

Gallery

Media Release

April 15 – June 4

1900 **Photographs of Berlin** **and environs by** **Heinrich Zille**



Little-known in North America but highly influential in Europe, Heinrich Zille (1858 – 1929) gained extraordinary popularity through his vivid and seemingly carefree photographs of turn of the century Berlin and environs. His eye turned to the refreshingly mundane detail of everyday life, and his images suggest a hip-shooting looseness quite uncharacteristic for the time.

In an interview published in *Art Press* in 1999, Vancouver artist Roy Arden said that Zille "had a more than adequate subject already developed through his work in caricature: the quotidian life of Berlin. His approach prefigures the snapshot style of someone as recent as Robert Frank." And in the same interview Jeff Wall wrote that "He was one of the first photographers to pay attention to dirt and debris on the sidewalk or on the ground, trash blowing around or being ground away by people's feet or wheels of vehicles. . . Zille [was interested] in people passing through places, inhabiting them, dirtying them, then disappearing from them."

Heinrich Zille was born in 1858 in Radeburg, Saxony. In late 1867, after a short residence in Potschappel, the Zille family moved to Berlin. In 1872 he began an apprenticeship as a lithographer, studying in the evening at the Berlin Academy of Arts. By 1877 he was working for the Berlin Photographische Gesellschaft, a firm engaged in photographic and graphic reproduction, where he was to remain for the next thirty years.

It appears that Zille's photographs were intended solely as 'studies' for his drawings of Berlin, for which he would later become famous. Consequently the photographs are not as well known. *Kinder der Strasse (Children of the Street)*, published in 1908, was Zille's first book of drawings, followed later by *Mein Milljöh (My Milieu)*, which sold over 100,000 copies. On August 9, 1929, Heinrich Zille died. The city of Berlin gave him a funeral 'with honours' in recognition of his significant artistic documentation of the city.

The forty-two photographs in the exhibition are on loan from the Berlinische Galerie in Berlin, Germany.

Gallery Hours: Wed-Sun 12noon to 5pm. Thursday we are open late, 12noon to 9pm

For more information please contact Diane Evans at 986-1351

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Operated by the British Columbia Photography and Media Arts Society