

presenting...

MASTERS OF LIGHT

by Abe Frajndlich

Spark Asso. Art Management is pleased to be representing a comprehensive set of photographs by Abe Frajndlich from *MASTERS OF LIGHT*, his 1990 solo exhibition at the Museum Ludwig (Cologne, Germany) which subsequently traveled throughout Germany via sponsorship from Eastman Kodak.

In this collection comprising of 43 original portraits of contemporaneous master photographers, ranging from Berenice Abbott, Robert Doisneau, and Ilse Bing to Arnold Newman and Cindy Sherman, Frajndlich brought out the faces that normally stood behind their cameras to be in front of his.

Individually, each portrait is telling in visual choreography and substantial in its physical form (measuring 30" x 40", unmounted). As a whole, this body of work is a portrait of the photography genre itself as it was going through integral moments of its late twentieth century history. First and foremost, *MASTERS OF LIGHT* presents a fascinating cross-section of photography of the time. Secondly, and perhaps unknowingly at the time of its making, the project captured "the changing of baton" from the generation of photographers whose practices were linked directly to the very beginning of the medium, to the next generation, many of whom became influential figures in contemporary art today. Frajndlich had arrived just in time—with a career spanning across the "gelatin silver" era, the rise of color photography, and finally to today's digital environment, he has been at once a keen observer and active participant. It is interesting to observe today how some of the younger subjects he chose at the time, such as Cindy Sherman and Gilbert & George, have continued to develop their niches in contemporary art through photography, further inspiring and influencing the generation that followed.

All color images in *MASTERS OF LIGHT* were printed on Kodak Ektacolor paper, one of the highest quality archival-grade substrates for color photography invented by Kodak and no longer in production today. The collection thus has, embedded in its DNA, the spirit of technological experimentation and advancement that pushed the medium's boundaries. More than two decades later, they retain their rich chromogenic qualities with no fading.

Around the time when *MASTERS OF LIGHT* was touring museums, Kodak's financial struggles began. The company endured legal disputes with Polaroid, suffered declines in photographic film sales, and was slow in transitioning to digital. By the time the show's tour came to a halt in 1997 due to Kodak's sponsorship discontinuation, digital photography had already begun its ascent, embraced by professional and casual photographers alike. Through *MASTERS OF LIGHT*, we are reminded of the moment that marked the beginning of the end of analog photography.

MASTERS OF LIGHT installation view at Museum Ludwig (Cologne, Germany), 1990 (left) and catalogue (right)



The present set was reconstituted in spring 2014 during archival work for the first time since it was put into storage more than two decades ago. As the exclusive agent to this vintage material, Spark Assoc. is working on organizing a public presentation of the entire set, along with the original 48-page color catalogue that accompanied the 1990 exhibit, one of only a few extant copies. For further information, contact Seol Park at <seol@sparkplusart.com>.

About Abe Frajndlich

The famous American “photographers’ photographer” Abe Frajndlich was born in Frankfurt am Main, Germany in 1946 shortly after the end of the Second World War. His parents were Polish Jews from Lodz who barely survived the war, and following their untimely deaths, Abe made his way to the US at the age of ten via Israel, France, and Brazil – by which time he had progressed through two mothers, three fathers, and seven languages. His teenage years were spent in Cleveland, Ohio. In the early 1970s, a time when the counter-culture was flowering in the U.S., Frajndlich dropped his pursuit of a Ph.D. in English Literature at Northwestern University and moved back to Cleveland. Without any particular notion of what he wanted to do, he began producing and selling photographs on Hessler Street for a few dollars apiece. It was in these unlikely circumstances that he made the acquaintance of Minor White, who was at the time head of the photography program at MIT. He followed his new mentor to Boston, where he worked in White’s studio and learned the “art of seeing.”

The friendship that developed between pupil and teacher reached its culmination in 1983, when Frajndlich published *Lives I’ve Never Lived*, a series of portraits he made of Minor White in the months before the latter’s death in 1976. What had begun as a personal project gradually grew into his life’s work; Abe Frajndlich began to “collect” and photograph photographers.

In 1988, Peter Howe (the picture editor at *Life* magazine at the time) asked Frajndlich to photograph the “Grandes Dames of Photography” – influential figures like Berenice Abbot, Barbara Morgan, Louise Dahl-Wolfe, and Ruth Bernhard. The project later expanded to include Aaron Siskind, Harry Callahan, Manuel Alvarez Bravo, Andreas Feininger, Alfred Eisenstaedt, and others. Six of these images were published in the 150th Anniversary of Photography issue of *Life*, in the fall of 1988.

