

RUIZ-HEALY ART

Latinx, Latin America, & Texas Contemporary Art



Kati Horna, *Subida a la Catedral*, 1938 / 1960

Kati Horna: In Motion

Ruiz-Healy Art is pleased to present *Kati Horna: In Motion*, a solo exhibition of works by Hungarian/Mexican photographer Kati Horna at our New York City gallery. This is Horna's first solo exhibition with the gallery and her first solo exhibition at a gallery in New York City. *Kati Horna: In Motion* will open on Thursday, March 9, 2023, with an opening reception from 6:00 - 8:00 PM at Ruiz-Healy Art, 74 East 79th Street, 2D, New York City, New York, 10075.

Kati Horna (1912-2000) was born to an affluent Jewish family in Budapest. Throughout her life Horna would go on to live in and subsequently flee Hungary, Germany, France, and Spain. In her later life Horna would go on to state, "I fled Hungary, I

fled Berlin, I fled Paris, and I left everything behind in Barcelona...It's for vagabonds like me. Because my clothes got torn on the route, I selected photography." The violence, danger, and injustice of the interwar period profoundly influenced Horna's ideology, with photography gifting her a vehicle for emancipation.

In the early 1930s, Kati Horna left her home in Budapest, first for Berlin and then for Paris, honing her skills alongside other avant-garde artists of her generation. Horna's black-and-white photographs utilized Surrealist narratives and featured experimental techniques, unsettling photomontages and superimposition, to further highlight emotion. Art historian Natalia Tiberio states, "In Paris, Kati Horna took inspiration from the French flâneurs and started to capture everyday life in the city – the cafes and their customers, streets, and neighborhoods. There was a particular place that became a great source of interesting photographs: the flea markets. She would drive her lens to objects left behind or that didn't quite fit displays, creating dreamy, surrealist scenes." Works from her 1933 series *Marchés aux puces, Paris* are great examples of her unique eye and mischievous spirit.

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From a young age Horna was politically active in left wing causes, and her connections to these circles led Horna to Spain, where she documented the Spanish Civil War. While in Spain Horna photographed the war's effects on the lives of ordinary citizens, primarily on women and children. The outbreak of World War II in 1939 forced Horna to seek refuge in Mexico City. Horna spent the rest of her life in Mexico, her adopted motherland, alongside a close-knit community of exiled European artists, including French Surrealist poet Benjamin Péret, English painter Leonora Carrington, and Spanish painter Remedios Varo.

Kati Horna's oeuvre exemplifies the beginning of the modern era of female emancipation and the Surrealist movement that would forever inspire the world of art over the course of the 20th century. While covering the Spanish Civil War, alongside her childhood friend Robert Capa who predominantly profiled the front lines of war, Horna shot the conditions of war on women and children. Kati Horna's surrealist-inspired images of the conflict are seen in *Subida a la Catedral, Barcelona* (1937). Horna transformed the way people viewed war through "gendered witnessing," a strategy she utilized to capture a female perspective on the notion of war. Her photographs were published in Spanish anarchist magazines, and for one of the first times in history revealed to the public the genuine effects war had on some of society's most vulnerable.

In her 1962 series *Oda a la Necrofilia*, Horna captures a woman grieving the death of a loved one. This was a difficult time for Horna personally, as her husband José Horna was gravely ill. Published in the experimental magazine *S.nob*, led by the prominent writer Salvador Elizondo, *Oda a la Necrofilia* captures Horna's friend and collaborator artist Leonora Carrington. The image shows Leonora nude, holding a lit candle with a white mask propped on a pillow on an empty bed, recalling the tradition of the death mask, in which an imprint of the face of the deceased is made as a memento. *Serie Muñecas, México* reveals surrealist images of broken or discarded dolls and mannequins, a personal memory that Horna took with her from her time photographing the Spanish Civil War. Art historian and curator Michel Otayek shares that "Horna's experiences of the war in Spain left a deep imprint in her later work. Some of her most personal series explore themes of disillusion, displacement, and loss, oftentimes with a refined sense of irony that can be traced back to the satirical, anti-fascist work of her early years in Europe." Photographs such as *Portrait of Leonora Carrington* (1960), *Remedios Varo* (1960), *Beatriz Sheridan* (1962), and *Remedios Varo and Gunther Gerzo at the Wedding of Leonora Carrington and Chiki Weisz* (1946) depict Kati's friends, collaborators, and artists whose careers flourished in Mexico, and shows the sitters in a relaxed pose. Out of their art would come the legacy left by these Surrealist artists that immigrated to Mexico, running from the horrors of World War II.

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About The Artist:

Kati Horna (1912-2000) was born and raised in Budapest, Hungary and moved to Berlin at the age of nineteen. In her twenties, she became an apprentice for the notable photographer József Pesci and took classes on photography. She moved to Paris in 1933, where her interest in Surrealism continued, and then to Spain in 1937, where she captured scenes of the Spanish Civil War. In 1938 she returned to Paris but had to flee again just a year later, after the Nazi occupation of France. Horna fled for the last time to Mexico, and fell in love with the country. In Mexico she worked for a handful of magazines on graphics, editing, and photography, and later taught photography at the Escuela de Diseño at the Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico City. Horna worked as a photographer for such publications as *Nosotros*, *Mujeres*, *Mexico This Month*, and *Diseño*. In 1962 she created the series *Fetiché (Fetish)* for the influential yet short-lived magazine *S.nob*. Between 1958 and 1968 she was the photography editor for *Mujeres*, a publication dedicated to women writers, artists, and other cultural agents.

Her work is in the permanent collections of institutions including the Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain; CRAI Biblioteca Pavelló de la Republica, Universitat de Barcelona, Spain; the Getty Museum, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX; and the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.