

Press release

HENRY WESSEL – California and the West

21. Februar – 3. Mai 2013

The exhibition presents a selection of photographs of the prominent U.S. American artist, Henry Wessel. The black and white handprints from the famous groups of works like *California and the West*, *Waikiki* and *Night Walk* illustrate a representative cross-section of his comprehensive artistic works. Like Lewis Baltz, Robert Adams, Stephen Shore, Bernd and Hilla Becher, among others, Mr. Wessel is represented in „New Topographics“ –a trendsetting exhibition in the George Eastman House from 1975, which only recently was reinstalled as an international travelling exhibition. The New Topographics Movement addresses the dialectic relationship between nature and civilization. It has therefore catapulted landscape photography back onto the agenda of contemporary art. Even before the new topographic photography established itself in this form, already in 1973 the New Yorker Museum of Modern Art dedicated a solo exhibition to Henry Wessel.

Henry Wessel is a photographer who was born in Teaneck, New Jersey, USA, in 1942, and has been creating his life's work that is centered on Americana since the mid-1960s. Beyond that Mr. Wessel has developed a completely unique, picture language that ruminates very much on structure and clear compositions, but also distinguishes itself through humor and irony. The coincidences, spontaneity and chaos of daily living are expressed naturally in his photographs. Mr. Wessel's photographs, which capture circumstances that can easily be overlooked, evidence his visual intuition for simultaneously depicting things with formal aesthetical consequence and with poetry.

In his group of works entitled „California and the West“, Henry Wessel has compiled his central ideas and motives since the 1960s. Among his preferred motives are the desert-like landscapes of the American West, the architecture of residential areas, as well as gardens and beach promenades. Ever since Mr. Wessel fled the gray winters of New York City in 1969 and alighted on the sunny Los Angeles, the light specific to California has played a significant compositional role in his photographic works. Henry Wessel's interest in light is mirrored in the newer photographic series entitled „Night Walk“. These photographs from the period 1995 to 1998 came into existence in the night hours during extensive walks through the residential areas of Los Angeles.

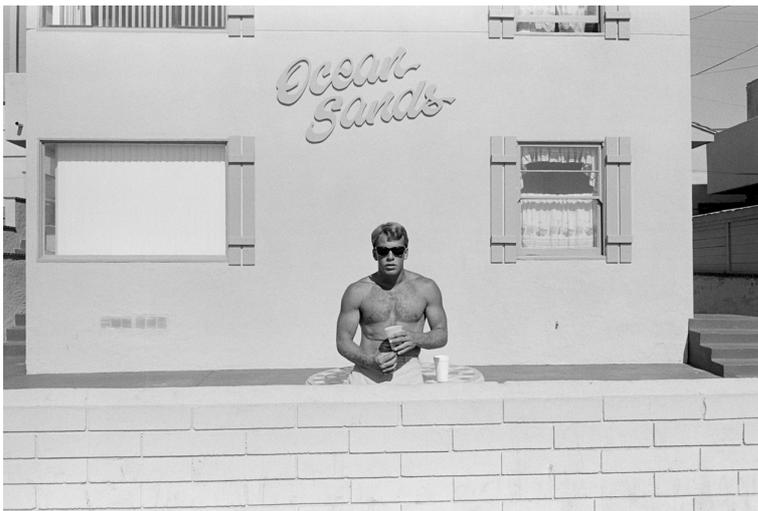
With the photographs of Waikiki Beach, one of the most famous beaches in the world, Mr. Wessel has captured a picture of American recreational activities in the 1970s and 1980s: surfing, sand and the pleasure culture. What first appears to be a commonplace holiday snapshot is revealed, when one views it closely, as a determination of borders. Waikiki, the best known district in Honolulu, which already then was a popular attraction for tourists, gets increasingly noticeable in the landscape photograph: the beach cafés, cement walkways and hotel chains cluttering parts of the beach are in juxtaposition to the sun worshipers, bathers and joggers as well as the palm trees, sandy beaches and the ocean. Henry Wessel figures out this next to one another and captures it with his Leica. It is thereby apparent that, beyond the free time fun, how culture encroaches on nature. Partially obvious, partially very subtle, the elements of this contradiction are put into the picture. Thereby, for example, palm trees that are photographed in large format leave a bitter taste in that garbage cans hide in what seems to be the shadows cast by a hotel complex that is not in the picture.

Henry Wessel's works are well represented in the collections of international institutions, such as the Art Institute Chicago, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Museum of Modern Art in New York City and in the FAIF (Fine Art Investment Fund) Collection. His works are on display worldwide in numerous solo exhibitions as well as in trendsetting group shows. Mr. Wessel's works are accompanied by a series of publications.

All exhibited works are on loan from the **Fine Art Invest Fund Collection** (www.faif.ch).



Henry Wessel, Pasadena CA, 1974
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Henry Wessel, Southern California CA, 1985
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