FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

20th-Century Portraits

February 1 – March 30, 2019

Deborah Bell Photographs is pleased to present an exhibition of portraits by American and European photographers of the 20th Century. Photographers whose works are on view include Erwin Blumenfeld, Louis Faurer, G.P. Fieret, Hiro, Rose Mandel, Marcia Resnick, August Sander, and Deborah Turbeville. Uniting many of the various images selected is the photographers' use of dramatic lighting and innovative, experimental printing techniques, resulting in captivating, and often abstract or even surreal, renditions of their subjects in ordinary contexts.

Erwin Blumenfeld (American, b. Germany 1897; d. 1969)

Erwin Blumenfeld was born in Berlin, where he practiced photography as a young boy. From 1916-1918 he served as an ambulance driver in the German army. He began to write and paint at the time when the German Dada movement was becoming established. In 1918 Blumenfeld moved to Holland, where he was involved with the Dada movement in Amsterdam; four years later he opened a leather goods shop, the Fox Leather Company, on the fashionable Kalverstraat. In 1932 Blumenfeld moved Fox to a new location, where he discovered a darkroom in the back of the store that was left by a previous occupant, and began taking photographs again. During this period Blumenfeld's photographs and art became well known, and his work was included in two exhibitions at the modern art gallery Kunstzaal Van Lier in Amsterdam in 1932 and 1933, the second of which, "Dutch Faces," consisted of 50 photographic portraits. Blumenfeld's shop went bankrupt in 1935, and in 1936 he left Holland to establish himself in Paris as a professional photographer. Blumenfeld's first published pictures in *Arts Graphiques* and *Verve* were an overnight success, and he became sought-after for portraiture, advertising, and editorial magazine work. In 1938 he began working for French *Vogue*, upon the recommendation of Cecil Beaton, and in 1939 he signed a contract with *Harper's Bazaar*, which was then under the innovative art direction of Alexey Brodovitch in New York. While in France photographing the collections for *Bazaar*, he was interned in French prison camps and narrowly escaped death. In 1941 Blumenfeld settled permanently in New York, opening a studio at 222 Central Park South, and soon became an American citizen. He flourished as one of the most lauded and highly paid portrait and fashion photographers of the 20th century, working regularly for the foremost American publications and advertising clients.

The early photographs that Blumenfeld made during his "Dutch years" (1918-1936), however, continue to rank among his most captivating and powerful. The photograph in this exhibition is a portrait of an American couple who visited Blumenfeld's leather-goods store. (Blumenfeld also made other exposures of the pair, some of which show them nude, which are reproduced in the catalogue for the 2006 exhibition organized by Wim van Sinderen at the The Hague Museum of Photography, *Erwin Blumenfeld: His Dutch Years 1918-1936*.)

DEBORAHBELLPHOTOGRAPHS.COM
16 EAST 71ST STREET, SUITE 1D
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10021
212-249-9400
INFO@DEBORAHBELLPHOTOGRAPHS.COM

Louis Faurer (American, 1916-2001)

Louis Faurer was born and raised in Philadelphia, where he made his first photographs in 1937 with a camera sold to him by his childhood friend Ben Somoroff. That year he won first prize for "Photo of the Week" for his photograph *"Happy" on Cantrell St., South Philadelphia, Pa.* in the *Philadelphia Evening Public Ledger*, accompanied by a full-page reproduction and a cash prize of $3.

In the mid-1940s Faurer commuted regularly between Philadelphia and New York. Seeking editorial assignments with the best magazines of the period, he met in 1947 with Lillian Bassman, the art director at *Junior Bazaar* magazine, who asked Faurer to return with test pictures of a model. Bassman also recommended Faurer to Alexey Brodovitch, the art director of *Harper's Bazaar*. That year, Faurer met Robert Frank at the *Harper's Bazaar* studios in New York. They later shared a darkroom and studio at 86th Street and Madison Avenue owned by Fernand Fonssagrives, and became lifelong friends. In 1948, Faurer's first fashion photograph was published in *Junior Bazaar*, and his work was included in Edward Steichen's *In and Out of Focus* exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art in New York. Steichen later included Faurer in his 1955 landmark exhibition, *The Family of Man*. In 1959, Helen Gee held a one-person exhibition of Faurer's work at her legendary Limelight Gallery. Through 1967 Faurer photographed on assignment for a number of magazines including *Charm*, *Flair*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Glamour*, *Mademoiselle*, *Vogue*, *Seventeen*, and *Look*; he continued working for European fashion magazines in 1968-1974 in Paris and London, and again in New York in the 1980s, all the while continuing his personal work.

