



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

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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 photography in the Twentieth century whose strong personality blazed the trail for photographers of the last century. After spending his childhood in Argentina, in 1911 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, just as Leica was starting to manufacture its cameras, he began work as a press photographer for the news agency Press-Photo, and began experimenting with several techniques: photomontage, double exposures, collage. The photomontage became for him a way to open the image to "an immense opportunity to expand its means of artistic expression."

During this golden age of photo journalism, 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 retired 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 Avantgarde 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 Neussus.

His need to experiment and to explore new forms recreating macrocosms through enlargements of microcosms, pushed Heinz Hajek-Halke in the mid-50s to abandon the mechanical camera and focus his work in the darkroom and the camera obscura. Following in the footsteps of Man Ray and Laszlo Moholy Nagy, he demonstrated the validity of photography as a medium of expression through directly developing abstracted images from negatives he created.

With a series of "led accidents" through chemical reactions of acids, solvents or paint on materials like glass, textiles, liquids and plastic, he directly produced glass negatives without a camera.

He also studied the movement of structures built with flexible wires and their play with light, through which he could give a shape to images. A technique named "Lichtgrafik" (light graphics) by the German art historian and critic Franz Roh.

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.

Ten years before his death in Berlin in 1983, Heinz Hajek-Halke, without heirs, donated his complete body of works to his friend and photographer Michael Ruetz who, after precisely archiving the estate, gave 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 devoted him a major retrospective by Michael Ruetz.

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