



Acquisitions

Photography 2008-11

• MATTIE BOOM AND HANS ROOSEBOOM •

With a view to the prominent place photography will be given in the new twentieth-century galleries, the Rijksmuseum has acquired a relatively large number of photographs from the period over the past few years. Twentieth-century photography was much less well represented than that of the nineteenth century, on which the Rijksmuseum initially concentrated.

Since the last time that this acquisitions section featured new photographs (Bulletin 57 (2009), no. 2), a great many important new items have been added to the collection. Many of these purchases were made possible by Baker & McKenzie, the firm that has been sponsoring the Rijksmuseum's acquisition of twentieth-century photography since 2007.

As it has done with nineteenth-century photography, in the case of the twentieth-century photographic material the Rijksmuseum is focusing on examples from other countries, a category

that is generally underrepresented in Dutch museums and archives: most of the institutions that collect photography concentrate on work from the Netherlands.

The Rijksmuseum wants to fill this gap and at the same time to show the foreign context within which the Dutch branch developed. The world of photography has never been concerned about national borders, so that the influences back and forth are numerous. This applies even more, if that were possible, to the twentieth century than to the century before.

- 1 THOMAS ANNAN (Dairsie 1829-1887 Glasgow)
Head of High Street, Glasgow, 1868
 Plate 1 from *Photographs of Old Closes, Streets, &c., Taken 1868-1877*
 (published by the Glasgow City Improvements Trust, 1878-79)
 Carbon print, 208 x 330 mm
 Printed on recto of mount: 1. *Head of High Street*
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It could be said that the photographer and printer-publisher Thomas Annan is the father of street photography. In 1868 the Glasgow City Improvements Trust commissioned him to record the alleys and closes of the Scottish city before they were demolished. He stationed himself with a tripod at the beginning or end of the alley and captured the narrow passage with one or two occupants here and there in photographs of breathtaking beauty. They are sharp, clear in composition and sometimes dark and dismal, without much light and sky. He photographed 'Close no. 12, Close no. 13, Close no. 9, 118, 148', and so on. The Rijksmuseum has fifteen carbon prints out of the complete set of forty and added number 1, *Head of High Street*, to its collection in 2009. This shot is different as Annan was not standing in the middle of the street, but went to the edge. Consequently the perspective runs into the distance on the right and is accentuated because he opted for a landscape negative, instead of his more usual portrait format. The contrast between the white sky and the dark foreground intensifies the composition. And in this case Annan caught his extra, a small child in front, moving, not posing. The figures are actually little more than shadows on the street. Nonetheless he succeeded in creating the suggestion of movement. The long exposure times of the nineteenth century meant that he was likewise unable to record the traffic in the street on the plate – we see it as vague blurs. With his heavy camera on a tripod he achieved an effect of urban dynamism which we otherwise only see in photographs dating from around 1900.

At that time Glasgow was Scotland's major industrial city. The cotton industry attracted many people, who lived in cramped conditions in narrow alleys and closes. The city was regularly hit by smallpox, cholera and typhoid. The water supply from Loch Katrine (also photographed by Annan) was an early attempt to improve social and housing conditions. In 1866 the city council finally decided that parts of the run-down inner

city had to be demolished to make way for wider streets and new houses. Annan had a few years – from 1868 to 1871 – to photograph the little streets and alleys that were to be demolished around Trongate, Saltmarket and the High Street – once busy centres in the city. The Trust had asked him to do this because there had been much discussion about the disappearance of characteristic parts of the city. People were afraid that the city would look predominantly nineteenth century – in other words, modern – so the photographic documentation perhaps went some way towards alleviating the sense of loss.

In 1871 the first set of thirty-one photographs was printed as albumen prints and bound in two albums. In 1877 Annan returned to add new photographs to the first set. Six years later, in 1878, in his own photography and printing business, he made an entirely new set of prints as carbon prints of the series – which ultimately amounted to forty photographs – in an edition of a hundred sets. This is the series which later made him so famous and which is repeatedly associated with his artistic career. For the purpose Annan used the carbon print process that allowed durable photographs to be made. He had acquired the patent and the rights to this process for Scotland in 1866. The prints in the Rijksprentenkabinet were also printed using this technique. They are mounted on grey card with the titles pre-printed beneath. The photographs are a brownish red with no traces of yellowing, and look very good. This is because the emulsion in a carbon print was formed by gelatin mixed with a pigment, usually carbon black and potassium dichromate, rather than a silver compound liable to degrade.



