



International Center of Photography

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media release



Martin Munkacsi
[Tibor von Halmay and Vera Mahlke], ca. 1931
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Munkacsi's Lost Archive

On view from
January 16, 2009
through
May 3, 2009

Media Preview
January 15, 2009
9:30–11:00 am

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Hungarian photographer Martin Munkacsi (1896–1963) created dynamic and elegant images of models and athletes in motion. His unique style—inspiring photographers from Henri Cartier-Bresson to Richard Avedon—grew out of the context of 1930s photojournalism and required a combination of split-second timing and radical cropping. For Munkacsi, process was key. The recent rediscovery of his long-lost negative archive helps to clarify his working methods and uncover the secrets behind his most famous images. Drawn from the collection of over 4,000 glass negatives recently acquired by the International Center of Photography, this exhibition will include vintage and modern prints, as well as some original negatives, many still in their boxes with Munkacsi's handwritten annotations. The exhibition will be on view at ICP (1133 Avenue of the Americas at 43rd Street) from January 16 to May 3, 2009.

Martin Munkacsi began his career as a writer, publishing interviews and poems as well as sports coverage in several Budapest newspapers. In 1925, he started publishing his vibrant photographs of sporting events, while also operating a portrait studio. Moving to Berlin in 1928, he signed a contract with the publishing house Ullstein, and quickly became a regular contributor to *Die Dame*, *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, and other prominent photo weeklies, shooting sports, travel, and lifestyle pictures. In the early 1930s, he traveled to Algeria, Palestine, Egypt, Turkey, Liberia, and across Europe, and he covered the rise of Nazism in Germany. Munkacsi emigrated to the United States in 1934, bringing with him the negatives of his work from Hungary and Berlin. He continued to add to this archive while living in New York, preserving eight years of groundbreaking fashion images created for *Harper's Bazaar* as well as numerous lifestyle stories for *Ladies' Home Journal*. In the 1950s, Munkacsi worked on advertising campaigns and a series of nudes in addition to writing screenplays and directing a film. His last major project, a retrospective collection of photographs entitled *The Fabulous World of Munkacsi*, was not completed before his death.

Munkacsi's negative archive, crucial to understanding his work, disappeared after the photographer's death in 1963, and was presumed lost. Then, following the Munkacsi retrospective exhibition at the International Center of Photography in 2007, the cache of fragile glass plates unexpectedly reappeared, and was acquired for ICP's permanent collection with the generous assistance of the photographer's daughter, Joan Munkacsi. The staff of the International Center of Photography is currently scanning, cataloguing, and rehousing the negatives in order to make them available to researchers and to the public. This exhibition will provide the first public view of this incredible historical discovery, and allow viewers a chance to reevaluate one of the great modernist photographers.

This exhibition was organized by Erin Barnett, ICP Assistant Curator of Collections.

Munkacsi's Lost Archive is a part of *Extremely Hungary*, a yearlong festival of performances and exhibitions in New York City and Washington, D.C., throughout 2009. The festival is organized by New York's Hungarian Cultural Center to celebrate Hungary's contemporary arts and impact on American culture. Additional information and complete programming can be found at www.extremelyhungary.org.