

William Kein Photography

9 September 2010 – 29 October 2010

William Klein

American, 1928-

Today Fifty One Fine Art Photography Gallery in Antwerp will honor both a long collaboration as well as a lifetime of artistic achievement of the painter, photographer, moviemaker, graphic designer and artist William Klein. Not only Klein's past oeuvres, but also his most recent artistic developments will be seen including a selection by Klein of large format images of Rome and New York, colored photographs and especially Klein's Painted Contacts.

Though Klein's Painted Contacts may seem like a surprising act of comedy in the repertoire of an austere photographer, they are "not gratuitous" according to Robert Delpire (Contacts, Delphire, 2008). "Some forget that William Klein's first passion had been painting, that he had studied with Fernand Léger and that he had swapped his brushes for a camera for many years without ever abandoning painting. It was precisely this project of painted contacts that put the brushes back in his hand and incited him to work with such jubilation on a totally new means of expression which belonged only to him" (ibid.). All in all, the colorful exhibition's theme will represent *one* underlying cause found in all of Klein's work, namely the right to *expression*.

After a brief career as a newspaper cartoonist, in the US Army, Klein moved to Paris, studied painting in 1948 with Fernand Léger, and consequently worked as a painter, graphic designer, photographer, and filmmaker (working with Chris Marker). Upon his return to New York in 1954, Klein created a photographic logbook (Life Is Good & Good for You in New York) which was published in 1956 and won him instant worldwide acclaim (Prix Nadar). He later also produced books dedicated to Tokyo, Moscow, and Paris. "Klein's visual language made an asset out of accident, graininess, blur, and distortion" (The Encyclopedia of Photography, 1984). Today, his work is not only "a crash course in what is not done in photography" (ibid.), but also a reflection of the sensuous way in which Klein feels and accordingly translates the energy of cities through his lens. This ability to uninhibitedly capture the intrinsic life

energy of his subject matter, is why Klein was nominated one of the 30 most important photographers in history at Photokina in 1963, a title that remains uncontested.