LITERATURE:

A. Ventura Mozley, 'Introduction to the Dover Edition', in T. Annan, *Photographs of the Old Closes and Streets of Glasgow, 1868|1877. With a Supplement of 15 Related Views*, New York 1977, pp. v-xii

M. Boom, 'De productielijnen van een negentiende-eeuws fotobedrijf. De firma Annan in Glasgow', *Kunstlicht* 25 (2004), no. 1/2, pp. 22-29

PROVENANCE:

Bernard Quaritch Ltd, London, 2009

(inv. no. RP-F-2009-294).

- 2 THÉODORE VAN LELYVELD (Semarang 1867-1954 The Hague)
The Waterfront, Paramaribo (probably on Queen's Day, 31 August), c. 1895-98
 From the photo album *Souvenirs de Voyage*
 Gelatin silver print, 114 x 169 mm
 © Théodore van Lelyveld
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With the advent of the hand-held camera in the late nineteenth century a great deal changed in photography. The photographer held the camera at waist height; the point of view was lower and the manoeuvrability greater. Now photographers often found themselves in the middle of the action instead of standing in front of it with a large, unwieldy camera on a fixed tripod. In the course of the 1890s photography became much more dynamic as it was taken up by a growing group of amateurs who set no store by the prevailing pictorial conventions. This group of amateur photographers frequently displayed unexpected talent and produced splendid sets of photographs.

One amateur photographer with just such an exceptional 'oeuvre' was Théodore van Lelyveld, 'amateur artist', and by profession assistant to the Governor of Suriname, Jonkheer T.A.J. van Asch van Wijck. After Van Lelyveld had achieved some small successes with photographs 'of a military nature' at the International Photography exhibition staged in Arnhem from 14 to 29 July 1894, he left in the same year with family and camera for a four-year stay in the Netherlands' South American colony. The Rijksmuseum acquired the photo album he put together during his time in Suriname.

This collection of more than 133 photographs shows that he was a talented documentary photographer, a photo journalist before the expression was coined. He might have been expected to follow traditional paths, close to the governor as he was. But as well as his own private life and friends and acquaintances, he also systematically recorded the houses, streets and people of all kinds. He made portraits of lepers and of a woman with elephantiasis. He photographed Javanese women (imported workers) in their camp and French prisoners who had fled the wretched conditions in the work camps in neighbouring French Guiana. The power of his photography lies in the tranquillity and the broad view, and in the conscious use of photographic means and possibilities. In this shot of the Waterfront he shows how fascinating an image of the bustling life of the street could be.

The fact that people were not yet used to this is revealed by the friendly suggestions given to amateur photographers that in the case of an 'instant shot', the object should be in motion. Van Lelyveld had no problem with that: this is modern street photography at its best. This scene is deliberately full of movement and blur.

LITERATURE:

P. Eckhardt, 'Théodore van Lelyveld', *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse fotografie*, part 44 (2011), pp. 1-13

PROVENANCE:

Charles Furstner, Amsterdam, 2009
 (inv. no. RP-F-2009-282-82-2).



- 3 HENRY PETER BOSSE (Sommerschenburg, Germany 1844-1903 Rock Island, Illinois)
View of the Mississippi from the Foot of a Dam, 1889
 Cyanotype, 265 x 336 mm
 Recto, in pen and ink: 70a | *From foot of Dam 1 13 looking up stream L.W. 1889*
-

The cyanotype is the most curious and intriguing of all photographic printing processes. The dominant blue colour of cyanotypes comes from the Prussian blue formed when the two iron salts applied to the paper are exposed to light. The technique has been used to a limited degree since 1840 up to the present day, but among the photographers who worked with it are great names like Eadweard Muybridge, Karl Blossfeldt and Jacques-Henri Lartigue.

Cyanotypes nevertheless have a relatively low standing. History of photography literature often points out that the process was often used to make proofs because it was simple and cheap. The English photographer Henry Peter Emerson was even more decided in his views; in his famous book *Naturalistic Photography for Students of the Art* (1889) he wrote about choosing printing paper. He was extremely dismissive of the cyanotype. 'The Ferro-Prussiate printing process, of course, does not concern us, blue prints are only for plans, not for art.' A couple of pages later he heaped on a little more opprobrium when discussing the use of tinted papers. 'But of course these tints must be used with judgment, and no one but a vandal would print a landscape in red, or in cyanotype.'

Although these last words are still quoted to this day, cyanotypes are now increasingly appreciated in their own right. In the same year Emerson made these disdainful remarks, Peter Henry Bosse produced a cyanotype of great beauty, which was recently acquired by the Rijksmuseum and added to its small but growing cyanotype collection. For whatever reason cyanotypes were actually used, they sometimes have great visual impact as photographs. Bosse's work is a good example.