It was Kodak who then picked it up, giving Frajndlich a two-year grant to go around the world to continue the series, picking and choosing his own list of significant photographers. The grant allowed Frajndlich to take pictures all over Europe, Japan, and across America. Two years later Frajndlich had completed dozens of portraits of seminal 20th-century photographers. An exhibition of 110 prints was mounted at the Museum Ludwig in conjunction with the international photo fair Photokina 1990. Hans-Georg Pospischil, the art director of the influential weekend magazine *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Germany’s equivalent of *New York Times Magazine*, designed the installation for the exhibition of Frajndlich’s 30” x 40” portraits of 55 photographers, along with examples of original works by each of them. The show was mounted on extraordinarily heavy 3.5’ x 10’ steel slabs that had weathered outdoors for six weeks, and then lit throughout with soft boxes that Frajndlich had used as his principal light source while photographing his subjects. No expense was spared in those heady days of the late 1980s and early 1990s. The show then traveled to five other museums in Germany and ended its tour in 1997 at the Fotogalerie Kulturamt Friedrichshain, in what had been East Berlin.

With a single-minded tenacity, Frajndlich continues to expand this body of work with portraits of fellow photographers, pop-cultural figures, intellectuals, and artists (the latest subject being Kara Walker) to the present day. He explores the ever puzzling relationship between actual persons and their legends via masterfully composed photographs, and the results of his continuing work are also presented in two of his later publications: *Portraits* (2000, published by Prestel) and *Penelope’s Hungry Eyes* (2011, published by Schirmer/Mosel).

Selected Collections

- Museum of Modern Art, NYC
- Whitney Museum of Art, NYC
- National Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C.
- George Pompidou Centre, Paris, France
- Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England
- Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, France

Select works from MASTERS OF LIGHT



Ilse Bing



Ruth Bernhard



John Baldessari



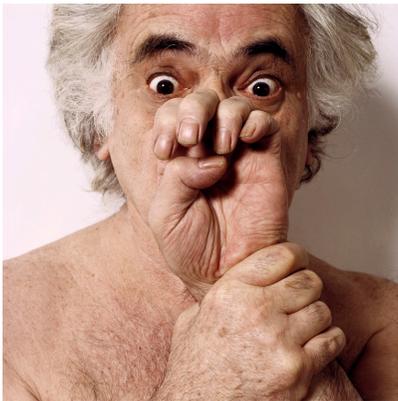
Gordon Parks



Aaron Siskind



Ted Allan



John Coplans



Gilbert & George



Dennis Hopper

List of portraits in this set:

John Baldessari
 Ruth Bernhard
 Ilse Bing
 Elliott Erwitt
 John Gutmann
 György Kepes
 Masahisa Fukase
 Berenice Abbott
 Willy Ronis
 Manuel Alvarez Bravo
 Robert Heinecken
 Daidoh Moriyama
 Robert Lebeck

John Coplans
 Horst P. Horst
 Lazlo Willinger
 Yasuhiro Ishimoto
 Robert Doisneau
 Ikko Narahara
 Gordon Parks
 Ted Allan
 Yousuf Karsh
 Arnold Newman
 Angus McBean
 Cindy Sherman
 Andreas Feininger

