

FRITZ HENLE
CROSSROADS
CHINA & JAPAN
1934-1936

May 12th - June 25th, 2022

Opening Reception
Thursday, May 12th, 2022, 6-8pm
Show Catalogue Available

Image: **Fritz Henle**, *The Great Wall of China*
1934-36, Gelatin Silver Print, 9 3/4 x 7 1/2 in.



Throckmorton Fine Art is pleased to offer an exhibit of over forty vintage photographs of China and Japan, taken between 1934 and 1936 by the celebrated photographer, Fritz Henle. The photographs are from Henle's personal archive and of great importance and rarity. Shooting in the relatively unrecorded reaches of East Asia in his early career distinguished Henle's body of work from that of his contemporaries. Few European photographers of this time in history had access to pre-WWII Asia and Henle's assignments as a publicity photographer for the Lloyd Triestino Shipping line offered him that opportunity. There, Henle recorded the physical and cultural conditions of an ancient world on the brink of tumultuous change.

Henle was born in Germany in 1909. He graduated from the Bavarian State Institute for Photography in 1930. Shortly afterwards, he traveled to China and Japan, being one of the few foreign photographers to work in East Asia between the two world wars. In China, Henle captured the young republic while it was still traditional. Later came the carnage of World War II and the ensuing forced modernization of the country. Henle's photographs are natural, capturing a long-gone moment in time. The photographs have an endearing aura of peacefulness.

Henle's photographs of Japan also have a realism, capturing traditional Japan just before it, too, would be hurled into modernity. Henle's work in Japan led to his first published book of photographs: *This is Japan: Folk and Landscape*, published in 1937.

On the eve of World War II, Henle traveled to Mexico. He befriended and photographed many artists, including Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera. But Henle also photographed peasants and laborers, as well as the landscapes of Mexico. This work led in 1946 to the publication of his prized book: *Mexico: 64 Photographs*. From Mexico, Henle moved to New York where he became one of the earliest and most recognized contributors to *Life*. The magazine would publish more than fifty photo essays by Henle, and his photographs sometimes graced the cover of the magazine. Henle also worked in the fashion industry, doing work for *Holiday*, *Town & Country*, *Elle*, *Mademoiselle*, and *Harper's Bazar*. His innovation was in taking models out of the studio and photographing them outdoors.

Henle was a purist and insisted on printing his own work. He summarized the keys to his success: "Correct exposure, exact development, careful enlarging." Henle was also a careful conservator and thanks to his stewardship, we still have today the compelling photographs he took nearly a century ago in China and Japan.

Tirelessly prolific, Henle published nineteen books of his work, from his first *This is Japan* in 1936 to *Casals* in 1975. His photographs were published over the decades in countless magazines; among them *Life*, fashion editorials shot for *Holiday*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Mademoiselle*, *Town & Country*, among many others. Numerous one person exhibitions beginning with *This is Japan* in Tokyo in 1936, helped to establish him as a creative visionary with an exceptional technique, a keen sense of striking composition, and a determination to capture the beauty of life.

He became known as "Mr. Rollei" for his devotion to the Rolleiflex medium square format camera throughout his career. Fritz Henle, who died in 1993 was arguably one of the best-known photographers in America by the mid 1950's. Fritz Henle, has been described by the late photo historian, Helmut Gerensheim, as the "last of the great classical photographers".



Top: **Fritz Henle**
Man with Riksha, Peking
1934-36

Gelatin Silver Print
10 3/8 x 13 5/8 in.

Left: **Fritz Henle**
Zen, Priest, Japan
1934-36

Gelatin Silver Print
mounted on Board
14 x 13 in.

Right: **Fritz Henle**
Man with Riksha, Peking
1934-36

Gelatin Silver Print
10 3/8 x 13 5/8 in.



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