From the late 1870s Bosse worked as a map-maker for the US Army Corps of Engineers. The 350 or so surviving cyanotypes by him show how this agency improved the navigability of the Mississippi, for example by building dams and streamlining the physical course of the river. Between 1883 and 1893, Bosse photographed the Upper Mississippi between St Paul and St Louis.

Almost all Bosse's photographs are held by the US Army Corps of Engineers, the Mayo Foundation Library (Rochester, Minnesota) and the National Mississippi River Museum (Dubuque, Iowa). In 1990 an album of 169 prints by Bosse was sold, and subsequently broken up. The photograph acquired by the Rijksmuseum came from this album.

LITERATURE:

- M. Neuzil, *Views of the Mississippi. The Photographs of Henry Peter Bosse*, Minneapolis/London 2001
 C. Wehrenberg, *Mississippi Blue. Henry P. Bosse and his Views on the Mississippi River between Minneapolis and St. Louis, 1883-1891*, Santa Fe 2002

PROVENANCE:

- Alexander McKenzie; Mrs Lucia M. Hendley; Henry Nelson Bond, Jr; Mike Conner; sale New York (Sotheby's), 16 October 1990, no. 67; Simon Lewinsky; Jeff Walba; Lee Gallery, Winchester, MA; purchased with the support of Baker & McKenzie Amsterdam N.V., 2011
 (inv. no. RP-F-2011-41).



4 ANONYMOUS (English?)
Portrait of Three Girls, undated
 Autochrome slide, 81 x 81 mm

In 1907 the Lumière brothers marketed 'autochrome', the first practical colour photography process. For the first time since the introduction of photography in 1839 it was possible for anyone who could operate a camera to take photographs in colour. The many earlier attempts by others to make colour photographs produced poor quality results and frequently involved laborious processes with special equipment. The Lumières' process, in contrast, was astonishingly simple; in fact it was hardly more difficult than working with the usual familiar black-and-white plates. Ready to use autochrome plates were sold in photography shops; they did not need a special camera, and the colours were pleasing, lifelike and fresh.

There was great enthusiasm when they were introduced. Even so, the autochrome, which was produced until the mid-1930s, never really became popular: the plates were relatively expensive, the exposure times were longer than for black-and-white plates and prints could not be made from the glass slides.

This is why early colour photographs are much rarer than old black-and-white ones. Colour photography only became commonplace in the decades after the Second World War and we associate pre-war photography almost exclusively with black and white. This means that every early colour photograph that comes to light is a minor sensation: as we are accustomed to black-and-white images every old colour photograph continues to amaze and surprise us.

Since the Rijksprentenkabinet began actively collecting photographs in 1994, it has bought and acquired almost four hundred autochromes. In 2009 the museum published a selection of them in *Stille beelden. Vroege kleurenfotografie uit het Rijksmuseum*. This portrait of three red-headed girls, which was probably taken in England, is one of the finest acquisitions made since then. Their red hair, brightly lit by the high sun, stands out all the more vividly because of their dark clothes and the dark background.

Every autochrome is unique and prints cannot be made from them as they can from a negative. This was why the process was of little interest to

professional photographers. Most of the autochromes were made by amateurs, whose work in general is less likely to have been preserved. As autochromes were made of glass, many must have been broken over the years and the ones that have survived rarely feature the maker's name, a date or a title. We know nothing about this photograph either.

LITERATURE:

P. Roberts, *A Century of Colour Photography. From the Autochrome to the Digital Age*, London 2007

H. Rooseboom, *Stille beelden. Vroege kleurenfotografie uit het Rijksmuseum*, Amsterdam 2009

PROVENANCE:

Lorraine Kordecki, Reigate, Great Britain, 2009
 (inv. no. RP-F-2009-51).



5 EMIL OTTO HOPPÉ (Munich 1878-1972 London)
Light and Shade in a Cobbled Street, New York City, 1921

Gelatin silver print, 245 x 188 mm

Verso, in pen and ink: *Sun patterns on Cobblestones*; a number of the photographer's stamps

© 2012 Curatorial Assistance, Inc. / E.O. Hoppé Estate Collection, Pasadena

Emil Otto Hoppé is one of the few early photographers who were so well-known that they published their autobiographies, in his case *Hundred Thousand Exposures. The Success of a Photographer* (1945). Before the Second World War photographers often had 'celebrities' in front of the lens, but they themselves usually remained in the shadows. In the first place Hoppé owed his recognition to his flourishing London practice as a portrait photographer. The many books of his photographs published in his lifetime also contributed to his reputation. A number of these books were devoted to countries that Hoppé had visited, like the United States. In 1927 photographs he took there appeared in *Romantic America. Picturesque United States* (a German and a French edition were also published in the same year).

