

PRESS RELEASE

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Wolfgang Tillmans

Atair

Incorporating new photographic, video and sculptural works

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In the fourteen years of working with Wolfgang Tillmans and now eight solo exhibitions at Andrea Rosen Gallery, each new encounter is an inspiring thrill. As a viewer, a participant and a follower, one is always granted not only a new layer of imagery and content but also a mind-expansive opportunity to clarify our base assumptions of the power of art as a whole and photography more specifically, both as a visceral experience and an intellectual responsibility. It is obvious that Tillmans does not do this only for our benefit; it is part of his consistent, personal commitment to evolving in relation to his art practice and as a rigorously engaged human in the world. Each time, he generously gives us the occasion to experience again, experience more, and experience more deeply.

“Accepting the insolvable nature of certain questions whilst continuing to research relentlessly is, for me, a viable way to engage reality.”

Tillmans images speak to us so strongly and directly because we feel that they have been created in a moment of attraction and engagement – that is, that he makes pictures of that which he finds meaningful. His images are about contact and closeness with a subject, the desire to capture and transform that three-dimensional instant of reality into a two-dimensional image. Yet the created object is not merely a metaphor—it is itself the essence of intent.

A theme explored in this exhibition is precisely that human impulse – to create tangible objects redolent of their creator. For Tillmans the creative impulse goes beyond taking pictures into editing and making things – exposing the fall and curve of his inkjet prints or occupying the space of the gallery with pages laid flat on tables. In his ‘paper drop’ works, he creates extraordinary sculptural forms in photographic paper, then by photographing them returns them to the accustomed flatness of that same medium. The golden ‘Gong’ and the tables first seen as part of the ‘truth study center’ installation, both included in this exhibition, are thus by no means his first engagements with the three-dimensional, though certainly the first works shown as uncompromisingly sculptural objects. The video ‘Farbwerk’ in Gallery 3 concludes this exhibition’s journey with a spellbinding zoom into the red ink reservoir of a printing press.

‘Garden’, ‘Venice’, and ‘Victoria Park’, three exquisite large black and white photographs, provide strangely compressed experiences of equally ordinary and extraordinary subject matter. In conversation with Hans-Ulrich Obrist, Tillmans states: “They’re part of a series of pictures in which black and white photocopies were made into large-scale photographs. They represent an exact recording of what has to be the most ephemeral type of image that exists. A black and white copy with unleveled contrasts created by tiny dots of pigment... a total flattening of an image. What I’m interested in is the transformation of value that takes place when I take a tiny, worthless piece of paper, and give it a body, a weight by massively enlarging it and giving it physical substance by framing it.”

Using whatever means necessary, Tillmans composes a visually unified experience on the diverse phenomena that comprise the broad spectrum of lived experience. His “multi-vocal” process amplifies the individual voices embedded within each work. Tillmans’ essentially optimistic vision of the interconnectedness of life eschews imposed boundaries whether between reality and abstraction, photography and other media, or between art and life.

Since “Freedom From the Known”, his last exhibition in New York City at P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center in 2006, Wolfgang Tillmans has had solo museum exhibitions at Helsinki-Festival, Taidehalli, Helsinki, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, UCLA Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC, Camera Austria, Graz, Kestner-Gesellschaft, Hannover, and Kunstverein Munich. The final venue of his North American traveling exhibition will open on February 14, 2008 at Museo Tamayo in Mexico City, and will continue through May 25, 2008.

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