

CASEMORE KIRKEBY



Polaroids: Steve Kahn

October 24 - December 19, 2020

Opening Saturday, October 24, 2020, 12-5pm (by appointment)

Casemore Kirkeby is pleased to present a selection of previously unseen *Polaroids* by Steve Kahn (1943-2018) taken while residing in Los Angeles during the years of 1974-77. These polaroids are equal studies and complete works demonstrating Kahn's early conceptual approach to photography and providing the impetus for his notable bodies of work: *The Hollywood Suites* (interiors and nudes) and Kahn's later body of work, *Corridors*.

These images were made at a time (1974-77) when other artists were starting to document events within their own constructions. I didn't feel I could continue working as a street shooter any more. Apparently others were experiencing similar needs to expand on the traditional concerns of photography.

*For the black and white work I did in *The Hollywood Suites*, I used a vintage Polaroid model 195 camera with on-camera flash, so I could see what I was doing immediately, making my next image a response to what I saw -- an abstraction of the event, yet concrete enough as a thing in itself. Back at the studio I copied these prints onto high-speed 35mm film, developing it to maximize a crisp grain structure. There wasn't much info in the original Polaroids and the sharp grain served to hold the surface...so, once again, it allowed me to play with the balance of content and formalism. Other than the process as described, I didn't do any special manipulations of the images. With one exception: I tried a bit of intervention. I added some graphic elements to a few doors, using tape, string, rope and black yarn to "draw" on the walls themselves. Those elements became part of the image I then photographed. They were called 'Bound Doors'.*

Otherwise I rarely altered the walls or curtains, or posters or framed lithos. They were photographed as I found them. Flat white plaster walls in need of repair and paint. These were the lowest common denominators of such living spaces.

On one occasion, the model didn't show up, and I found that I could explore the same issues by photographing the room itself - without the models. This discovery led to the next body of work: The Hollywood Suites (windows, mirrors, and doors). These were studies of the room - exploring the contained (content/me) through explorations of the container itself (the room) and how one takes on the nature of the other.

Essentially, the container became more interesting than the content it contained. I photographed the walls, windows, mirrors and doors. The articulated interface between inside and out, a perfect vehicle for what I was exploring coincidentally in psychoanalysis. I did that for another year. At some point I started focusing on the common indicators of a defined space, those elements that define for us an enclosed arena, like a room - corners, floor/wall/ceiling junctures. I would photograph parts of a room that way, in pieces, and then try to re-assemble the elements into something marginally credible, thereby exploring what it takes for us to conceptually accept that what we are seeing is, at least as a reference, real. Whereas in fact, the connection was fictitious.

-Steve Kahn, 2012

Steve Kahn (b. 1943, Los Angeles, CA, d. 2018, Berkeley, CA). 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. Kahn was the focus of a retrospective exhibition at The de Young Fine Art Museum, San Francisco, in September 2018.

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

Show Title: Polaroids: Steve Kahn

Exhibition Dates: October 24 - November 21, 2020

Opening Reception: Saturday, October 24, 12-5pm (by appointment)

Gallery Hours: Thursday - Saturday, 12pm-5pm (by appointment)

For press inquiries, please contact the gallery (415) 851-9808 or info@casemorekirkeby.com