In *Romantic America* Hoppé revealed himself as a photographer who was half modern, half old-fashioned in taste and style. On the one hand he often photographed modern architecture (factories, bridges and buildings) and he had an unusually good eye for the chiaroscuro effects of structures silhouetted against the sky; a powerful example is *Steel Structure, Philadelphia*, acquired by the Rijksmuseum in 2007 (inv. no. RP-F-2007-332; see the acquisition section in *The Rijksmuseum Bulletin* 57 (2009), no. 2, pp. 182-83, fig. 8). On the other, he used a gentle soft focus in many of his photographs – modern subjects and timeless older architecture alike. Unsurprisingly, Hoppé's books have titles like *Romantic America* and *Picturesque Britain* (1926).

He took this striking photograph, which the Rijksmuseum acquired in 2009, on the first of his three trips to the United States, from 1919 to 1921. Few of Hoppé's photographs captured such an unremarkable subject: an anonymous section of a cobbled street in New York City. Clearly Hoppé was concerned solely with the patterns of light and shade overlaying and echoing the texture of the street. In 1921 it was still highly unusual to take photographs where the subject was irrelevant and simply a reason for a study or composition, so it

should come as no surprise that this photograph does not appear in *Romantic America*. It was not until the late 1920s that it became *de rigueur* among modernist photographers to focus on form and texture and show no interest in the old idea that the subject was important too. In that sense the photograph was an intriguing precursor of what was to follow in the 1920s.

Yet the photograph is not just modern: the shallow depth of field is typical of Hoppé's approach. Foreground and background are blurred, only the cobbles in the middle are sharp. Though not included in *Romantic America*, this photograph is still a typical Hoppé.

LITERATURE:

P. Prodger, *E.O. Hoppé's Amerika. Modernist Photographs from the 1920's*, New York/London 2007, p. 69 (fig.)

PROVENANCE:

Bruce Silverstein Gallery, New York; purchased with the support of Baker & McKenzie Amsterdam N.V., 2009 (inv. no. RP-F-2009-250).



6 LÁSZLÓ MOHOLY-NAGY (Bácsborsód, Hungary, 1895-1946 Chicago)

View from the Pont Transbordeur, Marseille, 1929

Gelatin silver print, 391 x 278 mm

Verso, in pencil: *marseille (pont transbordeur)*; stamped in purple ink*foto moholy-nagy| moholy-nagy| berlin-chbg 9 fredericiastrasse 27atelier*

© László Moholy-Nagy Estate, c/o Pictoright, Amsterdam 2012

Photography was a nineteenth-century invention and was developed and shaped during that period. But at the start of the next century, after a devastating war, it experienced an 'Umwertung aller Werte' (re-evaluation of all values) with the rise of Modernism. One of the most important theoreticians of the modern movement was the Hungarian László Moholy-Nagy, who in August 1921, with his wife Lucia, had his first lessons in photography at the Lichtbildwerkstatt in Loheland near Fulda. Influenced by the Dutch De Stijl artist Theo van Doesburg and others, Moholy-Nagy became one of the most important champions of what they called the 'new imaging'.

The Bauhaus was the place where this philosophy was put into practice. Moholy-Nagy, who taught at the Bauhaus in Weimar between 1923 and 1928, wrote the influential *Malerei, Photographie, Film* in the Bauhausbücher series in 1925. The book is evidence of his curiosity about all forms of photography. It is full of unconventional and 'normal' photographs, from amateur shots to aerial photographs to prints from strips of film. It is interesting that photography was seen as a creative means of expression. Any composition, cropping and position was appropriate: the more unusual the better. Moholy-Nagy regarded the camera as a machine that could supplement and perfect the human eye: 'people can say that we see the world with totally different eyes'.

In *View from the Pont Transbordeur* it becomes clear where his experiments with viewpoints, cropped shots and new subjects had led. The extreme view downwards produces an almost abstract image. Some years ago the Rijksmuseum acquired a photograph Moholy-Nagy took of the same bridge: a sleeping fisherman in a boat half from above and foreshortened. In the photograph acquired in 2010, he went a step further. The metal structure of the bridge, shrouded in semi-darkness, contrasts with the brightly-lit round base of the concrete pier. The two triangular sails of a passing ship very subtly ensure that the shot is not entirely abstract. A camera's lens does

indeed see the world differently from the often wandering human eye. We clearly see how Moholy-Nagy experimented with new subjects and images in his film *Marseille*, shot at the same time. In it he constantly seeks new vanishing points, unusual compositions and visual effects. When he put the film camera down, he evidently picked up the photographic camera and captured the image – the view straight down – in a still photograph.

