You Are Looking at Something That Occurred

Foreword
Elizabeth Neilson

This exhibition brings together works by 14 artists, predominantly from North America and Germany, all held in the Zabludowicz Collection. When the Collection began over 20 years ago, photography was one of the cornerstone mediums: specifically the industrial objectivity of the Düsseldorf School under Bernd and Hilla Becher, in tandem with the cinematic staging developed independently by Cindy Sherman, Jeff Wall and Gregory Crewdson.

Although not presented in this exhibition and publication, the influence of and reaction to the work of the Bechers and Crewdson is palpable. These vastly different ways of working with the medium have established photography as an artistic practice beyond its documentary capabilities, emphasising its painterly, sculptural and theatrical potential. This exhibition and publication take into account the cross-pollination of influence across generations, continents and mediums, building one possible narrative around the contested questions of the meaning and interpretation of images.

What marks the practices of the artists we profile here is not just their singular vision and approach to picture making but a commitment to the camera itself as object and idea; the medium of photography is explored as a tangible physical form in addition to its image surface. Nearly two decades into the twenty-first century, our relationship to photography has expanded into myriad forms and platforms that circulate images incessantly and ephemerally. The works by the artists in this exhibition reveal a slowing down in the flow of images through their painstaking composition and production.

A collection is an accumulation of objects and influences, as any ongoing practice is. Therefore the list of those to whom we wish to extend our thanks is rather long. First and foremost, all the artists and their galleries have been incredibly generous and helpful, both in dialogue around ideas and works and in gathering the materials for this exhibition and publication. The perceptive contributions to this book by David Campany and Chris Wiley are hugely appreciated, their insight and experiences allowing ideas around the works to be examined in a fresh light.

Then there is the team that creates and curates the exhibitions here at the Zabludowicz Collection. This small and specialist group of people, directed, with grace, by Maitreyi Maheshwari, has again managed to make an exhibition that allows for each of the works to exist within a physical, conceptual and theoretical space that enriches our readings of and reactions to it. Paul Luckraft, lead curator of this exhibition, has delved into the collection to assemble a fascinating survey of just some of its contents. The groundwork and research required the detective capabilities of Ginie Morysse along with the Collection team of Sophie Drewett and Gemma Donovan, who were vital in making the project possible. We were also lucky enough to have on placement with us Marieke Folkers, an MA student and fellow from Radboud University in the Netherlands, to assist in valuable research. Helping extensively in the production of this publication has been our Assistant Curator, Rachel Cunningham Clark.

Presenting sensitive and large-scale works such as those included in this exhibition in a building such as our former chapel is itself a challenge. The production and installation team, led by Stephanie Bush, has yet again made this look effortless. To the entire team I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation for their hard work and dedication.

Finally, I feel it necessary to mention Thomas Dane, an adviser to and friend of the Collection who has been more influential than perhaps he considers. His guidance to myself and our founders, Anita and Poju Zabludowicz, has been immeasurable. It is of course Anita and Poju who deserve the hugest of thanks of all. Their passion, vision and consistent encouragement of ambitious projects in a time of conformity cannot, and should not, be underrated.

You Are Looking at Something That Never Occurred
Paul Luckraft

In the mid-twentieth century, street photography, summarised in Henri Cartier-Bresson's notion of the 'decisive moment', was pre-eminent. It emphasised the capture of unique moments cut from the texture of life. In the view of several influential voices writing in the 1970s, the act of recording the visible world remained central to photography, despite their doubts about modernist authorship. Roland Barthes identified the essence of the medium as the 'That-has-been' of a real past event.[1] Rosalind Krauss emphasised the notion of the indexical: a trace and shadow of a physical entity.[2]

Contemporary art photography cannot help but remain in dialogue with such foundational ideas, but its practitioners have consistently pushed back at the straightforward mechanism of point-and-click and the idea of the straight document. This immediacy and certainty feels of another era. Artists working with photography in recent decades primarily use strategies of slow construction.[3] Three main approaches can be picked out: the reworking of existing images; the staging of scenes; and the use of digital collage. Rarely do these operate in isolation, however; nothing is so clean-cut in photography.

Photography is never separate from the visible world around us, in all its beauty and banality. It is a process undertaken by millions of people worldwide, every moment of every day. Camera phones document things seen and done, and the internet circulates and stores the resulting digital fragments. Photography is the commercial images of desire, increasingly produced by consumers as well as companies, which keep the engine of consumer capitalism ticking over. It is the news reports of terrible accidents and happy reunions. It is the scientific imaging of things billions of miles away, or right under our noses but too minuscule to see.

