



HOWARD GREENBERG GALLERY

For Immediate Release

Sid Grossman
January 12 – February 11, 2017



Sid Grossman, *Coney Island (couple embracing)*, 1947
Gelatin silver print, printed c.1947, 7 1/2 X 7 7/8 inches

NEW YORK – The first solo exhibition in 30 years to explore the legacy of Sid Grossman (1913 – 1955) will be on view at Howard Greenberg Gallery from January 12 – February 11, 2017. The exhibition coincides with the publication of a new monograph, *The Life and Work of Sid Grossman*, published by Steidl/Howard Greenberg Library, with an essay by the curator and photo historian Keith F. Davis. An opening exhibition will be held on Thursday, January 12, from 6 to 8 p.m.

In a short career, ended by his untimely death at age 42, New York native Sid Grossman left an indelible mark as an artist and teacher on the photography of his era and beyond. In 1936, Grossman and his friend Sol Libsohn co-founded the Photo League, the left-leaning, socially conscious photographers' cooperative and school. Photographing at a very close distance and using blur and off-kilter compositions, Grossman's work of the late 1940s anticipates the work of many better known street photographers of the 1950s and 60s.

“Grossman’s vision of creative photography changed the lives of many around him and resulted in a body of work of major historical importance,” Davis writes in the book. Among the many photographers who were taught or influenced directly by Grossman are Sy Kattelson, Leon Levinstein, and Lisette Model. More broadly, traits of Grossman’s work and philosophy can be seen in the work of Ted Croner, Roy DeCarava, Louis Faurer, Robert Frank, William Klein, and Saul Leiter as well as Garry Winogrand and a younger generation of 1960s artists.

The exhibition surveys 35 photographs by Grossman, from his own neighborhood of Chelsea, to Little Italy and Coney Island, as well as in Central America during World War II, while serving as a photographer in the U.S. Army.

While stationed in Panama during the War, Grossman honed his skills with the use of a top quality photography lab as a public relations photographer for the Air Corps. A jumping girl in a white dress made in Panama in 1945 is filled with exuberance. The graininess and blurriness of the image underscores the emotional vitality of the subject, a pivotal moment that would lead to a new way of thinking by American street photographers.

Some of Grossman’s best known work was made in Coney Island during the summers of 1947 and 1948. His groups of sunbathers gathering together and performing for the camera are visceral and dynamic. As Davis notes, “They are remarkable pictures—at once richly humane and bursting with graphic energy. The subject was perfect for Grossman: Coney Island was a landscape of human flesh, an endless index of physical gesture, contact, and vulnerability.”

Made during the same 1947-48 period, his powerful image of a slightly blurred boy with a mask and a toy gun playing next to a crumbling brick wall has a similar energy and physicality, yet alludes to man’s darker nature.

In April 1949, Grossman’s career was hit by an extraordinary turn of events, from which it would never recover. A fellow member of the Photo League, Angela Calomiris, was revealed to be an undercover FBI agent and testified against Grossman, asserting that he had introduced her to the Communism. As Davis explains in the book, “In this deeply shameful era of American political history, personal reputations were tarnished or destroyed on the basis of hearsay or uncorroborated undercover reports.”

Grossman never again photographed on the streets of New York. He spent time in Provincetown, Massachusetts, where he continued to make pictures, and later made a group of images of New York City Ballet dancers. His public exhibitions in museums and galleries ended mostly in 1948. He died of a heart attack in December of 1955. In modern American photography, no greater career has been cut off so prematurely. Work by Sid Grossman can be found in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; and the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

The exhibition will include a small selection of work by some of Sid Grossman’s students including Rebecca Lepkoff, Leon Levinstein, Marvin Newman, and Ruth Orkin.

A companion exhibition with work by Sy Kattelson, a student and close friend of Sid Grossman, will be on view at Howard Greenberg Gallery Two, next to the main gallery, also from January 12 – February 11, 2017.

About Howard Greenberg Gallery

Since its inception over 30 years ago, Howard Greenberg Gallery has built a vast and ever-changing collection of some of the most important photographs in the medium. The Gallery's collection acts as a living history of photography, offering genres and styles from Pictorialism to Modernism, in addition to contemporary photography and images conceived for industry, advertising, and fashion. Howard Greenberg Gallery is located at 41 East 57th Street, Suite 1406, New York. The gallery exhibits at The ADAA Art Show, The Armory Show, The Photography Show presented by AIPAD, New York, Photo London, Art Basel, Paris Photo, and Art Basel Miami Beach. For more information, contact 212-334-0010 or info@howardgreenberg.com or visit www.howardgreenberg.com.

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