

For Immediate Release

CHARLES JONES | *early 20<sup>th</sup> century gold-toned gelatin silver prints*

May 18 – July 2, 2021

VICTORIA MUNROE  
fine art

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*Parrot Tulips*, c. 1900, 6 x 4 1/4"



*Radish Long Red*, c. 1900, 6 x 4 1/4"



*Bean (Dwarf) Sutton's Masterpiece*,  
c. 1900, 6 x 4 1/4"

Opening May 18 through July 2, 2021, Victoria Munroe Fine Art is pleased to present concurrent exhibitions of photography: **Charles Jones** (British, 1866-1959): *early 20<sup>th</sup> century of gold-toned gelatin silver prints* and **Sachiko Morita**: *Gelatin Silver Prints on Watercolor Paper*. A separate press release is available for Sachiko Morita.

**Charles Jones** was an English gardener whose sensitively composed gelatin silver prints of vegetables, fruits and flowers have been widely championed since they were discovered at a London antiques market in 1981. Jones trained as a gardener from an early age. By 1905 his horticultural expertise won him the position of head gardener at Ote Hall in Sussex where he raised a remarkable variety of vegetables and flowers. His passion was also to document in glass plate negatives each of the hundreds of specimens he grew. Jones' mastery of the gold-toned silver gelatin glass plate negative process, which also relied on the sun for success, went unrecognized during his lifetime. What is clear is that the meticulous attention he devoted to photographing the beauty of his crops and flowering plants at Ote Hall was matched by the care he devoted to their cultivation. Inscriptions on the back of each photograph include the photographer's initials and a precise record of the particular cultivar, many of which are heirloom varieties appreciating a renaissance today.

This exhibition of eleven masterfully composed still lifes presents iconic examples by the proto-Modernist photographer, Charles Jones. Arranged as for a country fair, Jones photographed a cluster of pea pods with spiraling tendrils, a single shimmering onion, a plate stacked with perfect cucumbers, a bunch of hardy carrots, and a mound of freshly dug potatoes. The shine of the peas inside their pods and the waxy luster of the huddled cucumbers suggest Jones polished his vegetables before posing them to their best advantage. Three prints document his extraordinary narcissi, parrot tulips and dark zinnia blossoms, all facing the camera.

Printed from glass plate negatives, Jones' gold-toned gelatin silver prints are each unique. In their direct, up close representation the images reflect an unusually modern sensibility that contrasts the prevailing approach to botanical subjects by his contemporaries. The glass plates were used for a single print and then relegated to the gardens where they were made useful as cloches for seedlings.

(over)

As author and museum curator Robert Flynn Johnson noted in *The Plant Kingdoms of Charles Jones* :

*"The strength of Jones' photographs is in the subtlety of his arrangement, lighting and focus. They do not have the decorative artsiness of the Edwardian age in which they were created. Instead, his works anticipate the modernism of painters like Charles Demuth and Giorgio Morandi and photographers such as Edward Weston and Karl Blossfeldt without the attendant formalism of twentieth century aesthetics. The photographs of Charles Jones have a simplicity, like Shaker furniture, that is spare and direct."*

Charles Jones' vintage photographs are in the collections of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, the Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts, San Francisco, the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. His work has been the subject of museum exhibitions at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco (1988), at Le Musée de l'Elysée in Lausanne, Switzerland (1999), and the Chicago Botanical Gardens (1999).

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