So when we propose that the things we see in photographs might not have occurred, what might we mean? Perhaps that it is only through the framing as a photograph that anything becomes an occurrence at all. Otherwise it remains part of the ongoing flow of everyday life.[4] The act of making a photographic image takes a part of the world and makes it into something else, a representation, a picture. In doing so, contemporary artists place photography in dialogue with other forms of visual art, such as painting,sculpture and cinema, often borrowing and blending aspects of these disciplines. Pictures add additional layers to our reality, made from the material of the world, but shifted into new compositions. This can be achieved with the slightest of gestures, or the most complex of procedures.

Copies and Clichés

A single work from a series of 84 individual pictures spanning 1977–80, ***Untitled Film Still #41*, 1979** by **Cindy Sherman**, features a female protagonist with short black curly hair wearing a striped playsuit, posing hands on hips in a geometric villa. Sherman is the character in the costume, and across the *Film Still* series she adopts a range of personas inspired by female stereotypes in the cinema of the 1940s, 50s and 60s, from Hollywood B movies to Italian Neorealism. Sherman's pictures evoke an imagined archive of films from which these single frames might have been cropped. Rather than direct parodies or impersonations of particular actresses or films, Sherman makes composites. Multiple influences absorbed as a consumer and fan of popular culture are blended with spaces and situations of her own life to create moments she projects herself inside of.

Sherman's work had an instant impact when it was first seen in New York in the late 1970s. Many feminist critics identified an overt rebuttal to the oppressive 'male gaze', and overlaid this directly onto the work. This rather closed definition was also accompanied by more nuanced readings. For critic Douglas Crimp, writing in 1980, Sherman's work was radical not just in terms of the performance of gender and sexuality, but more fundamentally in its disclosure of the fiction of the unitary self.[5] Rather than creating new scenes, it investigated existing representations already available. Crimp positions this as a valuable and necessary attack on the foundations of artistic subjectivity within western art, reversing the autobiographical impulse. Art could act not as a tool to reveal an artist's true self, but as a mechanism to reveal the very idea of a self as a fabrication.

Due to its many sequenced procedures, cinematic or staged photography often carries associations of total control; a singular vision clearly executed. It is interesting to note, then, just how experimental and circumstantial the making of the *Untitled Film Stills* was. Sherman shot *#41* when on vacation with her parents in Arizona in 1979, with her father enlisted as assistant for the set-up and the pressing of the shutter-button. And the distinctive hazy texture on the print is not the result of deliberate intent to obscure detail or create additional mystery, but instead the result of a darkroom mishap when Sherman let the top of the film can float off in the developing bath.[6] The certainty of Crimp that all images already exist, and are merely channelled by the artist, is diluted when these pictures are considered as condensed moments rather than just as signs pointing at theories. What we see in a photograph in a museum, gallery, book or online is always the result of innumerable human and technological contingencies.

The Pictures Generation is the banner Sherman's mode of work is commonly grouped under. The name derives from a small exhibition and accompanying essay, *Pictures,* put together by Crimp at Artists Space, New York in 1977. Many contemporaries used existing images in a much more direct way than Sherman. **Richard Prince** rose to prominence by re-photographing and

[1] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard, Hill and Wang, 1981, p. 77.

[2] See the essays 'Notes on the Index, Part 1 and 2', in Rosalind Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, Cambridge, MA, and MIT Press, 1986, pp. 196–219.

[3] David Campany, 'Photography, Encore', an essay for the book *Time Present: Photography from the Deutsche Bank Collection*, 2014. www.davidcampany.com

[4] As discussed in 'The Domain of Occurrence: Jeff Wall in conversation with David Campany', first published in Spanish in *Concreta* magazine, No. 4, 2014. www.davidcampany.com

[5] Douglas Crimp, 'The Photographic Activity of Postmodernism', *October*, Vol. 15, Winter 1980, pp. 91–101.

[6] *Cindy Sherman: The Complete 'Untitled Film Stills'*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2003, p. 14.

reprinting sections of commercial images and posters. The work ***Untitled (four women looking in the same direction)*, 1977** comprises four head and shoulder shots of female figures locked together in a shared glance. In its focus on the formulaic depiction of women in popular culture, Prince's work has affinities with Sherman's project. The women depicted are not performing for Prince's camera, however, but are unknown actors who have unwittingly become part of his work. They are anonymous, lacking presence as participatory subjects, and there is an uncomfortable sensation of voyeurism, the particularly male pleasure of looking from a mediated distance. Prince's most iconic series, begun in the early 1980s, lifts images of cowboys from Marlboro cigarette adverts. These works distil and parody a particular ideal of all-American masculinity and individual freedom that runs so deep in many aspects of the national identity, including the heroic gestures of post-war Abstract Expressionism.

