

FREDERICK SOMMER:

Photography, Drawing, Collage

8 June - 28 July



Faggionato Fine Art is pleased to announce their forthcoming exhibition of the American artist Frederick Sommer (1905 – 1999).

Sommer’s celebrated photographic work will be shown in conjunction with his drawing and collage, displaying this artist’s innovative aesthetic sensibilities through the context of his wider artistic practice. Employing a variety of expressive approaches and experimenting with various media concurrently, Sommer’s work can be seen as *“an extraordinary model of the aesthetic mind – an image, at once, of exploration, imagination and integration”*ⁱ.



Often linked to the Surrealists, Sommer shared the sentiment that ‘choice and chance structure art and nature’ⁱⁱ.

In his photography and collage, Sommer makes use of found objects – often trivial or mundane items - and transforms them through careful construct and correlation, imbuing them with new layers of meaning and open-ended interpretations/ associations.

The photograph Jack Rabbit (1938) is at once an image of decay as of regeneration. Decomposing objects held a particular fascination for Sommer, who commented on how things “beautifully exchange characteristics from one to another”ⁱⁱⁱ in the climatic conditions of the Arizona desert.

In the process of creating a work, Sommer looks for connections: he describes how items he was rearranging would ‘open up’, indicating a structural simpatico^{iv}.

The characteristic appropriation and (re) assemblage of items, structured in precise but unexpected ways, is fundamental to the expressive power of Sommer’s work. By utilising appropriated items – objects with histories –he creates works that are deeply allusive, images at once recognizable and yet unfamiliar. His images “prod us to look at reality with a new objectivity and intensity, through eyes unclouded by sentiment, prejudice, or traditional notions of beauty”^v

Even with the supposedly straightforward subject of landscape, Sommer sets his frame unconventionally, choosing to disregard the horizon line and usual vanishing points.

His innovative view has a flattening effect, and brings out the patterning in the formal structures of the land. It is a perspective that “encourages a more speculative viewing of the landscape, defined more by the idea of contemplation than by geographic description”^{vi}



In his drawing Sommer similarly reflects a lively process of exploration in which he seems to consciously liberate his technique. Confident, luminous images dance across the black paper of his glue drawings, teetering between abstraction and figuration.

The artist’s skill lies in his technical brilliance, his understanding and ability to manipulate structural relations, to create a formal coherency between seemingly disparate elements.



Public Collections

Sommer’s work is included in public collections in the United States and abroad:

The Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois; The Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, Arizona; George Eastman House, Rochester, New York; The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C; The Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena, Colorado; The Princeton University Art Museum, New Jersey; The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco; The Tokyo Fuji Art Museum, Tokyo; The Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Gallery Hours:

Monday -Friday 10.00 am – 6.00 pm

For further information and images please contact Stephanie Kirkness, info@faggionato.com

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ⁱ Davis, Keith F, *Living Arts: the sources of Frederick Sommer’s Work*, in *The Art of Frederick Sommer: Photography, Drawing, Collage*, Yale University Press, p21

ⁱⁱ Frederick Sommer, *quoted in The Art of Frederick Sommer: Photography, Drawing, Collage*, Yale University Press, p180

ⁱⁱⁱ Frederick Sommer, *quoted on fredericksommer.org*, (Frederick & Frances Sommer Foundation website)

^{iv} fredericksommer.org, (Frederick & Frances Sommer Foundation website)

^v Davis, Keith F, *Living Arts: the sources of Frederick Sommer’s Work*, in *The Art of Frederick Sommer: Photography, Drawing, Collage*, Yale University Press, p18

^{vi} fredericksommer.org, (Frederick & Frances Sommer Foundation website)