

Mitchell Albus Gallery is delighted to present an exhibition of photographs by Charles Henri Ford, called *Love and Jump Back*, opening Oct. 30, curated by the photographer Allen Frame. The show will include 50 photographs by Ford—a writer and artist whose production ranged from poetry and fiction to collage, film, and photography. He once said that Jean Cocteau was his mentor, that Cocteau “always said about himself that he was a poet in everything he did- a poet in fiction, a poet in movies. He was multimedia.” Ford followed that example of fluid creative output, but the real mentor in his life was the Russian painter Pavel Tchelitchew, 11 years older, with whom he lived for 25 years. The exhibition also includes drawings by Tchelitchew loaned by the Ford estate.

*Love and Jump Back* concentrates on the photographs Ford made from the early 1930’s, when he was living in France and Italy, through the 1950’s. Strongly influenced by the young Henri Cartier-Bresson’s work, Ford made street photos that explored the link between Surrealism and photography that Cartier-Bresson had forged- uncanny juxtapositions of artifice and reality, and observed figures in startling compressions of time and space. He also began to photo the circle of luminaries in his midst from the moment he left Mississippi where he had grown up as the son of a family that ran small hotels across the South. Before leaving for New York, and then Paris, he published a magazine called **Blues**, featuring such established writers as Ezra Pound, Gertrude Stein, and Sherwood Anderson. In New York, he became friends with Parker Tyler, and their racy experiences became the basis for their collaborative novel, **The Young and Evil**, published in Paris in 1933 and banned in the UK and US. In Paris, he was the lover of Djuna Barnes, who like Tchelitchew, was considerably older. In Morocco together, he typed up her novel **Nightwood**. Then returning to Paris, with a stop off to visit Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas at their country home, he became lovers with Tchelitchew, and they were together until Tchelitchew’s death in 1957.

Ford photographed Tchelitchew in many situations; the painter was a striking, aristocratic Russian, well-known in Paris for his ballet designs as well as his paintings, and a huge success when they moved to New York in the late 30’s. MOMA bought his painting *Hide-and-Seek* in 1942 and gave him a solo show. Ford also depicted their whole galaxy of Surrealist friends, including Leonor Fini, Andre Masson, Salvador Dali and Gala, Andre Breton, Yves Tanguy, and then in New York, many writers, including Ted Joans, Wallace Stevens, Carsons McCullers, Paul Bowles, William Burroughs, Isak Dinesen, and W. H. Auden.

He was friendly with other photographers of the era, including George Platt Lynes, Cecil Beaton, Carl Van Vechten, Herbert List, and James Van der Zee. Pictures by them and of them are in the exhibition, and in some cases, their pictures of Tchelitchew as well. Ford’s sister Ruth was a model and actress, photographed by Man Ray, Beaton, Scavullo, and Ford himself, and some of his many pictures of her are included.

Before Tchelitchew died, Ford became infatuated with a young Italian named Andrea Tagliabue, whom he photographed erotically and extensively. Herbert List also photographed Tagliabue, who was cast in a film by Marcel Carne in 1960, **La Terrain Vague**, and Ford became the still photographer. Some of his stills showing Tagliabue with Carne and cast are in the exhibition, along with List’s and Ford’s nudes.

*Love and Jump Back*, the title taken from Ford's unpublished memoir, is only the 4<sup>th</sup> major exhibition of Ford's photographs. His photographs of Italy were first shown at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London in 1954. He had a portrait show in 1993 at London's Akehurst Gallery. The photos from Italy were exhibited again at Leslie Tonkonow Gallery in New York in 1997, where they were paired with Allen Frame's photos of Italy in the 1990's. Then in 2006, in Ford's first museum show, a survey of all the photographs, including later ones in Greece, Nepal, and Crete, was presented at the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art at the University of Oklahoma in 2006.

Besides publishing the maverick **Blues**, Ford founded and edited the legendary art magazine **View** in 1942. He published 17 books of poetry, and had exhibitions not just of photography but also of his drawings, paintings, collages, poem posters, and sculptures. He knew the art circles of every decade from the 30's through the 90's. He introduced Andy Warhol to his first film camera and made the underground film **Johnny Minotaur** in Crete. But throughout his life he also made these photographs which have rarely been seen or published. *Love and Jump Back* revisits that body of work and Ford's uncanny vision and acute sense of style.

Many thanks to Indra Tamang for making all this material available. Tamang, who met Ford in Nepal in 1972, collaborated with him in photography and was an invaluable close friend and assistant until Ford's death in 2002.

Allen Frame