

Art in America

EXHIBITIONS THE LOOKOUT | MAY, 2016



Felix Gonzalez-Torres

at Andrea Rosen Gallery,
through Jun. 18
525 West 24th Street

It's hard to overstate Felix Gonzalez-Torres's influence on art since the 1990s. His extraordinary body of work—emotive, delicate, powerful—simultaneously revived and transformed the legacy of Conceptual art. Julie Ault and Roni Horn, two

artists who were close with Gonzalez-Torres during his short lifetime, have organized a trio of exhibitions devoted to distinct aspects of his practice on view this summer at galleries in London and Milan in addition to Andrea Rosen. It would be a rare privilege to see all three. So rare, in fact, that the primary audience for the tripartite presentation may be the curators themselves and other friends. It is as if, in a gesture Gonzalez-Torres would no doubt appreciate, they have created an opportunity for personal reflection and intimacy amid the circuits of the global art world. The solo exhibition in New York, the first at the gallery since 2000, is rewarding on its own. It features four text pieces, one from 1989 and the others from 1991, commonly referred to as portraits. Printed high on otherwise blank white walls are lists of words or short phrases paired with dates: e.g., “VCR 1978 Dad 1991 Bay of Pigs 1961.” The spare notation suggests points of overlap between the personal history of the “subject”—Ault is one—and global political developments. When installed in galleries filled with other artworks, such subtle pieces can become objects of peripheral attention. In this otherwise empty space, the understated works and the marginal spaces they occupy become the sole focal points. The language, restrained as it is, speaks to private and shared joys and traumas. Such experiences, in this context, can be read as the basis of enduring friendship. —*William S. Smith*

Pictured: View of Felix Gonzalez-Torres's 2016 exhibition at Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York.