The aura of an original artwork, meaning the presence of the artist carried within it, was, for Walter Benjamin, withered away by repeated mechanical reproduction. This emptying out of aura fascinated Benjamin, pointing as it did to liberation from tradition.[7] Crimp took up these ideas in his articulation of a postmodern photography, arguing that a new type of aura resurfaces in works made from images of commodity fetishism. In place of originality and authenticity there is an aura of absence. A ghostly negative haunts images corrupted by capitalism.[8] This might be said to be only half of the story, however. When we consider the work of Sherman or Prince today we are unable to remove their identities as famous and successful artists from the pictures. The aura of the individual artist reasserts itself. Perhaps what makes the early works of Prince and Sherman feel so alive is their autobiographical resonance. The artists did not assume or seek a separation for themselves from the desires and dreams inherent in their images. Sherman played the role of movie stars, and perhaps Prince imagined himself as the cowboy in the saddle. They were always implicated in their pictures.

The images that are easiest to produce and consume are probably clichés. The shared global language of non-art photography is made up of images of celebrities, products and sunsets, or 'viewzak' as David Campany has referred to them.[9] **Anne Collier** makes pictures that draw close the staples of such imagery in order to explore the gap between artist and viewer. Her re-photography of book covers, magazines and record sleeves features imagery that suggests the hippy, new-age and self-help movements of the 1960s, 70s and 80s. These might seem innocuously nostalgic, but they also indicate the origins of ideologies that have morphed into today's global digital corporations. Collier invites viewers into an uncertain territory between the sentimental and something more engaging or unsettling.

***Studio Sunset*, 2007** and ***Studio Moonlight*, 2008** show printed posters hung on a white wall. The tacks in the corners are visible, emphasising the layering at play; glowing celestial bodies float over an illuminated sea, hovering above the horizon of a black floor. Notions of romance, the Romantic, and idealised studio bohemia stack up. ***Positive (California),* 2016** reproduces a soft-grained black-and-white photograph of a naked woman, walking away from us into the sea. It is very close in structure to something a young Richard Prince might have produced. In the hands of Collier the picture can be read as a feminist questioning of the circumstances that led the original to enter circulation. Was it the woman's choice to walk into the sea, or was she directed to do so? Where has her image been, and what has it been used to sell? Collier's work might prompt such questions, but it doesn't demand they be asked. There is a disarming emotional ambivalence, an atmosphere of overexposure and saturation, a kind of calm acceptance, even.

Flattening is perhaps the key sensation in Collier's work. The viewer is left to project their own associations or fantasies, or to just walk on. Collier might be said to perform two reruns, a double testing of emptiness. Firstly, banal source material is isolated and spotlighted to see whether it can be reanimated to hold our attention. Secondly, she adopts well-worn Conceptual Art strategies of image appropriation, daring to see how little she can differ from clichés within contemporary art. Her resulting artistic identity is made enigmatic and ghost-like.

People and Places

The personal and authentic within photography is often associated with how much of an artist's life their images reveal. **Wolfgang Tillmans** could be said to be extremely generous in this regard. In the late 1980s his work suggested a new direction for the documentary tradition, featuring moments of raw unpolished beauty in cities such as Bournemouth, London and Berlin. Friends and acquaintances, and the places they frequented, were the prime subjects. How these images then translate to a space of encounter is central to Tillmans. The 31-part piece ***Berlin Installation 1995–2000*, 2000** is printed at widely differing scales, the pictures scattered across a twelve-metre expanse of wall producing a constellation of bodies and textures. Alongside portraits, details of nature and landscapes, there are indications of the politics surrounding identity, as seen in the picture of gay rights campaigners Andrew Lumsden and Peter Tatchell speaking at Mardi Gras 2000.

Wolfgang Tillmans
Mardi Gras, 2000

[7] Walter Benjamin, *A Short History of Photography* (1934), in Alan Trachtenberg ed., *Classic Essays on Photography*, Leete's Island Books, 1980, pp. 199–217.