Faurer's photographs were re-discovered in 1976 when was introduced to the curator Walter Hopps by their mutual friend, Sue Hoffman (known by then as the actress Viva, who starred in many of Andy Warhol's films). Hopps remembered Faurer's work from its regular appearance in the short-lived, extraordinary magazine *Flair*, and recommended Faurer's remaining cache of vintage prints from the late 1930s-1950s, and the work he made while in Montreal, London and Paris from 1969-1974, to the art dealer Harry Lunn, who began to offer Faurer's photographs in his Washington, DC gallery. In 1977, Marlborough Gallery showed Faurer's prints in a group show and a one-person exhibition. LIGHT Gallery in New York also exhibited Faurer's work and represented him well into the 1980s.

In his introduction to the catalogue for Faurer's 1980 exhibition at The University of Maryland Art Gallery at College Park, Maryland, organized by Hopps and the photographer John Gossage, Hopps explains his reactions upon seeing Faurer's photographs again:

At my first viewing (somewhat chaotic early hours in New York's Chelsea Hotel—Faurer not present), I was surprised to recognize images (but not Faurer's name) which I had seen in an issue of* Flair *(a short-lived, opulent magazine from Cowles Publications). The photographs in that issue, which I acquired in 1950, immediately affected my thought about photography. There have been times over the years when I have tried to find that issue of* Flair*, to recall the photographer who took those pictures that were stuck in my mind…to no avail. …

New York City has been the major center of Faurer's work, and that city's life at mid-century, his great subject. The city is totally Faurer's natural habitat. He can be at home, at one, with people on it streets, in its rooms. However serene* or *edgy his encounters, one senses Faurer (if at all) as* being *the same as the people in his photographs. And since these people are extremely varied, it is a transcendent vision that allows the photographer to* be *so many "others." Faurer's at-oneness with his subjects contrasts with both the mode of working and the results of Evans and Frank. They have proved to be great and wide-ranging explorers and finders of their images. Faurer made only one important trip: from Philadelphia (where he made his first, early brilliant photographs) to New York, where he stayed, and where in the course of things his vision consumed, whether ordinary or odd, the all of it. …

I am in awe of the high point he can reach in a photograph such as* Family, Times Square*, at the center of New York in the center of our century. Perhaps no other American image stands comparison with Picasso's* Family of Saltimbanques*, on their imagined European plane in 1905. However little known or historically acknowledged, Faurer stands as a master of his medium.

G.P. Fieret (Dutch, 1924-2009)

Fieret lived his entire life in The Hague, Holland. He was renowned for his innovative, informal portraits and nude studies, all dating from the 1960s and 1970s. The robust energy and private narrative of each of Fieret's pictures make his work as fresh and relevant today as it was 40 and 50 years ago. His main subjects were women and self-portraits, in which he explored chiaroscuro lighting and double-exposures. In printing his pictures in the darkroom, he experimented with cropping and varying contrast and exposure time, rendering each print unique. In an attempt to protect his work, which he feared would be appropriated by imitators (even Picasso), he signed his prints in a celebratory flourish of penmanship and anointed them with his copyright stamps in graphic perfection.

Working freely in the 1960s and 1970s, when the market for photography was almost non-existent, and barely beginning, Fieret rarely made duplicate prints from any one negative. 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 and photography, he intentionally dismissed perfection and consistency for innovation and experimentation – by solarizing film and paper; sandwiching negatives; re-photographing prints 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.

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 in communication with the photographer, and always free to be themselves.

