

- **EARLY COLOR** -
Saul Leiter

8 September – 4 November 2006

Fifty One Fine Art Photography is proud to present the exhibition "Early Color" of Saul Leiter, the creator of urban visual poetry.

Saul Leiter, son of the renowned Talmudic scholar and rabbi Wolf Leiter, was born in 1923 in Pittsburg. But at the age of 23, he aborted his studies at the Cleveland Theological College to pursue a career as a painter in New York. At that time the Abstract Expressionist painter Richard Pousette-Dart was experimenting in the darkroom with portrait photography. Paradoxical, it was his friendship with this painter that proved to be decisive for his recognition of the creative potential of photography.

Although he has never ceased painting, Leiters camera slowly became an ever-present tool. In 1947 he began taking black and white photographs. One year later he surrendered to colour photography, rather rare in the late 1940s and early 1950s. But it clearly marked his antithetical position to Roland Barthes' view that 'colour is merely a coating applied later on the truth of the black-and-white photograph'.

The photographs of Saul Leiter with abstracted forms and ambiguous reflections are famous. They prove his likeliness to select small, half-hidden scenes on the street. But in the subdued colours and unusual cropping of some of his photographs one can also notice a strong influence of the Japanese print aesthetic or the typical French adoration for the asymmetry.

Leiters images are marked by a certain stillness and sensibility. The photographer seeks out moments of quiet humanity rather than confronting the viewer with the upcoming urban anxiety of that time, as in the work of many contemporaries such as William Klein and Robert Frank.

Saul Leiter has his own unconventional way of seeing, framing events and translating reality. As his work curator Jane Livingston has written: "...His photographs are lyrical without being sentimental and psychologically penetrating without being theatrical."

In 2007 his work will also be presented at the Milwaukee Art Museum and Fondation Henri-Cartier Bresson in Paris.