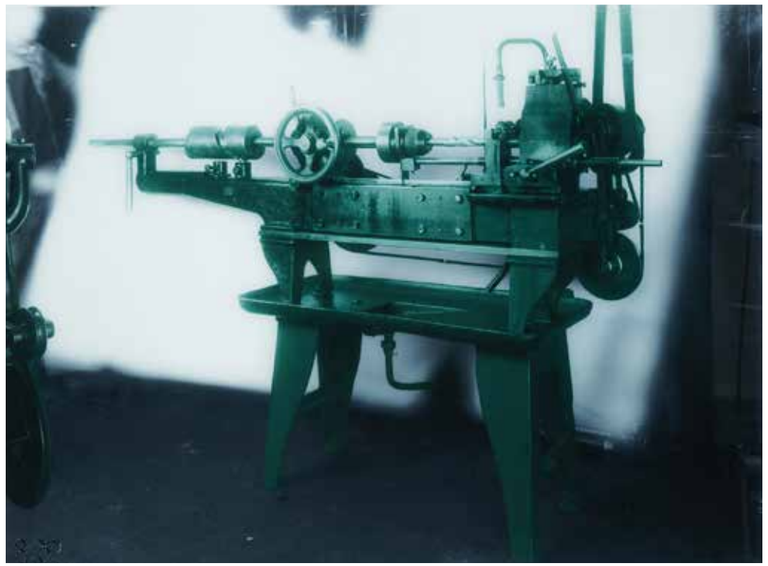
[8] Douglas Crimp, 'The Photographic Activity of Postmodernism', *October*, Vol. 15, Winter 1980, pp. 91–101.

[9] David Campany, 'Photography, Encore', an essay for the book *Time Present: Photography from the Deutsche Bank Collection*, 2014. www.davidcampany.com

An ongoing misapprehension surrounds Tillmans' work: that it is about *lifestyle* in a narrowly autobiographical and solipsistic way. The fact that the pages of fashion and culture magazines such as *i-D* were key early sites of presentation has pinned assumptions to his work of something too carefree or too easily consumed. In reality, the sensation of spontaneity has always been somewhat of an illusion. Even the early works were often re-enactments, staging moments in a way that captured a feeling of relaxed intimacy, but remaining always near rather than true documentary.

The abstractions Tillmans has made since 2003 have further tested his relationship to representation. Resulting from non-camera dark room processes they possess ethereal luminosity. They are also suggestive of bodily tactility, and are threaded into the toughness of Tillmans' wider oeuvre. In 2005 he began the *truth study center* series, comprising his pictures displayed alongside newspaper cuttings, internet page printouts and pamphlets. Existing as publications or as installations under glass on wooden display tables, the project addresses his concern for how information is framed and received according to the politics of those who produce and distribute it.

Although often associated with a youthful energy of innovation, a strong connection to aesthetic tradition runs throughout Tillmans' various projects. Commenced in 2009, *Neue Welt* involved journeying to new locations around the world, observing the macro and micro patterns of people, cities, nature and machines. In the manner of a travelogue Tillmans maps the complexity of the world around him, but our contemporary moment doesn't allow dispassionate clarity. His pictures reflect on truth as a contested site of multiplicity and confusion.



Thomas Ruff
Maschinen 0923, 2004

A pseudo-scientific archival impulse is keenly felt in the work of another German artist, **Thomas Ruff**. From the generation preceding Tillmans, Ruff studied in the late 1970s and early 1980s under Bernd and Hilla Becher at Staatliche Kunstakademie Düsseldorf. This school of photography emphasised the uncomplicated and grid-like cataloguing of subjects; in the case of the Bechers' own work the focus was on typologies of industrial infrastructure such as water towers.

Ruff's work has remained true to such conceptual rigour and the idea of the series, and has over several decades explored disparate aspects of what the photographic archive might contain. His early works were colour portraits, but ones of a particular intensity. ***Stoya*, 1986** presents a monumental head and shoulder image of a sitter, placed square-on and expressionless, clearly lit against a white background. The directness gives the works an ominous air of administration: passport photos or police mug shots. Germany in the 1980s was a country still divided between East and West and on the front line of the Cold War. Ruff's *Portraits* direct us to individuals, but locate them as anonymous figures in a larger system of registration. And the scale and quality of the photographic prints place the subject at the mercy of close interrogation by the gallery goer.

In subsequent series Ruff turned away from overtly human content. Like Tillmans his childhood passion was astronomy, and in the late 1980s he began to work with existing negatives he acquired from the archives of the European Southern Observatory, showing the night sky above Chile. The resulting pictures can be read as subtle and sumptuous abstractions, but also as ambitious attempts to chart galaxies and nebula. A seemingly more mundane and less spectacular archive was the source for a series called *Machines* begun in 2003. Glass negatives from a 1930s tool factory were coloured in iron-oxide tones before being enlarged.

A different type of found image formed the basis of the JPEG series of the 2000s. Low-resolution files of architectural monuments both new and ancient and of disasters both natural and man-made were culled from the internet. When expanded to massive proportions the grid-like weave of pixels reveal an unstable surface. The work ***jpeg ny15*, 2007** is an image of the World Trade Centre in New York as the towers collapsed following the 9/11 attack. An interest in how photography can only ever produce a partial and surface rendering of an event runs through Ruff's practice.