LITERATURE:

M. Boom and H. Rooseboom, 'Gezicht vanaf de Pont Transbordeur, Marseille', *Bulletin van de Vereniging Rembrandt* 20 (2010), no. 3, pp. 26-29

PROVENANCE:

Howard Greenberg Gallery, New York; purchased with the support of Baker & McKenzie Amsterdam N.V. and the Vereniging Rembrandt, with additional funding from the Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds, 2010 (inv. no. RP-F-2010-1).



- 7 MAN RAY (pseudonym of Emmanuel Radnitzky, Philadelphia 1890-1976 Paris)
Électricité. Dix rayogrammes de Man Ray et un text de Pierre Bost, Paris (Compagnie parisienne de distribution d'électricité), 1931
 Portfolio of ten heliogravures, printed by A. Jarach and P. Chambry, each approximately 260 x 200 mm.
 © Man Ray, c/o Pictoright, Amsterdam 2012

Man Ray was undoubtedly one of the most influential photographers of the twentieth century. Even though his experimental photographs probably contributed most to that reputation, he also worked as a portrait and fashion photographer. Aside from photographs he also made paintings and drawings, objects, collages, ready-mades and films. He was in touch with Dadaism and Surrealism without actually being part of these movements.

Born in the United States, he worked mainly in Paris, where in the 1920s and 30s he took the photographs that still hold the strongest appeal. In 1922 – by chance, so he said – he discovered a variant of the photogram technique, which he called the rayograph. In a photogram, a technique as old as photography itself which Man Ray got to know as a boy, the object is laid on the photographic paper, after which the light does its work and the paper darkens where it is not shielded by the object. The result is a reversed silhouette: a 'cut-away' where the shape corresponding to the object is white and the rest of the paper is black. In a rayograph, the objects are not always laid flat on the paper; some are placed upright so that the light causes a quite different shadow effect.

Man Ray made several rayographs during the 1920s, and these are highly sought-after nowadays. *Électricité*, a portfolio containing ten photographs reproduced as heliogravures, was published in 1931. Man Ray was commissioned to make them by the Compagnie parisienne de distribution d'électricité (CPDE), which had an edition of five hundred printed and handed them out as promotional gifts. It is an early example of how modernist free work and practical advertising photography entered into a happy union. Photographs were almost never used alone in advertisements and brochures: drawings still predominated at that time. Man Ray's playful approach illustrated the many and new uses of electricity in the home – from light bulbs and lampshades to an oven, an iron, a toaster and a fan.

In most of the images in *Électricité* Man Ray combined the rayograph technique with straight printing from a regular negative. In these cases he probably made a copy negative of the original rayograph and then superimposed the two negatives to create a single photograph.

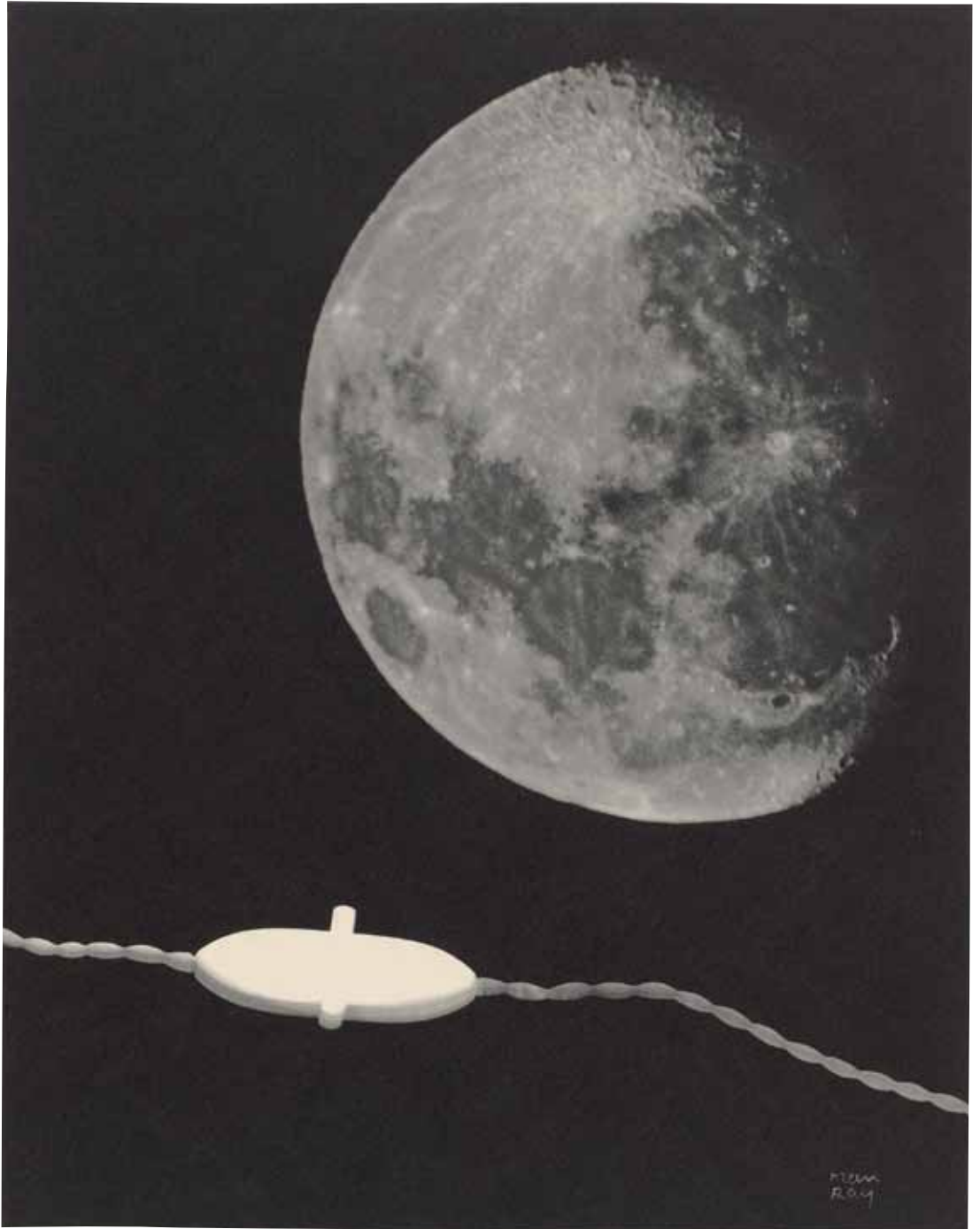
The portfolio is an important highlight in photography, advertising and book design. An example in good condition, with a cover for each photograph, a separate text section and a slipcase, is rare nowadays. The only thing missing from the one that the Rijksmuseum bought in 2010 is the small, separate compliments card.

