

CASEMORE --- KIRKEBY



Stasis, Corridors 1969-1980

Steve Kahn

March 10 - May 26, 2018

Opening Reception: March 10, 2018 6-8pm

Casemore Kirkeby is pleased to present the opening of *Stasis, Corridors: 1969-1980*, an exhibition spanning several bodies of work and photographic approaches by Steve Kahn between 1969 and 1980. The exhibition acts as timeline covering a critical point of evolution for Kahn as a photographer moving on from documentary photography in an effort to expand upon the concerns of traditional photography, leading Kahn to further document events within his own constructions. Notable transitions within this time period appear as: Early Work, Stasis, The Hollywood Suites, Triptychs/Quadrants, Door/Window Constructions, and conclude with Corridors in 1980.

Kahn was part of generation of photographers coming out of Los Angeles in the 1970s that included Robert Heinecken, Ilene Segalove and Jerry McMillan, among others. They brought a conceptual and collage approach to photography, breaking away from the pure documentary impulse toward an interest in how photographs create meaning. As part of a pivotal moment in the history of contemporary photography, Kahn's transition from the role of observer into the conceptual realm of abstraction is apparent through the directional concerns of the work hand selected by Kahn for *Stasis, Corridors*. For Kahn, at first using the camera as a tool

for pure documentation, the process quickly became an entrance into a void of 'no exit', or the way a picture could act as a conceptual surrogate for an object well beyond the immediate act of looking. The found constructs determined the suggestive field of perception, and ultimately a deeper interpretation of space, form, and content alone.

Through this meditation Kahn moved onto *Stasis* (1973-1974) a collection of 22 black and white photographic constructions resulting in a monograph of the same title. *Stasis* marked the evolution of a type of photographic freedom for Kahn, with the allowance to risk shutter speed, exposure and content. The result superimposed time on the element of place, challenging a static photograph with an irreversible capture that resisted a chronologic read of the work. "*I thought I'd let the camera record an event over time -- an event of which I established the limits. In that formal arena, subjective activity would play out its scripts. Perhaps I could learn from the experience. From this work I created a portfolio of images of a blurred reality. This marked my departure from traditional photographic concerns.*" (SK)

By the mid-1970s Kahn accepted a role as commercial photographer for a bondage magazine, his work taking place in sporadic, transient motel rooms. Addressing the idea of containment and isolation lead Kahn into a further theoretical realm concerning the interior construction and degenerative state in the physical placement of wall treatments, windows and doorways. This discovery overlapped Kahn's earlier interest in the risk of photographic abstraction, leading him to "explore the contained through the container". These were straight forward, formalized photographs direct in their resolution, resulting in a deep expose of constrictive methodicalness on Kahn's part. Elements seen in the pictures suggest the theatrical formation found in isolation. While the camera, acting as part of the production in its obvious limitation, confirmed a restrictive scope and scale through simple image collection.

The dichotomy Kahn had captured through expanding on the crossover of event and object by the second half of the 1970s encouraged a move in the way of direct photographic application at a lifelike-scale in graphic space through Kahn's subsequent body titled *Triptychs/Quadrants* and *Door/Window* constructions. Shooting segments of the rooms in Polaroid, and rephotographing each exposure with 35mm, a physical reassembly of graphic space began to develop, "*By re-assembling the space two-dimensionally, using these prints, I created something new, consisting of the original information, yet quite skewed. This challenged me to re-think how I perceived the space initially and to consider what assumptions I brought to the problem.*" (SK). The reimagining and abstracting of space coupled with the presentation of Kahn's photographic approach of the transience at large scale orchestrated a void in photographic terms, while continuing his objective to resolve the issue of traditional photography in a way that was radically conceptual for the moment.

The final body of work during these formative years reaffirmed Kahn's interest in information collection through photographic process. *Corridors* (1979-1980) was originally produced as quadrants of the same image, operating as conjunctive elements in Kahn's architectural syntax. In the language of traditional photography, Kahn photographed the hallways in color print Polaroid and copied each onto 4 x 5 transparency material.

Stasis, Corridors 1969-1980 is the final exhibition built during Kahn's lifetime and exposes a distinct trajectory of Kahn's dedication to process, to record a conceptual void through the admittedly familiar, to circumvent photographic strategy by challenging the medium through experimentation.

Steve Kahn (born Los Angeles, 1943-2018)

Kahn's works are in the collections of the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Los Angeles County Museum of Contemporary Art (LACMA); the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the Houston Museum of Fine Arts; the High Museum, Atlanta; and the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, among others. His monograph *The Hollywood Suites 1974-76* was published by Nazraeli Press in 2014 and a publication of his photographs of chemical plants made in the 1980s is forthcoming in 2018. Kahn will be the focus of a retrospective exhibition at The de Young Fine Art Museum, San Francisco, September 2018.

Location: Casemore Kirkeby, 1275 Minnesota Street, #102, San Francisco, CA 94107

Show Title: *Stasis, Corridors 1969-1980*

Exhibition Dates: March 10 - April 28 2018

Opening Reception: Saturday, March 20, 6-8pm

Gallery Hours: Tuesday - Saturday, 11am - 6pm

For press inquiries, please contact Julie Casemore at (415) 851-9808 or info@casemorekirkeby.com