Buying and Selling

Images conveying information about events or products defined the way the modern world saw itself. Photography played a central role in shaping the identities of the citizen and the consumer, and as the medium became more accessible to the wider population during the twentieth century it was increasingly used to assert individual agency. In *On Photography* Susan Sontag argues that an individual with a camera enters into a 'chronic voyeuristic relation to the world which levels the meaning of all events'.[10] Sontag cites a particular printed advert as an example. A cluster of people look out from an image, all wearing expressions of fear or excitement, bar the one holding a camera to their face, who smiles assuredly. The copy reads: '… Prague…Woodstock…Vietnam…Sapporo…Londonderry…LEICA.'

[10] Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (1973), p. 7. Electronic edition RosettaBooks, LLC, 2005.

Rebellion, youthful abandon, war and sport become 'equalised by the camera'. Individual moments with particular characteristics are fitted into models of depiction and models of looking.

The work of **Christopher Williams** asks how photographic images from our recent industrial culture are read, and how much information they might contain within their structures. Rather than working with found images, Williams takes apart and reassembles the conventions of advertising and classification in his own precisely constructed studio shots. And through exhibition architecture and design he also tests the protocols of how photographic art is presented.

A series spanning 1993–2001 was titled *For Example: Die Welt ist schön*, which translates as *The World is beautiful*. This phrase is the title of the 1928 photo-book by German artist Albert Renger-Patzsch, a leading proponent of the New Objectivity. This movement asserted the camera as a direct recorder of the modern world in all its 'splendid fidelity'. Williams combines just such surface clarity with an intricate conceptual system of his own design.

***Model: 1964 Renault Dauphine-Four, R-1095.* [...], 2000** shows a car turned on its side in an empty lot, the black gleaming machine seductive but somewhat comic. Its extended title, which Williams crafts with as much care as his images, discloses that it was taken in Los Angeles on 15 January 2000, and gives technical, production and sales data relating to the vehicle. Williams's choice of shooting location indicates his fascination with the way symbols of commodity and political ideology flow across different locations and registers of visual culture. The 1964 Renault was a model featured heavily in news reports of the student protests of May 1968, overturned and used as barricades on the streets of Paris. The car could also be read as a Hollywood movie prop, perhaps featuring in a contemporary cinematic homage to the stylish and avant-garde films of Jean-Luc Godard.

Since 2003 Williams has produced another major series, *For Example: Dix-huit leçons sur la société industrielle,* which translates as *Eighteen Lessons on Industrial Society*, a title taken from a 1963 text by French sociologist Raymond Aron. Here Williams examines the many-layered nature of professional image production, including equipment, power supply and studio assistants. Removing himself from the act of taking the photograph he takes a directorial role. In ***Linhof Technika V* [...], 2008** we see a large-format camera, with a syringe-like shutter cable hanging down, and on the ground glass viewer, which inverts the image, an upside down pair of female feet clad in yellow plastic platform shoes. In the blurred background of the picture is a pair of pale calves, the right way up. We are looking at a cut and suspended image. A moment is paused, the anonymous body of a model is abruptly cropped, and the hand of an anonymous photographer is absent. Are we seeing the process of a photograph being taken, or a picture built to suggest an action that will never take place?

Williams has referred to himself as a 'functionary', an administrator.[11] This is probably a wry reference to the derogatory use of the term by the Czech-born philosopher Vilém Flusser in his important and influential text *Towards A Philosophy of Photography.* For Flusser the significance of photography extends beyond the technical tools of production or individual images produced, and is instead a powerful 'apparatus' underpinning the automation of modern life. In his view artistic experimentation is the key to reasserting human subjectivity.[12] Williams's chosen method of experimentation is to assign himself different bureaucratic roles in order to make connections between nested sets of histories: the industrial, artistic, institutional and social.[13] In doing so he opens up poetic moments of resistance in a flow of often unseen operations.

Like Williams, the work of **Elad Lassry** shares a contemplation of the commercial images of the post-war twentieth century. Rather than Williams's system of interconnected references, Lassry instead produces enigmatic individual occasions. His pictures are all of a consistent size, matching that of a magazine page. They have lacquered or timber frames that extend out the saturated colour spaces, decisively making the images into objects. Inside these case-like boxes sit subjects that can be human, or animal in the case of ***Skunk*, 2009**. They can also be inanimate objects, such as fruit or domestic ornaments. And they can be new 'originals' or images found from archives. Depicted in close-up detail, the objects are sealed within their new environments, severed from a previous context. Lassry's work is simple in structure but highly mysterious as to its intentions. There is uneasiness too: a wholesome Americana with an uncanny strangeness hovering behind it. The seduction photography can perform is made to feel personal, and the small scale adds to the just-for-you quality of something precious gifted. It pushes the work into a dialogue with the atmosphere of luxury goods, mining the tension around limited edition Conceptual Art and its proximity to commodity objects.

