Museum and author of *The Photographs of Homer Page, The Guggenheim Year: New York, 1949-50* writes "stylistically his photographs represent a crucial missing link between the warm, humanistic socially motivated documentary work of the 1930s and 1940s and the tougher, moodier, grittier work of the later 1950s."

Homer Page's New York photographs would be the most significant work of his career. Following his Guggenheim year, Page had varied success. He continued working with Steichen, acting as his chief assistant for the 1955 exhibition "The Family of Man" which also included nine of his photographs. Eventually Page turned to commercial work to support himself, primarily freelancing and doing contract photojournalist work. He photographed for men's magazines – *Cavalier*, *Adventure*, and *True* as well as for other mainstream publications. In April 1952, *Harper's Bazaar* published images from his photo essay of Korean War amputees. Throughout the 50s and early 60s, Page traveled overseas working in India, Indonesia, Laos and other Far East countries. In 1959, *The Little World of Laos* was published and in 1963, Viking published *Puerto Rico: The Quiet Revolution*. By the end of the 60s, Page all but abandoned photography taking a job as a grants writer for a consulting firm. In his later years, he became increasingly involved in environmental causes spending most of his time away from the frenetic pace of New York. Page died on September 7, 1985.

Homer Page's work is part of The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art Hallmark Photographic Collection. *The Wall Street Journal* included *The Photographs of Homer Page* by Keith Davis in its list of the top photography books of 2009.

In the South Gallery, we will feature photographs by Shomei Tomatsu, widely considered the most important figure in Japanese postwar photography.

For further information, or to request visuals for press,
contact Ali Price at 212 334 0010 or ali@howardgreenberg.com
Starting January 9, the exhibition can be viewed at www.howardgreenberg.com