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.

Fieret was legendary not only for his photographs, but also for playing the panpipes and feeding the pigeons, riding his bicycle through The Hague with buckets of birdseed hanging from the handlebars.

Hiro (Yasuhiro Wakabayashi)
(American, b. China 1930)

Hiro was born in Shanghai to Japanese parents and lived his early life in Peking and Tokyo. In 1954 he moved to New York to study photography at the School of Modern Photography on Park Avenue, which he soon left for the studio of Lester Bookbinder and Rouben Samberg, who were working with still-lifes. He also attended the New School for Social Research from 1956 into the 1960s. In 1956 he became a member of Alexey Brodovitch's renowned American Institute of Graphic Arts Design Lab. Hiro admired the photographs of Richard Avedon, who hired him at the end of 1956, and in 1957 Hiro entered a formal arrangement to share the studio with Avedon. In early 1958 Brodovitch asked Hiro to join *Harper's Bazaar*. Hiro's first published assignment, a photograph of a shoe, was published in the March 1958 issue of *Bazaar*. Hiro worked under exclusive contract for *Bazaar* from 1965 to 1975. His best-known portraits and photographs in any genre are spectacular examples of meticulous compositional simplicity and astonishing darkroom technique. As Martin Harrison explains in his 1991 book *Appearances: Fashion Photography Since 1945*, "Brodovitch's 'gospel of the new' found no translator more adept than Hiro, no one who sought more resolutely to live up to Brodovitch's dictum: 'If you look in your camera and see something you've seen before, don't click the shutter.' Throughout the 1960s and beyond, Hiro, painstakingly resourceful and inventive, the most techologically aware of all photographers, would be the quintessential torch-bearer of his mentor's modernist philosophy."

Rose Mandel (American, 1910-2002)

Rose Mandel is closely associated with the well-established modernist tradition in Northern California photography as represented by Edward Weston, Ansel Adams and Imogen Cunningham, yet her nature studies and abstract landscapes also belong to the broader American landscape tradition exemplified by Minor White, Walter Chappell, Harry Callahan, Ralph Eugene Meatyard, and others who explored complex symbolic meanings in their images of the natural world.

Born in Poland, Mandel studied art in Paris, and child psychology with Jean Piaget in Switzerland. She fled Europe in 1942, arriving in Staten Island, New York after a perilous journey in steerage on a steamer carrying hundreds of émigrés, including the celebrated French artist Marcel Duchamp.

Her country destroyed, family members and friends killed in the Holocaust, she made the San Francisco Bay Area her new home. An introduction to Edward Weston inspired Mandel to study photography as an art form. She began formal studies in 1946 with Ansel Adams at the California School of Fine Arts (now the San Francisco Art Institute) in the very first class of the photography department Adams established. Mandel felt that Adams had "saved her life" by showing her "a new way to see the world, through the lens of a camera."

During this period Mandel also developed a collaborative relationship with another instructor, Minor White, who was only two years her senior. White shared Adams's reverence for the renowned photographer Alfred Stieglitz, stressing Stieglitz's theory of equivalents. As the photography historian David Travis has observed, "Adams proved to be the mentor Mandel had hoped for in Weston"; however, "Mandel's nascent ideas about photography matched White's about psychology as student and teacher encouraged each other." Mandel thus became an active participant in an exciting period in Bay Area art and photography that was largely centered around two significant educational institutions, the California School of Fine Arts (now the San Francisco Art Institute) and the University of California, Berkeley, where Mandel worked from 1947 to 1967 in the art department. An early portrait of the painter of the Bay Area figurative painter William Theophilus Brown (American, 1919-2012), then a student who befriended Mandel, is included in this exhibition.

Marcia Resnick (American, b. 1950)

Most people familiar with the art of Marcia Resnick know it through her smart and very funny photographs tracking the passage of a pre-adolescent girl into young womanhood (*Re-visions*, 1978). But starting in her first photography class at Cooper Union, where she experimented broadly and wildly with the chemical possibilities of the medium, and her studies at the California Institute of the Arts, Resnick's work has conveyed a much wider-ranging exploration of the inherent, and often humorous, contraditions between art and reality as evidenced in her series *See*, *See Changes*, *Landscape*, and *Landscape/Loftscape*.