The process by which objects and images gain meaning and resonance over time, or lose their initial lustre to become discarded relics, is central to **Sara Cwynar**'s work. Gathering items from eBay and second-hand stores, she

[11] Mark Godfrey, 'Cameras, Corn, Christopher Williams, and the Cold War', *October*, Vol. 126, Fall 2008, pp. 115–142.

[12] Vilém Flusser, *Towards A Philosophy of Photography*, trans. Anthony Mathews, Reaktion Books, 1983, p. 75.

[13] 'Christopher Williams: The 19th Draft: David Andrew Tasman and Catherine Taft, in conversation with Christopher Williams', *DIS* magazine. http://dismagazine.com/discussion/69719/christopher-williams-the-19th-draft/

Elad Lassry
Skunk, 2009

arranges, photographs, prints, collages and re-shoots this material. Most recently Cwynar has extended this approach to the making of videos, such as ***Soft Film*, 2016**. Film footage, stills and screen-grabs are woven together with pieces of text she has scripted, narrated by a male voice as a looping essay. The viewer is taken on a journey through myriad narratives sparked by objects and images, including amateur 1970s snaps of a Kenyan businessman's visit to a South Korean factory, studio portraits from the Harlem Renaissance of the 1930s, and pre-9/11 postcards of the World Trade Centre.

Cwynar pays particular attention to gesture and touch, and the way that hands point and hold. In the video the phrase 'soft misogyny' is used, suggesting how relatively innocuous details of a pose might indicate the female body as selling tool – the rack, the peg and the display model. Cwynar's video is also preoccupied with the kitsch materiality of objects such a velvet jewellery cases, and how their aesthetic conventions might recur as retro-desire and nostalgia. 'Was this colour the style of the time or has it faded into that?' we are asked at one point. Cwynar is open about her struggle with photography's failure to reanimate the past or fully connect us to moments that were not our own.

Near and Far

So far we have focused a good deal on the sources and location of images, but what of the space *within* a picture? **Natalie Czech**'s *Hidden Poem* series are palimpsests that emphasise text as much as image. Her action of re-photographing existing pages of books, magazines and product packaging might suggest a homage to the Pictures Generation, but Czech's final pictures emphasise subjective choice and serendipity as much as the pre-existence of image types. On printed pages Czech highlights a selection of words, revealing existing modernist poems by the likes of Velimir Khlebnikov and Aram Saroyan. Sparse in style and marked by repetition, the poems cannot help but be read in relation to the narrative and imagery in the found printed material, such as sea voyages or solar eclipses. The original page is altered by the revelation that within its body lay another entity: an authored poem. As a viewer one ponders how the artist could have had the tenacity or good fortune to make these 'finds'. Czech's ongoing investigation into different registers of meaning, particularly pertinent in our time of easily searchable archives, activates a flow back and forth between text and image, between existing information and unexpected discoveries.

The unexpected is a prime sensation in the pictures of **Lucas Blalock**. In a work such as ***Gaba with Fans*, 2012** the naturalism of a studio portrait is undercut by the many perforated layers of visual material. Dislocated phantom arms hold objects at contorted angles, and textures of a cartoon-like wooden floor open up at the eponymous subject's feet. Blalock's technique involves first taking large-format analogue negatives then scanning them into a computer. There he uses Photoshop tools to produce jumbled spaces: the visual material of the original is erased, folded back in on itself, and sometimes drawn over. On occasions Blalock alters his pictures very little, sometimes not at all. We might think of an intuitive performance leading to a picture, and in interviews Blalock has cited Bertolt Brecht's ideas of off-stage action being brought into view. Gestures are made visible and new aesthetic spaces are set out. This approach looks back to the traditions of Cubist collage and painting while also reflecting on the 'disembodied' and potentially untrustworthy nature of images that circulate in online space.[14] Rather than digital tools being used to erase flaws or create seamless sublimes, Blalock's empathetic compositions direct us to look at common objects and scenes, and enjoy the awkwardness.

The phrase 'you are looking at something that never occurred' was used by **Jeff Wall** in an interview conducted by Blalock in 2013.[15] It is an enigmatic line, and alludes to the ongoing question of the medium's truth-telling properties and shortcomings. More specifically, Wall was arguing for the continued importance of radical artistic experimentation irrespective of mass appeal. He cites André Breton's Surrealist term 'occultation' from 1929, meaning art which emanates from somewhere unexpected, from beyond our 'social surface', as Wall puts it.

