

## LEON LEVINSTEIN : Obsession

28 January - 5 March, 2005

Opening

Thursday, 27 January 2005, 6-8 pm



Houston Street, New York, c.1955. Vintage gelatin silver print

"I will endeavor to make the energy and the particular quality that I feel in American life a part of my photography.

This is the way I have photographed in the past; it is the only way I know."

*Leon Levinstein, Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship Application, 1955*

**New York** - Howard Greenberg Gallery is pleased to present *Leon Levinstein: Obsession*. Characterized by their bold and dynamic compositions, Levinstein's photographs are an encyclopedic catalog of a forty-year exploration of the streets of New York. Levinstein photographed anonymously, never greeting his subjects head on, but seeming to intercede between and around them without notice. He worked with the eye of a voyeur; from the privileged vantage of seeing without being seen. Photographing rapidly with a hand-held camera, Levinstein 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 1910, Levinstein was raised in West Virginia and Baltimore, where he was a student at the Maryland Institute of Art. Following World War II, he moved to New York, first studying painting, and then enrolling in his first photography course in 1947. During the next six years, he was to study with both the influential *Harper's Bazaar* art director Alexey Brodovitch, one of the earliest proponents of "street

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photography," and Sid Grossman, 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 sympathy with photographers like Robert Frank, Louis Faurer and William Klein who were exploring similar themes and subjects. Levinstein photographs were included in seven exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art during the 1950s and 1960s, most notably *The Family of Man* in 1955, 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 1940s through 1960s consumed by the energy of urban life, his photographs remained lesser known than many of his colleagues until after his death in 1988. Levinstein established his career 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 in addition to his photographs of New York City, the exhibition includes images from the photographer's trips abroad to India and Haiti.

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.

**Also on view :** 28 January - 5 March, 2005

### **André Kertész - Perception**

A Selection of Exceptional Vintage Photographs

### **Dave Heath - Korea**

#### **Photographs 1953-1954**

Please join us for a book signing with Dave Heath celebrating the release of the limited edition Dave Heath: Korea, published by Lumiere Press and Howard Greenberg Gallery:  
Saturday, 12 February, 2-4 pm

For further information, or to request visuals for press,  
contact Margit Erb at 212 334 0010, [margit@howardgreenberg.com](mailto:margit@howardgreenberg.com)  
Starting January 27<sup>th</sup>, the exhibition can be viewed at [www.howardgreenberg.com](http://www.howardgreenberg.com)