

**CLAUDE TOLMER**  
***Photographiques***

February 22 – May 11, 2019



Untitled photogram, 1930s



Untitled montage, c. 1931



*Trois Moteurs du Handley-Page*, c. 1935

**L. Parker Stephenson Photographs** is pleased to present a selection of vintage photographs from the **1930s** by graphic artist and art director, **Claude Tolmer** (1911-1991). A member of the prestigious Paris-based printing firm Maison Tolmer, Claude brought modernist photography into the visual language of commercial imagery at a historical zenith of print production.

Maison Tolmer, founded in 1910 by Alfred Tolmer, Claude's father, quickly grew to become the most sought-after producer of packaging and printed design for luxury goods and remained as such through the 1950s. It transformed the mercantile sphere, foregrounding the desirability of products with experimental designs that extended a sense of tactile opulence to their presentation. Young, brilliant avant-garde artists from Western and Eastern Europe (including Jean Moral and Alexey Brodovitch) were hired by Alfred to create the seductive armature for which Maison Tolmer was known.

Claude Tolmer trained as a painter under André Lhote before joining the family business as a commercial artist and art director. Fascinated with the powers of photography, he established a studio and experimented with photograms, cliché-verre and montage combined with painting and drawing. A number of examples -one of which is on view in the exhibition- were published in his father's canonical 1931 graphic design book *Mise en Page: the Theory and Practice of Layout*. Tolmer's work is suffused with wit in its construction and engagement with materiality, built on the pleasures of stuff and surface. In a different but complementary way, his unmanipulated photographs of barges in the Seine, airplanes, and flea market clutter are formal exercises that play with abstract forms and composition in the everyday world. They share the urban ebullience of contemporaneous work by Brassai, Germaine Krull, and Andre Kertesz.

Tolmer was part of a generation of early 20<sup>th</sup> century European photographers, including Man Ray and Moholy-Nagy, for whom the advertising image and fine art photography were in dialogue with one another, or simply impossible to separate.

For additional information or to request images, please contact the Gallery at 212 517-8700 or by email at [info@lparkerstephenson.nyc](mailto:info@lparkerstephenson.nyc)