Wall's proposal for a strategic separation of works of art from everyday life is distinctly out-of-step with much avant-garde thought, which has historically directed its energies towards eroding just such boundaries. Central to the magnetism of Wall's work is its ambition for intensely felt allegorical meaning, but produced through the visual mode of photography, a medium so familiar and so potentially devalued by its non-art identity. It is a tension acknowledged by Wall across his extensive writing. The aesthetic language of his large illuminated transparencies, although hung in a gallery, cannot help but evoke the cinema screen and the advertising lightbox, irrespective of his own assertions that formal decisions of luminosity and detail are the sole motivation.[16]

An emphasis on artistic subjectivity might feel contradictory to the mechanistic nature of photography. Indeed, strong directives towards an objective approach have regularly recurred across the medium's history, often producing important and influential results. However, the impossibility of something being truly objective, in the field of art at least, is a point that the works in this exhibition touch on repeatedly. Photography as art cannot help but navigate the space between the known and the unknown, between proximity to the thing depicted and distance from it, and between the intended and the accidental. A photographic picture is connected to its origins but also opens up revisions of the past, present and future. Things do not occur in the world as they do in pictures. In words borrowed from Jorge Luis Borges, 'The original is unfaithful to the translation.'

[14] 'Jeff Wall and Lucas Blalock: A Conversation on Pictures', *Aperture* magazine, 2013. http://aperture.org/magazine-2013/jeff-wall-and-lucas-blalock-a-conversation-on-pictures/

[15] Ibid.

[16] 'Jeff Wall: Artist's Talk', Tate Modern, 25 October 2005. http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/video/jeff-wall-artists-talk/

A roundtable discussion hosted by Chris Wiley, with Lucas Blalock, Sara Cwynar and Erin Shirreff

Chris Wiley: The exhibition *You Are Looking at Something That Never Occurred* ranges across several decades of photographic practice and includes works by artists of an older generation that seem to have a large influence on each of your practices, whether directly or indirectly. It seems like Jeff Wall and Christopher Williams, or Anne Collier and Elad Lassry, to give an example of closer peers, would be particularly useful to talk about here. I was wondering if you had any comments on how they might have shaped your initial vision for your practices, or maybe even put up some barriers of things that you thought you couldn't do?

Sara Cwynar: I remember the first photographer I ever learned about when an undergrad was Jeff Wall. Those other photographers you mentioned were so exciting because they didn't do what Wall did; they made work without a movie crew. The sheer scale of the production in photography influenced by cinema made it seem totally impossible to me. Wall or Gregory Crewdson are the people you're taught are art photographers. It felt this really kind of male, high technical production value, high barrier to entry way of making art. Many of the artists in this show, because they weren't that, were the first people who made me think 'oh, I could actually do that' – especially Elad Lassry who I saw in *Interview* magazine when I was an undergrad.

CW: Everybody in this room started their work as a photographer at a time when the budgets for picture making seemed so incredibly high. Something I've never really thought about the turn back to studio practice that happened with all of our generation is that the sheer expense was clearly a factor.

Lucas Blalock: Yeah, that's huge. But I felt there were artists making good things on a shoestring, and I was like 'oh, you can make things on the cheap', and that can be part of the ethos of the work. That was super exciting, and a way out of big cinematic pictures. Everything was enormous and expensive. So it was exciting to think through things that had a different exchange or something.

Erin Shirreff: I've never personally been able to imagine having a practice that involved so many people. How are you able to keep in touch with your own sense of what you want to accomplish, with all those personalities in the mix? So I've never really considered that kind of a production in my studio; everything, for better or for worse, is sort of a one-woman show. I have worked with extremely helpful assistants over the years, but collaboration at that scale seems mystifying to me.

CW: It might add lots of extra subjectivities into the production of the work, in the same way that a film becomes a multi-authored document. It seems like a Gregory Crewdson or a Jeff Wall photograph might be a similar kind of thing; it's like a lot of voices speaking at once but making this grand operatic thing – which actually brings me to a theory I have about the turn to studio photography, post the cinematic moment in picture making. It's the idea that there was an attempt to turn inward, and that the studio was a space for artists to project their own subjectivities and bring photography back to a more intimate, personal scale. I was wondering if that was something that you relate to, or disagree with?

ES: I have shied away from big production stuff because I'm rarely sure where I'm trying to go when making a work, there is a lot of uncertainty. To have company during that process would be really distracting. It has to happen with a certain amount of privacy. Call it inward, whatever you want. Having a studio practice for me means having the space to discover my work as it's being made.

