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Gerard Petrus Fieret/Portraits from the 1960s & 1970s

May 8-July 31, 2015

Deborah Bell Photographs is pleased to announce the inaugural exhibition in our new upper-east-side space: **GERARD PETRUS FIERET/PORTRAITS FROM THE 1960s & 1970s**. In their previous gallery location in Chelsea (2001-2011), Deborah Bell Photographs held four exhibitions of work by the enigmatic Dutch artist. This will be the first exhibition of Fieret's photographs in the U.S. since 2010, the year after his death.

Fieret was born in 1924 in The Hague, Holland, where he died in 2009. A legendary figure in his city, where he fed the pigeons daily and played panpipes in the cafes, he was widely renowned for his fresh, innovative, informal portraits and alluring nude studies, all dating from the 1960s and 1970s. Fieret's vintage gelatin silver prints are liberally appointed with his copyright stamps and signed in a celebratory flourish of penmanship.

One of Fieret's trademarks, besides the copyright stamps and swath-like signatures overlaying his imagery, is the very personal relationship he had with his subjects: they were almost always in motion, always animated, and always free to be themselves.

The robust energy and private narrative of each of Fieret's pictures make his work as fresh and relevant today as it was forty and fifty years ago. Fieret's main subjects were women and self-portraits, in which he explored chiaroscuro lighting and experimented with printing and cropping of his images. In an attempt to protect his work, which he feared would be appropriated by imitators (even Picasso), he stamped and signed his prints to graphic perfection, rendering each one unique.

Working freely in the 1960s and 1970s, when the market for photography was almost nonexistent, Fieret rarely made duplicates of any one image. His quest was "art for art's sake," and the darkroom was an exciting part of his adventure with photography. The visceral qualities of these gritty and unorthodox black-and-white prints, made from 35mm negatives, reveal that Fieret operated completely by instinct in the darkroom as well as with the camera. Although he was trained in graphic design, he intentionally dismissed perfection and consistency for innovation and experimentation -- by solarizing film and paper; sandwiching negatives; re-photographing images in another setting; cropping his compositions in surprising ways; fogging the paper; varying the contrast of papers in order to create dissonance in the image; and taking advantage of accidents in the darkroom that worked out to his great delight. The results are never repetitive or pretentious.

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When asked about his approach to photography, Fieret commented: "Often things depend on chance. I am very grateful for that because it keeps me from coming to one single, even standard, which at some point would lead to a dead end. I direct it; I know damned well what I am doing from experience." In describing his intentions, he explained: "What I aim at with my photography is anarchy: in the context of a conservative society, my photographs are aggressive. Intense life, passion -- a healthy passion for life -- that is what they are about."

Fieret's photographs are in institutional collections worldwide, including those of The Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; The Bank of America LaSalle Collection, Chicago; Leiden University Library, Leiden; the Fotomuseum Den Haag, The Hague; the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; and numerous private collections.

Publications on Fieret include three exhibition brochures published by Deborah Bell Photographs and Paul M. Hertzmann, Inc., San Francisco (2003, 2005 & 2007); the retrospective exhibition catalogues *Foto en Copyright by G.P. Fieret (Gerard P. Fieret -- 80th birthday. Photo retrospective)*, Fotomuseum den Haag, The Hague (2004) and *Foto en Copyright by G.P. Fieret, Volume 2*, Fotomuseum den Haag, the Hague (2010); and *Gerard Fieret (1924-2009)*, a monograph edited by Willem Diepraam, Flip Bool and Frans van Burkom, with text by Frans van Burkom, published by Focus Publishing, Haarlem (2010).

This exhibition is presented in association with Paul M. Hertzmann, Inc., San Francisco.

Gallery hours are Tuesday-Saturday from 11-6 through July 2nd and Tuesday-Friday from July 7-31st.

For further information or scans, please contact Kat McElroy, Director, at 212-249-9400 or by email at kat@deborahbellphotographs.com.