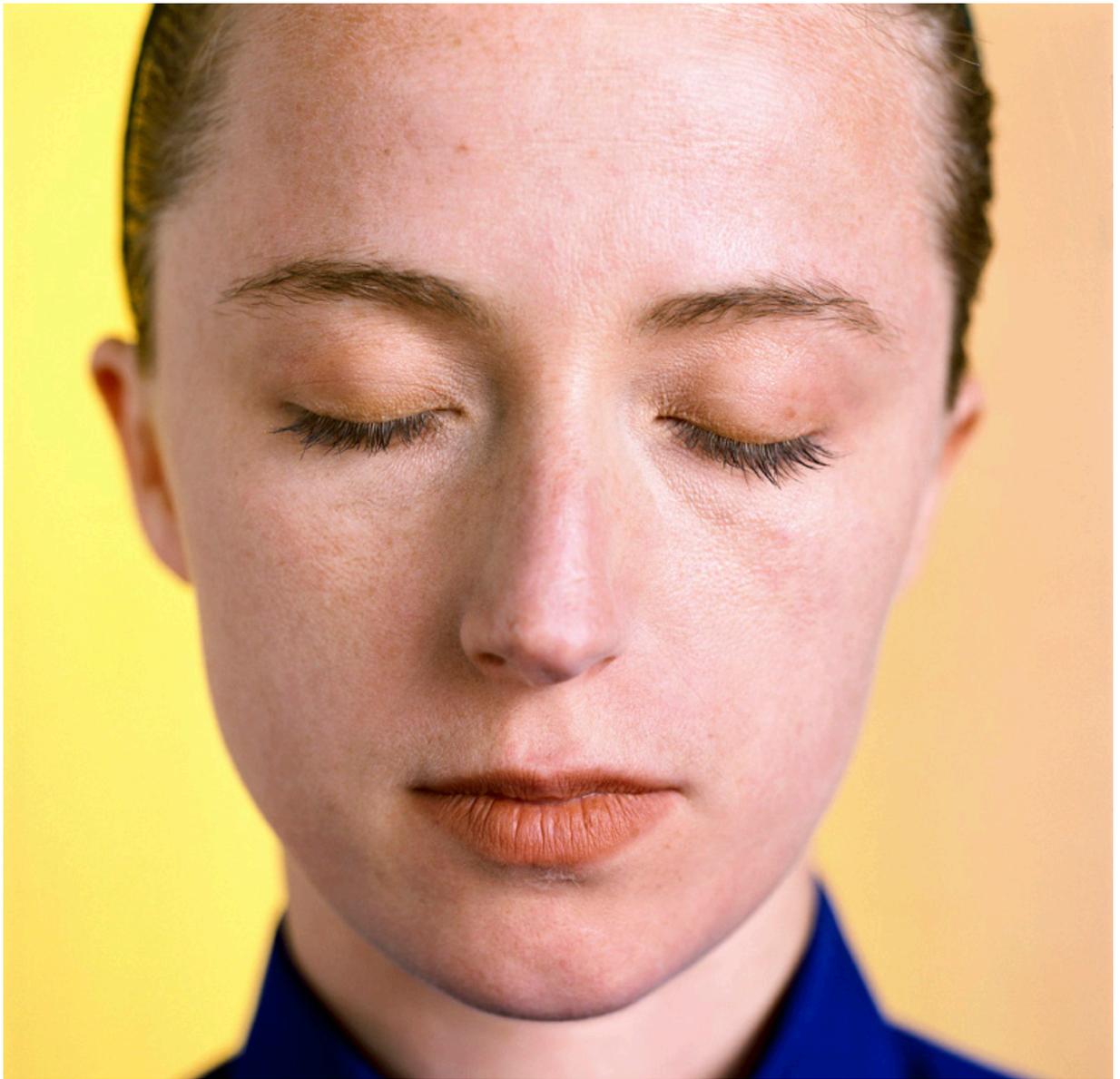
Aaron Siskind
 Frederick Sommer
 Lucas Samaras
 Beaumont Newhall
 Eikoh Hosoe
 Hiromi Tsuchida
 Edouard Boubat
 Gilbert & George
 Dennis Hopper
 Harry Callahan
 Alfred Eisenstaedt
 Hans Namuth
 Barbara Morgan

Marc Riboud
 Harold E. Edgerton
 Mario Giacomelli
 Norman Parkinson

Technical specifications

- 43 original prints in total
- Print type: Chromogenic Type C
- All printed between 1989-1990
- Photographed on Kodachrome 64 and printed on Ektacolor Plus
- All prints signed
- Substrate size is 30"x40"; image area 28"x28"
- Condition: Has been in artist's storage since 1990; pristine, untouched, unmounted, unframed

Select works from *MASTERS OF LIGHT* (cont.)



Cindy Sherman



Catalogue view, page 20



Arnold Newman



catalogue view, page 7

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ADDENDUM*Complete list of portraits from MASTERS OF LIGHT 1990 catalogue*

Arnold Newman	Duane Michals*	Yasuhiro Ishimoto	Imogen Cunningham*
Henri Cartier-Bresson*	Andre Kertesz*	Angus McBean	Dennis Hopper
Lucas Samaras	Robert Lebeck	Alexander Liberman	Daidoh Moriyama
Ilse Bing	Robert Doisneau	Barbara Morgan	Hans Namuth
Harold E. Edgerton	Edouard Boubat	John Coplans	Yousuf Karsh
John Gutmann	Humphrey Spender	Mario Giacomelli	Manuel Alvarez Bravo
Aaron Siskind	Marc Riboud	Harry Callahan	Frederick Sommer
Masahisa Fukase	Cindy Sherman	Hiroshi Yamazaki	Eikoh Hosoe
Willy Ronis	Horst P. Horst	Gordon Parks	Alfred Eisenstaedt
Ted Allan	Lazlo Willinger	Hiroshi Tsuchida	Erwin Fieger
Louise Dahl-Wolfe	Bill Brandt*	Norman Parkinson	Berenice Abbott
Robert Heinecken	Minor White*	Cornell Capa	Elliott Erwitt
Beaumont Newhall	John Baldessari	Robert Frank*	Ruth Bernhard
			Andreas Feininger

* These portraits can be assembled as contemporary gelatin silver prints.