

## ERWIN BLUMENFELD - CHASING DREAMS

### Experimental Nudes 1936 - 1955

October 11th - November 30th, 2019



*“I’ve never had time for realities, I was always entangled in illusions”.*

*- Erwin Blumenfeld*

*Chaussee 36* is delighted to present an exhibition dedicated to Erwin Blumenfeld’s experimental approach to nude photography.

One of the most influential photographers of the twentieth century, Erwin Blumenfeld (1897-1969) is most renowned for the work he produced after emigrating to New York in 1941 where he embraced a career as a fashion photographer. Yet he created a varied and extensive oeuvre, formulating drawings, collages, portraits and nudes during his time living in Europe - in his home city of Berlin, then Amsterdam and finally in Paris.

The exhibition *Chasing Dreams* highlights Blumenfeld’s singularity which was structured upon two eternal chases: the drive to innovate and the desire of the feminine. Indeed, he was endlessly enchanted by the female form - in his professional career and, more diligently, in the personal realms of his dreamscape. Viewed through a purely technical focus Erwin Blumenfeld was a master of solarisation, multiple exposure, shadow and mirror-image. The influence of the Dadaists, Surrealists and Man Ray is evident in his work, fuelling his imagination whilst living in Paris in the mid-1930’s.

Far from the early, naturalistic nudes he produced in Amsterdam or the highly-stylised *Vogue* covers for which he was so reputed for in New York, these forty mainly vintage prints examine the artist’s fascination with the female form and reflect upon his ongoing experimentation in its depiction. They are personally intimate studies of the feminine that were neither commissioned nor exhibited during his lifetime.

**“The nude doesn’t simply represent the body, but relates it, by analogy, to all structures that have become part of our imaginative experience”.** *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form*, 1956. - Kenneth Clark

*Chasing Dreams* is an embodiment of these dualities. Blumenfeld's nudes convey an erotic tension but are not sexualised - rather, they are the results of a vision driven by his dreams rather than by his desires. The female body is presented in a staged fashion but the models remain innominate and commune the essence of the feminine rather than individual character. The photographs are a projection of Blumenfeld's illusory mindset, displaying intricate patterns and motifs of light & shadow where anonymity prevails, reinforced through close-up photography and the cropping of the models' heads.

As such *Chasing Dreams* portrays a poetic representation of his quixotic visions, a physical manifestation of a lifetime of photographic innovation and of the unrelenting chimera that obsessed him. Here the common theme is the stark contrast between his acute technical acumen, forged through hours spent in the dark room and the sublime sensuality of the feminine that haunted his subconscious, and how Blumenfeld brought this contrast into focus. A man tormented by war, fascinated by technology, enraptured in beauty and beholden to his inner self, ultimately driven forth by his expertise and his dreams on an eternal chase.

This exhibition curated by *Chaussee 36* has been organised in close collaboration with the *Erwin Blumenfeld Estate*, New York. *Chaussee 36* would like to thank Yvette Blumenfeld Georges Deeton, Simone Klein for her expertise regarding these vintage prints, the *Howard Greenberg Gallery* and *Galerie Kicken* for lending us these artworks.

Chausseestraße 36 | 10115 Berlin | Chaussee36.photography | Do - Sa 13 bis 18 Uhr | Thur - Sat 1 to 6pm