

JAN YOORS

'It is what is unseen in a person or a drawing, that makes them interesting.'

Fifty One Fine Art Photography is honored to present the first solo show of the Belgian artist Jan Yoors* (1922-1977). More than forty years after his death his black&white photographs of New York from the 1960s and 70s will be exposed. Juxtaposed with his charcoal nude drawings and his abstract watercolors.

Jan Yoors was a versatile artist: sculptor by training, painter, writer, filmmaker, photographer and master of tapestry. His rich life experience influenced him artistically. As a teenager Jan travelled on and off with a *Gypsy kumpania* throughout Europe. The transience and immediacy of the Gypsy lifestyle left a lasting impression on the young artists life. Although he saw himself as a Gypsy, he didn't choose this nomadic lifestyle. On the eve of WWII he began to study sculpture. During the war the Allies recruited him on his way to Britain. During his service, Yoors was imprisoned twice by Nazi forces.

Following the war Jan moved to Britain, where he studied international law at the School of African and Oriental studies in London. He first became intrigued by tapestry after visiting a tapestry exhibition. Dismayed by the destruction of the war, he fled to New York in 1950 where he moved into a studio and began weaving tapestries. In that time, 'The World City' which Yoors called New York, was in a period of artistic transformation: civil right movements, the urban changes in spatial divisions, abstract expressionism, followed by pop art were the artistic genres. Overwhelmed by the ethnic diversity in the city, Yoors sought to capture its immensity and richness on camera. He took photographs of Malcolm X, black Jews in Harlem, the Chinese community, the Hispanic community, the Hassidim Jews and many more. Yoors found a sense of familiarity and recognition in every community. His fragmented photographs of demolished buildings, birds eye city views and panoramas are fascinating abstract images.

In the 60s he made a trip to Europe to re-establish contact with the Gypsies. He documented his experiences in several illustrated books: *Gypsies*, *Only One New York*, *Gypsies in Spain*, *Crossing: A journal of survival and resistance in World War II*.

Yoors drafted many charcoal drawings portraying nude, most often, headless bodies that he shaped with bold, black outlines where only the legs and shoulders could be seen against the frame. Although the form of the drawings is flat, they are very expressionistic. Yoors creates an illusion of three-dimensionality with a bold mirage of lines. Yoors vivid simplicity of lines and colors can be seen in his watercolors which are painted with the same abstract language.

Jan Yoors is underexposed as an artist in Belgium. In 2005 his photographs were exhibited in a group show 'Belgian Photographers 1840-2005' at the Fotomuseum in Antwerp. Previously, one must go back to 1975 when a 'Jan Yoors Retrospective' was held in the

Cultural Centre of Ghent. However, in the 50s Jan Yoors had already received international acclaim. His sculptures, tapestries and photographs have been exhibited throughout Europe in the 50s and 60s. Yoors' work, particularly his tapestries, has received a lot of artistic recognition in the US and in 1959 he was listed as a new talent in 'Art in America' magazine.

Nowadays, his work is included in collections such as Archives of American Art, Chicago Art Institute, Metropolitan Museum of Art and Museum of Art and Design in New York, Fotomuseum in Antwerp, as well as private collections like Christie & John Walton (Wal-Mart), Senator Eugène de Faq (Belgium), James Johnson Sweeney (curator MoMA 1935-46 – director Guggenheim 1952-60), Paule Pia (Belgian photographer, dealer and founder of Fotomuseum Antwerp).

In this solo exhibition, Fifty One Fine Art Photography presents a showcase of Jan Yoors photography, watercolors and charcoal drawing. Yoors' work embodies the visual language and stylistic rendering of a remarkable artist. The absence of frame, close view of displaying his subjects, and disjointed images, where parts are often left out, refers to the dynamic life of the Gypsies. For Yoors these omissions and expressionistic lines lead to an interesting and stimulating experience contemplating his work.

*From May 11th until June 20th 2012 at Fifty One Fine Art Photography.
Opening on Thursday May 10th 2012 from 6pm.*

**Fifty one fine art photography is representing the estate of Jan Yoors*

For more details or high-resolution images, please contact info@gallery51.com

Jan Yoors will be on show in the FeliXart Museum from 28.10.2012 until 13.01.2013. The museum will be presenting its first retrospective of Jan Yoors, consisting of watercolors, sculptures and abstract tapestries.