

*Alfred Gescheidt, Photographs 1949 - 1979*

September 10 - October 24, 2009

Meet the artist: Thursday, September 10, 6 - 8 pm

Higher Pictures is pleased to announce an exhibition of vintage works by Alfred Gescheidt. The exhibition will include a selection of rare photographs ranging in date from 1949 through 1979. Once ubiquitous, through magazines, advertising, posters, postcards, album covers, book covers, and so forth, these maverick images have fallen largely out of sight in the last twenty years, but now return to view with both an intriguing sense of strangeness and a curious familiarity. This exhibition brings back to the fore a fascinating dimension of the postwar era's print media, popular culture, and visual sensibility, as well as a most vivid artistic personality - a photographer once described by the former New York Times photo editor John Durniak as "the Charlie Chaplin of the camera."

Rooted in traditional art practices and possessed of an idiosyncratic, at times hallucinogenic vision, simultaneously mocking and flattering American sensibilities, Alfred Gescheidt developed a rich body of work in a genre of photography that has few masters. His technical skills dazzled, even confounded fellow professionals. Through montage, collage, double exposure, retouching, re-photographing (always his own images, and in various states of manipulation), distorting lenses - shifts in scale, startling juxtapositions, hybrid forms and elastic anatomies, antic humor, a mischievous sense of eros, and a keen awareness of the complicity and duplicity of photography itself, Gescheidt rendered a compelling metamorphic pictorial world. There the mundane, commonplace, and conventional are transformed into witty, indiscreet, seductive, and certainly fantastic alternatives. His friend the cartoonist Rube Goldberg said to him, "You're a genius! Your pictures don't need captions." And indeed they zero in on the visual heart of the matter, needling the optic nerve.

Alfred Gescheidt was born in New York City on December 19, 1926. As a teenager he attended the High School of Music and Art and graduated with honors in 1944. He received a scholarship to the Art Students League where he studied with painters William Barnett and Henry Sternberg until he was drafted into the Navy in 1945, serving briefly in World War II. Upon completing his military service in 1946, he enrolled at the University of Mexico in Albuquerque on the GI Bill. There he studied with collage artist Ray Johnson and the painter Randall Davey. Introduced to the work of Edward Weston, Henri Cartier-Bresson, and Paul Strand while in New Mexico,

Gescheidt decided to become a photographer, and in 1949 transferred to the Art Center School in Los Angeles where he studied commercial photography with Will Connell and fashion photographer George Hoyningen-Huene. Later, he would also take Alexey Brodovitch's acclaimed design class. As a student, Gescheidt was something of a rebel, always taking his assignments in unexpected directions or finding something else to do altogether - to the occasional consternation of his instructors, though Hoyningen-Huene offered him work as a fashion photographer. Aspiring to be a photojournalist, he moved back to New York in 1950 to begin his career, starting out as a freelance photographer specializing in picture stories and illustration, and then under contract to Black Star, the legendary picture agency. His first published photographs appeared in Life magazine's "Speaking of Pictures" section. Journalism did not suit his temperament or imagination and in 1955 he opened his own studio and focused on advertising photography for leading ad agencies and his own work. In 1973, he published a photographic column in Oui magazine called, first, "Gescheidt's World" and then, simply, "Gescheidt,"- which means, in German, smart, witty, clever.

In addition to the aforementioned publications, Alfred Gescheidt's work has appeared in the New York Times, New York Magazine, Newsweek, Esquire, Ladies' Home Journal, Woman's Day, Mademoiselle, Modern Photography, Popular Photography, Parade, People, The Saturday Evening Post, Time, TV Guide, Look, Colliers, This Week, Pageant and numerous others. Gescheidt is the author of *30 Ways to Quit Smoking*, published by Doubleday in 1964, dozens of iconic postcards, posters, and album covers from the 1950's to the present. His work is in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art and the International Center of Photography.

For further information please contact Kim Bourus at (212) 249-6100.

[Upcoming Exhibition](#)

Doug Dubois - *All the Days and Nights*, October 29 - December 5