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**Aaron Siskind**  
**T R A N S F O R M A T I O N**  
Rare Vintage Abstract Photographs: 1935 – 1951  
21 June – 31 August 2001

The Bruce Silverstein Gallery is pleased to announce the exhibit *Aaron Siskind: Transformation*. This is the first comprehensive gallery exhibition exploring the early photographs of Siskind (1935 to 1951). During this extraordinarily productive period, Siskind evolved from pioneering social-documentary to being the only photographic founding member of the American Abstract-Expressionist movement.

Aaron Siskind (1903-1991) began taking pictures in the early 1930's. As a member of the Photo League, he produced now classic documentary studies, among them the "Most Crowded Block" and "The Harlem Document." While these early works portrayed the pressing social conditions of the time, many of the compositions foreshadowed Siskind's eventual transformation toward abstraction. It is only later, during the 1940's, when Siskind fully committed his imagery away from the literal subject and more toward the formal relationships between light, structure and texture.

By the late 1940's, Siskind had developed strong bonds with many of the leading artists of the day. Siskind, along with legendary painters such as Barnett Newman, Adolph Gottlieb, and Mark Rothko would gather weekly to drink, laugh, and debate at either the Cedar Street Bar or the Waldorf Cafeteria in New York City. It was Newman, who convinced Siskind to show his work to Charles Egan of the renowned Charles Egan Gallery. Siskind had his first show at the Egan Gallery in 1947. Over the next few years, such modern masters as William de Kooning and Franz Kline would also exhibit at Egan, and would influence and be influenced by Siskind. By 1950, the Egan Gallery was the focal point for Abstract Expressionist artists with Aaron Siskind an official member of the group. This show includes a selection of the original photographs exhibited at the Egan Gallery.

By 1951, Siskind had joined Harry Callahan at the Institute of Design in Chicago – the New Bauhaus- to teach photography full time. Over the next 40 years Siskind maintained relationships with the Abstract Expressionists, particularly Franz Kline, and continued to develop and refine his abstract style. Yet it was the work from 1935 to 1951 where Siskind had undergone this monumental transformation that influenced the course of the single most important American art movement of the twentieth century.