



Galleria CARLA SOZZANI

PRESS RELEASE

HEINZ HAJEK- HALKE

Opening **Saturday February 6th, 2016**
from **3.00 pm to 8.00 pm**

On show from **Sunday February 7th, 2016 to Sunday April 3rd, 2016**
Every day, 10.30 am – 7.30 pm
Wednesdays and Thursdays, 10.30 am – 9.00 pm

Galleria Carla Sozzani
Corso Como 10 – 20154 Milan, Italy
tel +39 02 653531 fax +39 02 29004080
press@galleriacarlasozzani.org
www.galleriacarlasozzani.org

HEINZ HAJEK- HALKE

The **Galleria Carla Sozzani**, in collaboration with the Archiv der Akademie der Künste in Berlin and Eric Franck Fine Art in London, is pleased to present the work of **Heinz Hajek-Halke** for the first time in Italy. The exhibition features a selection of his most extraordinary vintage photographs, manipulations of form, light and movement printed between the Thirties and the Seventies.

“Two difficult aspects that have always overshadowed my character: defiance and curiosity. To put it more elegantly: a thirst for knowledge. And so it came to pass that I became a photographer in spite of a background in academic painting; and remained a painter in spite of being a photographer.”

Heinz Hajek-Halke, born in Berlin in 1898, is almost unknown to the general public, but is one of the pioneers of German photography in the Twentieth century whose strong personality blazed the trail for photographers of the last century. After spending his childhood in Argentina, in 1910 he returned to Berlin and reunited with his father Paul Halke, a painter and a cartoonist, who became his first drawing teacher, and he began to study art at the Academy of Fine Arts.

Forced to leave school in 1916 for the First World War, in 1918 he resumed his studies with the painter Emil Orlik and then lessons with Hans Baluschek, whom he considered more progressive and less conventional.

In 1923 he began work as a press photographer for the news agency Press-Photo, and began experimenting with several techniques: photomontage, double exposures, collage. During this golden age of photojournalism, he collaborated with the great photographers Willi Ruge and Else Neuländer (Yva) to develop more and more complex images. His work was in demand by the most famous magazines of the Weimar Republic.

During the Second World War he moved to Switzerland and Lake Constance, where he began to explore the scientific field of insect-biology through photography. With a large view camera he explored many techniques of chemical manipulation, distortion of light and magnification of microscopic elements.

In 1949 he became a founding member of "Fotoform", the Avant-garde group of West German photographers founded by Otto Steinert; six years later he started teaching photography and graphics at the University of Arts in Berlin. Among his students there were personalities that would continue to mark the history of photography like Dieter Appelt and Floris Neusüss.

His need to experiment and to explore new forms had him recreating macrocosms through enlargements of microcosms. In the mid-50s he focused his work in the darkroom using the techniques of the camera obscura, following in the footsteps of Man Ray and Laszlo Moholy Nagy.

Spreading on a glass support materials like glue, varnish, soot, wire, fish bones, glass shards and other found objects or substances, he created a series of "accidents" on his negative plate, but by his knowledge of the chemical and mechanical techniques, he was able to replicate images during the printing process in the darkroom. The forms previously generated on the glass support, enlarged, became a detailed macrocosm fixed on paper.

These experiments have been termed "**Lichtgrafik**" by the art historian Franz Roh on the occasion of the exhibition "Subjektive Fotografie" in Saarbrücken in 1951.

While searching for new forms continuously, Halke built structures with flexible wires called the "**Drahtmontage**" - which he mounted on specially lighted turntables. Their whirling motion, together with the light shifting during the shooting time, provokes from the original structures the final complex shapes.

These numerous experiments, and their physical and chemical processes, became a kind of alchemical research; a sort of gray area between art and science where Heinz Hajek-Halke, an enigmatic individualist and curious anarchist, moved and guided his imaginary with technical rigor.

His was a systematic method consisting of preparatory drawings of recurring themes, previous solutions re-evaluated; and over time revisions would confirm their validity. In this process Heinz Hajek-Halke was always the consummate artist where his preparatory studies transformed his photographic prints into intense images. He always remained a photographer working with the photographic process as a medium of expression to develop abstracted images.

Ten years before his death in Berlin in 1983, Heinz Hajek-Halke, without heirs, donated his complete body of work to his friend, the photographer Michael Ruetz who, after archiving the estate, donated it to the Archiv der Akademie der Künste in Berlin, to which it still belongs.

Two books were published during his life: *Experimentelle Photographie* in 1955 and *Lichtgraphik* in 1964.

In 2002 the Centre Pompidou in Paris dedicated to Heinz Hajek-Halke his first retrospective curated by Alain Sayag. In 2012 the Akademie der Künste in Berlin mounted a major retrospective curated by Michael Ruetz.

A book published by Carla Sozzani Editore will accompany the exhibition.

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