

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHARLES JONES [British, 1866-1959]

August 30 – September 30, 2018

Early 20th-Century Photographs



Pear Margaret Marrillat, c. 1900, 4 ½ x 6 inches



Bean Longpod, c. 1900, 6 x 4 ½ inches

From August 30 through September 30, 2018, The Drawing Room in East Hampton is pleased to present an exhibition of rare vintage photographs by **Charles Jones (British, 1866-1959)**. A separate press release is available for the concurrent exhibition, **FIONA WATERSTREET: Sculpture**.

Charles Jones was an English gardener, whose sensitively composed and sharply detailed photographs of vegetables, fruits and flowers have been widely championed since they were discovered in 1981 at a London antiques market. The son of a master butcher, Jones trained as a gardener and began tending to the fruit trees and walled kitchen garden at Ote Hall in West Sussex in the 1890s. Over the next decade, while mastering his professional horticultural skills, Jones began to experiment with large format photography. Although his accomplishments as a gardener were noted in a professional publication in 1905, his remarkable proto-Modernist photographs seem to have gone unrecognized during his lifetime.

This exhibition assembles more than twenty tightly composed photographs of subjects that include clusters of peas and bean pods, cabbage heads, potatoes and a single onion enveloped in light. Three photographs of different pears reveal nuances in shape and surface, and his cropped view of a single zinnia is among the iconic floral still lifes. Throughout this engaging body of work, Jones' interest in capturing the distinctive qualities of each specimen is apparent in the formal presentation and subtle lighting he utilized.

Captured on glass plate negatives with a large format camera, Jones' gold-toned gelatin silver prints were likely created to document the produce he cultivated with equally meticulous attention. Inscriptions on that back of each photograph include the photographer's initials and a precise record of the particular cultivar. Contrasting the prevailing approach to botanical subjects by his contemporaries, Jones isolated his subjects from their context in nature, silhouetting the fruits, flowers and vegetables against a dark or light cloth in a studio-like set up.

(over)

As author and museum curator Robert Flynn Johnson once noted:

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' 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'Élysée in Lausanne, Switzerland (1999), and the Chicago Botanical Gardens (1999).



Zinnia Double Red, c. 1900, 6 x 4 ½ inches

www.drawingroom-gallery.com

Gallery hours: Friday, Saturday & Sunday 11-5, and by appointment

For further information and reproduction quality images, please contact the gallery at 631 324.5016