

FRANZ ROH: Photography & Collage from the 1930s**SEPTEMBER 14—DECEMBER 22, 2006**

Ubu Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of more than 60 vintage photographs and 20 collages by **Franz Roh**, the German art historian, critic and photographer who not only defined the European avant-garde between the two World Wars, but who—as both critic and artist—influenced the collective trends seen in much photo-based work today. Ubu Gallery's exhibition presents works largely from the 1930s, most of which are on view for the first time, and illuminates the possibilities of expression Roh coaxed from the photographic mechanism, particularly the negative print and the photomontage. Ranging from motifs of the female nude to the urban landscape to Surrealist-inflected collage, the works in Ubu's exhibition attest to both Roh's theoretical engagement with photography, as well as his singular take on a number of the experimental techniques that would define much of the "New Vision" in photography.

Called the "Nero (*Ne-Roh*) of Criticism" by friends—notably Willi Baumeister, George Grosz, László Moholy-Nagy and Kurt Schwitters—Roh is well known for his 1925 landmark publication, *Post-Expressionism—Magic Realism: Problems of Recent European Painting*, an ambitious attempt to codify the art historical paradigm of his mentor, Heinrich Wölfflin, with a complete roll-call of the new objective painters. Roh coined the term "magic realism" to emphasize the return of these painters to realism after a decade or more of abstraction in art. "With the word 'magic' as opposed to 'mystic,' I wish to indicate that the mystery does not descend to the represented world, but rather hides and palpitates behind it..." Because objects had been lost to abstraction and were now being reclaimed by the magic realists, the world was being made newly available to the senses of the beholder.

In 1929, at the encouragement of Moholy-Nagy, Roh contributed to the theory of photography with the legendary book, *Foto-Auge: 76 Fotos der Zeit* ("Photo-Eye: 76 Photos of the Time"), produced in collaboration with the typographer Jan Tschichold. On its heels came *Fototek*, a prospective series of photography books to be written by Roh and designed by Tschichold. Only two issues were published—*Moholy-Nagy. 60 fotos* and *Aenne Biermann. 60 fotos*. A third monograph on El Lissitzky was conceived, but never realized. The first photographs by Roh to be published appeared in *Foto-Auge* and were two series of negative prints, a technique that allowed Roh to exaggerate the coldness and hardness of line in everyday forms. For Roh, the photographic image was to be a crystalline object whose referent was simultaneously within the world and beyond it. "Photography is not mere print from nature, for it is (mechanically) a turning of all color value, and even of depth in space, and structure in form. Nevertheless the worth of photography lies in the aesthetic value of nature."

The progressivism of Roh's work led to *Foto-Auge* being sequestered and confiscated and eventually to the artist's brief imprisonment—when he was forbidden to write by government censors—in 1933. However, he was granted a professorship in modern art at the University of Munich in 1946, a position he held for the remainder of his life. He continued to promote contemporary art in the post-war years and became president of AICA (International Association of Art Critics) in 1951. Franz Roh died on December 30, 1965 in Munich at the age of 75.

Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 11:00 AM–6:00 PM. Ubu Gallery is located at 416 East 59th Street between First Avenue and Sutton Place.

For further information or for visuals, please contact Esme Watanabe at (212) 753 4444 or info@ubugallery.com.

UBU GALLERY

416 East 59 Street New York NY 10022 Tel: 212 753 4444 Fax: 212 753 4470
Email: info@ubugallery.com www.ubugallery.com



Untitled, ca. 1930 Vintage gelatin silver print 9½ × 6 inches (23.2 × 15.2 cm)
 (ROH 56)