LITERATURE:

- J.A. Callis et al., *Man Ray. Photographs from The J. Paul Getty Museum*, Los Angeles 1998, pp. 62-65
 M. Parr and G. Badger, *The Photobook. A History. Vol. II*, London 2006, pp. 132, 177, 182-83

PROVENANCE:

- Denis Ozanne Rare Books, Paris; purchased with the support of Baker & McKenzie Amsterdam N.V., 2010
 (inv. no. RP-F-2010-177).



8 ARNOLD NEWMAN (New York 1918-2006 New York)

Four Portraits of Piet Mondrian, 1942

Four gelatin silver plates mounted on one sheet, together 280 x 216 mm

Verso, stamped on all: © ARNOLD NEWMAN ...; on one in pencil: # 812 | *Mondrian*

© Estate of Arnold Newman, c/o Getty Images

When the American photographer Arnold Newman died in 2006 at the age of eighty-eight he was celebrated above all as the maker of artists' portraits. One of his earliest sitters was the Dutch painter Piet Mondrian (1872-1944). The most famous portrait from that sitting shows the painter face on, his wrist resting on the easel, looking into the lens with an expression of mild torment. Along with a print of this portrait the Rijksmuseum also acquired four contact prints in which Mondrian adopted a different pose during the same sitting. These four separately cut contact prints are mounted two by two on one sheet.

Although collecting photographs has really taken off in recent decades, certain subjects or photographers prove to be poorly represented in Dutch public collections. Portraits of Piet Mondrian, for example, are few in number, even though he is undeniably an internationally renowned Dutch artist and in his own way rather photogenic – which is why the Rijksmuseum seized the opportunity to buy this set of portraits when it arose.

Newman photographed Mondrian in the first of the two studios the painter had in New York, at 353 East 56th Street (on the corner of First Avenue). He stayed there from his arrival in New York until October 1943. It was a small studio with no furniture in the front room apart from an easel and a drawing board. Mondrian had whitewashed the rooms and fixed different sized square pieces of red, yellow and blue paper to the walls. 'It was otherwise too inhospitable,' he said.

An old portrait photographer's trick for relaxing sitters is to take the time to chat and fiddle around a little. Newman did that too: 'I don't pose people. I just let them fall into positions that are natural to them. I fool around and scratch my side and keep the chatter going. Gradually they get bored or relaxed, and then I see something and say, "Hold it! Don't move!" and it works.'

Rarely was the painter portrayed in such a cool and detached way. The portraits André Kertész and Cas Oorthuys made of Mondrian during his

time in Paris, for instance, were taken from much closer and are consequently far more intimate. In their severity, Newman's portraits actually give expression to something of the painter's reputation.