After these early bodies of work, made in the mid-1970s, and overlapping with the publication of her book, *Re-visions* (1978), Resnick photographed the burgeoning "demi-monde" of art and music in New York—the "bad boys" of the New York downtown music and arts scene—from 1977-1982, often on assignment for magazines and newpapers such as *The Village VOICE*, *SoHo Weekly News*, and *New York* magazine. As Luc Sante asserts, she "was and remains the scene's memory, living the life even as she chronicled it."

August Sander (German, 1876-1964)

August Sander was one of the greatest and most influential photographers of the 20th century. He is internationally renowned for his monumental and ambitious project of creating a typological "total picture" of German society, now known as *People of the 20th Century*. As early as 1911 Sander conceived of his intention to make what he described as "a physiognomic portrait of an

age," but the National Socialists intervened in 1936 to thwart his progress by destroying the printing plates and all remaining copies of his first book, *Antlitz der Zeit* [Face of Our Time] (1929). Sander continued work on his project until his death in 1964. The intended publication, *People of the 20th Century*, was finally realized by the August Sander Archive, Cologne, in 2002 and is comprised of 619 portraits in seven volumes.

Early in his career as a portrait photographer, Sander rejected his painterly gum-bichromate prints in favor of the clarity and honesty of the unretouched gelatin-silver print. His guiding credo, to "look, observe and think," led him "to see things as they are and not as they should or might be." His direct approach to sitters resulted in unsentimental portraits, a radical approach at a time when pictorialism was still a popular aesthetic.

August Sander's enormous impact on contemporary photography cannot be overstated. It can be seen in the work of the German photographers Bernd and Hilla Becher and their students Andreas Gursky, Candida Höfer, Thomas Ruff, and Thomas Struth, and in the photographs of Judith Joy Ross and Rineke Dijkstra, all of whom, among countless other photographers, cite Sander's influence on the direction of their work. Sander's detailed concept of presenting what the art historian John von Hartz describes as "a social structure of his time in the form of portraits" continues to inspire photographers who also seek to achieve an incisive picture of the age and times in which we live.

Deborah Turbeville (American, 1932-2013)

Deborah Turbeville has been hailed for her iconoclastic fashion photographs of the 1970s and 1980s, elaborate tableaux that depict brooding, introspective models wearing haute-couture clothing. Posed in desolate settings, Turbeville's beings seem to wander in barren landscapes, and to languish in deserted interiors. Although refreshingly subversive, and a radical departure from fashion photographs composed on a backdrop in the studio, her pictures were shocking to many readers when they first appeared in the pages of American *Vogue* in 1975.

A former fashion editor for the *The Ladies Home Journal*, *Harper's Bazaar* and *Mademoiselle*, Turbeville began taking photographs in the 1960s; however, she had no formal training until 1966 when she enrolled in a six-month photography workshop given by Richard Avedon and the art director Marvin Israel. As Turbeville told *The New York Times* in 1981, "If it hadn't been for the two of them, I wouldn't have taken my photography seriously." Another mentor was Gösta Peterson, whose free-form approach with animated models greatly inspired Turbeville. She also acknowledged the influence of European films of the 1970s, especially those by Bertolucci and Antonioni.

Turbeville describes her philosophy in the introduction to her first book, *Wallflower* (1978):

Through a series of vignettes in stills, I wish to use the medium of photography to explain a group of rather eccentric people – sometimes one or two, sometimes many – placed in settings that help describe them. These people perform like a repertory company, often reappearing in different roles.

… My pictures walk a tightrope. They never know. … I am not a fashion photographer, I am not a photo-journalist, I am not a portraitist.

Gallery hours are Wednesday through Saturday from 11am to 6pm. High-resolution scans of most works are available to the press. For further information please contact Deborah Bell Photographs by telephone at 212-249-9400, or by email at info@deborahbellphotographs.com.

*****