

PACE/MACGILL GALLERY

F R E D E R I C K S O M M E R

Frederick Sommer (1905-1999) was born in Angri, Italy, grew up in Brazil, and studied at various institutions there prior to enrolling as a graduate student at Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y., from which he received his MA in Landscape Architecture in 1927.

During the early 1930s Sommer began teaching design, drawing, and watercolor in Tucson. Following a meeting with Alfred Stieglitz in 1935 and an introduction to Edward Weston a year later, Sommer began to explore photography's relationship to other artistic mediums. He replaced his smaller cameras with an 8 x 10 view camera and began photographing the people and environs of Prescott, Ariz., where he lived. Already versed in the literary and philosophical sources of surrealism well in advance of a 1941 meeting with Max Ernst, Sommer's understanding of its tenants deepened on that occasion and further supported Sommer's lifelong incorporation of the surreal into his art. His willingness to experiment on both technical and conceptual levels resulted in a legacy of unorthodox images: horizonless desert landscapes, out-of-focus nudes, cameraless abstractions, cut-paper photographs, and collages of found images. In addition to friends and family, his subjects include amputated limbs, doll parts, and animal carcasses.

Sommer's work has been presented in over 100 solo and group exhibitions worldwide since 1933, and tributes celebrating the centennial anniversary of his birth have been organized by the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City; the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence; the Snite Museum of Art at the University of Notre Dame, Ind.; the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque; and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

He received numerous accolades during his lifetime, including a Guggenheim Fellowship (1974); an Honorary PhD from the University of Arizona (1979); the Friends of Photography Distinguished Career Award (1982); and Arizona State University's College of Fine Arts Award (1985). Sommer was named Artist of the Year by the University of Bridgeport, Conn. in 1985 and was presented with the Arizona Governor's Arts Award in 1987.

Sommer's work belongs to many public collections in the United States and abroad, including the Art Institute of Chicago; the Center for Creative Photography, Tucson; the George Eastman House, Rochester, N.Y.; the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; the Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena; the Princeton University Art Museum, N.J.; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the Tokyo Fuji Art Museum; and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Monographs of Sommer's work include *Frederick Sommer* (1968); *Venus, Jupiter and Mars: The Photographs of Frederick Sommer* (1980); *Frederick Sommer at Seventy-Five, A Retrospective* (1980); *Words/Images, Frederick Sommer* (1984); *Frederick Sommer: Selected Texts and Bibliography* (1995); and *The Art of Frederick Sommer: Photography, Drawing, Collage* (2005).

The Frederick and Frances Sommer Foundation is located in Prescott, Ariz.