LITERATURE:

H. Geldzahler (Foreword), *Artists. Portraits from Four Decades by Arnold Newman*, London 1980

W. Coppes, 'Photographies, reproductions et portraits: l'image que Mondrian veut donner de lui-même', in B. Léal, *Mondrian*, Paris 2010, pp. 145-57

PROVENANCE:

Howard Greenberg Gallery, New York; purchased with the support of Baker & McKenzie Amsterdam N.V., 2008 (inv. no. RP-F-2008-9).



9 LEON LEVINSTEIN (Buckhannon 1910-1988 New York)

Haiti, 1965

Gelatin silver print, 242 x 354 mm

© Estate of Leon Levinstein, courtesy Howard Greenberg Gallery, New York

It was only after his death that the American photographer Leon Levinstein's life and work really attracted attention. He was a photographic loner, a difficult man with no family or friends, and an obsessive photographer, who preferred to spend the entire day with a camera round his neck looking for people and situations that would photograph well. He spent every evening printing in the apartment he had converted into a dark room. In 1946 he established himself in New York as a graphic artist with an advertising agency. Later he went freelance so that he was able to plan his own time and have scope for his photography, but he never took the step of becoming a professional photographer or photojournalist even though he had plenty of opportunities. He had his first exhibition in 1956 in the Limelight Gallery in New York; gradually his work became better known and was occasionally acquired for museum collections.

Levinstein's passion was street photography. From the 1950s to the 1970s he took a lot of photographs in New York, on the beach at Coney Island, during parades and at the circus – anywhere where there were people. He also went to other countries, to Europe, Haiti and Mexico.

His photography is anonymous; he sought people and situations at random. The resultant work was totally unconventional. He made rough cut-outs and tight compositions: something is always happening in the most unexpected way. Levinstein got close to people and observed them from all sides. This led to messy, unembellished portraits and situation sketches full of contrast. Sometimes there is interaction: a woman kissing is aware of the photographer and looks at him. The result of this continuing pursuit was a vast quantity of photographs of consistent quality. Each image is different and has an individual intensity and character.

In this street scene in Haiti we can see how he used the space in the photograph. By way of the out-of-focus head of the boy in the foreground we go to the woman with the hat and the stool in the middle and quickly to the background, where

someone is going past. In the left background a diagonal stretches the space in the photograph still further: so we as viewers also enter the depth, the third dimension. Nowhere does the viewer's eye find rest. Levinstein stretches the space in the flat plane constantly and directs the viewer from front to back and from left to right, playing with the light and dark passages with the spinning white hat as a centrifugal force.

LITERATURE:

S. Stourdzé et al., *Leon Levinstein: Obsession*, Paris 2000, p. 206

PROVENANCE:

Howard Greenberg Gallery, New York; purchased with the support of Baker & McKenzie Amsterdam N.V., 2011 (inv. no. RP-F-2011-45).



10 DAVE HEATH (Philadelphia 1931)

Portrait of a Woman, c. 1965

Gelatin silver print, 345 x 240 mm

Verso, in pencil: *Dave Heath*

© Dave Heath, courtesy Howard Greenberg Gallery, New York

Some photographs derive their power and significance from the fact that they capture their age so strikingly and are among the best that were made at the time. There are a great many of these. Much rarer, though, are photographs that are almost timeless and hence appear universal. This portrait of an unknown woman by Dave Heath is a powerful example. The photograph was taken around 1965 but could just as well be much more recent. The portrait is subdued, intimate and so tightly framed that there is little or no clue to when the photograph was taken. In his photobook *A Dialogue with Solitude*, which Heath published in 1965, it is striking that Heath's photographs have an existentialist feel and are thus 'children of their time'. 'Disenchantment, strife and anxiety enshroud our times in stygian darkness ... many people are caught up in an anguish of alienation,' wrote Heath in the foreword. Although Heath clearly had a pessimistic view of life, he did not want that to come across in his photographs too much. 'What I have endeavored to convey in my work is not a sense of futility and despair, but an acceptance of life's tragic aspects.' *A Dialogue with Solitude* is certainly not a cheerful book, but neither is it nihilistic or gloomy. This applies not only to the portraits in this book, but to the portrait shown here as well, which has been set free from the pessimistic spirit of the time and now, decades later, is still touching.

LITERATURE:

D. Heath, *A Dialogue with Solitude*, Culpeper 1965M. Parr and G. Badger, *The Photobook. A History. Vol. II*,

London 2006, p. 104

PROVENANCE:

Howard Greenberg Gallery, New York; purchased with the support of Baker & McKenzie Amsterdam N.V., 2011

(inv. no. RP-F-2011-47).



