

# PACE/MACGILL GALLERY

## HARRY CALLAHAN: NATURE

November 30, 2006 through January 6, 2007

*Gallery hours: Tuesday-Friday, 9:30-5:30; Saturday, 10:00-6:00.*

Pace/MacGill is pleased to present an exhibition of nature studies by Harry Callahan. Selected from Callahan's extensive work in this genre, the twelve intimately scaled prints in the exhibition were assembled into a special series by the artist in the early 1990s. Over the years, Callahan printed his pictures in various sizes but, after he had time to reflect on the presentation of this body of work, determined that this was the size in which he would like the photographs to be seen.

Over the course of a career that spanned six decades, Callahan made nature one his primary themes, continually finding new ways of seeing trees, weeds, snow, and surf. Ranging in date from 1941 to 1991, the images in the exhibition typify the artist's innovative approach to these subjects as well as his stated desire to "capture a moment that people can't always see." A number of works, for example, provide a striking description of surface detail on natural forms, while others reduce those forms into compelling abstract patterns and linear rhythms. Also remarkable in this group is the elegant union of textures and contours created in *Eleanor, Aix-en-Provence, France, 1958*, which superimposes the nude silhouette of the artist's wife onto a deep landscape background. Consistent throughout the series are the simplicity and technical refinement that distinguish Callahan's style and secure his place among the foremost American photographers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Harry Callahan (1912-1999) came to photography as an untrained amateur in 1938 while working for the Chrysler Motor Parts Corporation. It was a series of lectures by Ansel Adams at the Detroit Photo Guild in 1941 that sparked Callahan's lifelong passion for the medium and its creative possibilities. The following year, he visited Alfred Stieglitz at An American Place in New York and saw the portraits of Georgia O'Keefe that would inform many of the photographs he later made of his wife Eleanor. As early as 1946, Callahan's prodigious talent was recognized by both the Museum of Modern Art in New York (which then exhibited his work for the first time) and László Moholy-Nagy who invited him to teach photography at the Institute of Design in Chicago (formerly known as the New Bauhaus). Callahan's pioneering experiments with extreme tonal contrast, multiple exposures, and camera movement during this period suggest the influence of the Institute's modernist aesthetic. After a 15-year tenure in Chicago, Callahan moved to the Rhode Island School of Design where he established the photography department and taught until

his retirement in 1977. Working in both black-and-white and in color, Callahan's constant exploration of new subjects and techniques encompassed portraiture, architecture, landscape, and street photography in the United States, Europe, and South America.

Among the scores of solo and group exhibitions featuring the photography of Harry Callahan, career retrospectives have been held at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (1976-77); Centre Pompidou, Paris (1991); the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (1996-97); and the Center for Creative Photography, Tucson (2006). His work has been the subject of over a dozen monographic publications since 1961, and can be found in the permanent collections of most major museums around the world, including the Art Institute of Chicago; the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; the George Eastman House, Rochester; the High Museum of Art, Atlanta; the National Museum of Photography, Copenhagen; the Maison Europeenne de la Photographie, Paris; the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art New York; the Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago; the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; and the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.