II GERARD PETRUS FIERET (The Hague 1924-2009 The Hague)

Nude, c. 1969

Gelatin silver print, 598 x 496 mm

Recto, lower right, in felt-tip pen: *G.P. Fieret*

© Estate of G.P. Fieret, The Hague

It was not possible to publish a monograph about the life and work of this paranoid photographer with a tormented existence until after his death. It revealed how he had suffered a wretched youth and had spent time in a German labour camp during the war. Fieret began drawing as a child and in 1947 was enrolled in the art academy in The Hague, where he remained only briefly. A little later, in 1951, he was introduced to photography by Livinus van de Bundt at the Free Academy in The Hague. It became an important tool in coming to terms with himself and his life – and in his relationship with women, whom he only ever approached by way of the camera. This unconventional artist led a nomadic existence throughout his life. He cycled through the streets of The Hague with two buckets of pigeon food to feed the birds. He lived in dilapidated studios and produced hundreds of photographs which he kept in a freezer. After his death his negatives were found in containers he had buried in the garden.

His biography also reveals that he looked at the photographic work of others. Although he would always deny it, he borrowed images and subjects from Van der Elsken, Van der Keuken, Breitner and Sanne Sannes. This monumental nude is likewise reminiscent of the composition that adorns the cover of Bill Brandt's *Perspective of Nudes* (1961), which he may have seen and examined in the library of the Leiden Print Room – now Leiden University Library – where he often spent time. However, one cannot really say that the individualistic Fieret 'quoted' or directly copied from the work of others. His photographs do not look much like the prints we are used to seeing in photograph collections. Dented, written on, crooked with frayed edges, with holes, sellotape and traces of pigeon droppings. He scribbled his signature on the sheet with a felt-tip pen and put a copyright stamp on it. As a colleague put it, they are the only photographs where the curator has to wear gloves to protect himself and not the art. The often monumental photographs are unlike any other work, with their expressiveness and wall power. Fieret made them something entirely his own.

The female nude was an important subject. He invited scores of women to his studio and made long series of studies. Occasionally there is an unconventional street scene, a still life or a picture of a pigeon. The self-portrait was also a recurrent theme: the Rijksmuseum has three of them. The bulk of Fieret's oeuvre is held in three places in the Netherlands: Leiden University Library, where his work was discovered in the second half of the 1960s; the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, which acquired a large selection, and the Hague Museum of Photography, which holds the studio estate. The Rijksmuseum has a small collection of thirty-one works.

LITERATURE:

F. van Burkom, *Gerard Fieret (1924-2009)*, Haarlem 2010
(*Monografieën over Nederlandse fotografen*)

PROVENANCE:

Willem Diepraam, Amsterdam, 2010
(inv. no. RP-F-2010-80).





- 12 HELEN LEVITT (New York 1913-2009 New York)
Squatting Girl, or Spider Girl, New York City, 1980
 C-print, 382 x 571 mm
 Verso, in pen and ink: *N.Y. 1980 Helen Levitt*
 © Estate of Helen Levitt / courtesy Laurence Miller
 Gallery, New York



Until twenty years ago colour photography was regarded as too garish, too loud and too distracting from the subject, and it was hardly taken seriously in the museum world. Black-and-white photography was the norm, however much it differed from the way we saw and see our world in colour every day.

In spite of this general disdain, in the mid-1970s American photographers like William Eggleston and Stephen Shore began to use colour in often panoramic American landscapes and street scenes. This broad, expansive style, in which even the tiniest and seemingly insignificant details were captured, is now called the school of the New Topography.

What is fascinating about the American photographer Helen Levitt is that in the 1970s she effortlessly switched from black and white to colour and yet stayed true to her theme. Since the 1940s the New York-based photographer, who was a scrupulous observer, had captured children with her camera – in the city and in the street, in all kinds of situations. She effectively wrote a ‘petite histoire’ of the little ones who live in a big city. For the most part, photographers who were used to working in shades and tones of grey found it very difficult to switch to a radically different way of looking and ‘picturing’, but in later life Levitt happily took on the challenge of a new age. In this photograph of the girl in the gutter, the green and blue are almost pitiless: they determine the composition, space and direction in the photograph in all respects. And the figure of the child moves with it. All attention is focused on the squatting girl and we do not know actually what brings her to the kerb half under the car. Hence ‘a world in colour’, instead of distracting us, can drag us to the subject and become a narrative, almost poetic image.

LITERATURE:

S.S. Phillips and M. Morris Hambourg,
Helen Levitt, San Francisco/New York 1991, p. 64

PROVENANCE:

Roy Kahmann Gallery Amsterdam; Lawrence Miller Gallery,
 New York; purchased with the support of Baker & McKenzie
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