LB: I would agree with that. I like starting in a foggy place and trying to get to a clear one. As soon as you upscale production the process turns into an industrial one, it's just not the same story, it's doing something else.

CW: So we're saying there's something intimate and inward-facing about studio practice. But this is not in keeping with a lot of practices in the history of photography, which were all about going out into the world. Sara, could you perhaps talk about why that move out into the world was something you weren't necessarily interested in pursuing?

SC: I think control is important. I also want to say something about the word 'personal', because I think a lot of people would say that the types of studio practice that we all have are less personal, because we're not depicting the people in our lives. There's such a history in photography of portraiture, and depictions of bodies, or of family. To work in the studio feels really impersonal to me, actually. It's about not letting other people in at all, and that's what's appealing for some artists. But the personal seeps back in, in the things we choose to focus our attention on.

CW: Do you guys agree with that feeling of a more impersonal quality to studio practice?

LB: I think it depends on what the word 'personal' means. For me the studio showed up at a time when I was working full time, and so it was a way for me to continue to have a practice that was sort of vibrant. I could play in it all the time, even though I was living in New York and didn't have a car and was shooting with this big ungainly camera. And so on that level it's personal because it's this thing I was dedicating all my time to. But the content isn't exactly personal in one sense of the word.

ES: A sense of intimacy or my own subjectivity is pretty buried in my work; it's not overt or explicit. But I still sometimes think my work is so embarrassingly biographical, even though there's nothing about me in it. I think about this more in terms of the work's affect: maybe it comes across as aloof, or it has particular physical or emotional qualities to it. Those to me feel very revealing.

Sara Cwynar
Color Column 1, 2014

CW: If you're not relating to a traditional form of photographic subjectivity like Emmet Gowin photographing his wife, or Nan Goldin photographing her friends in New York, what do you position yourself in relation to? Is it art history, is it the history of image making?

LB: For me there's a big family. I don't exclude the history of photography at all. I think about people like Lee Friedlander often. That stuff's not gone. There are a lot of ways to go back. I want to disagree that there should be a hard line put between the old photography and the new photography. I am not photographing my family, but I learn things from pictures by artists who did and draw them into my own work. Josef Sudek made pictures of stuff sitting on his windowsill for fifteen years, for example.

CW: Yeah, photography has a long history of studio practice. But it's interesting that there is something that people think is new about this moment right now – or maybe there isn't?

ES: Well the thing that's new now is our relationship to images as a culture. That's changed drastically. How the art photograph exists within a larger terrain of image culture, I think that's the thing that's new and different and changing all the time. And I feel that it has changed even since I was an undergrad, like how people now look at images on their phone.

SC: The way that we live with images now is not something I think about directly, or not right at this moment. Instead I think about how images have accumulated up until now. So maybe it is just a different way of thinking about the same thing. The context of everyone being able to make images is something I have never managed to figure out how to consider in any real way. But what I do think about a lot is how an image lives on way past the thing it was supposed to be, and takes on a life of its own. The Hito Steyerl essay, 'In Defence of The Poor Image' [2009], said it better than I ever could, about a picture moving through the world and degrading, but gaining in one value versus another.

So in my plastic cup pieces that are in this show [*Islamic Dome (Plastic Cups)* and *Corinthian Column (Plastic Cups)*, both 2014], I was thinking about how these historical images of architecture that I was finding in encyclopaedias, of Classical forms and ruins, had the same qualities as stacked plastic party cups: a new manifestation of something of great value that had been viewed a million times, but was now watered down to this random object.

CW: This idea of the appropriated images culled from the archives is obviously something that dates back at least to the 1970s Pictures Generation, but I feel this is something that's being dealt with differently by people from our generation. Erin, you use appropriated images but you use them in a cinematic fashion. Can you talk about the significance behind your use of appropriated imagery?

ES: It's funny because people ask me about appropriation a lot, and I don't think of my work in those terms at all actually. Appropriation has an important and clearly defined legacy in recent art history of course, but I have never felt compelled by, say, questions of authorship. How I come across the images I end up using can be very random.

CW: What interested you in the image of James Turrell's *Roden Crater*, for example?

ES: It was a form that had lodged somewhere in the back of my brain. I used to live in the south-west, but I'd never been to the site. At the time I was making a show of sculpture and video and photography – actually my first solo show in New York – and the idea of it kept coming back, and it connected in vague and indirect ways to the sculpture that I was making, to a sense of suspended time. So I looked, and found an image on the internet that corresponded to this hazy, false memory of it. I've been asked a lot whether the video I made with the image is a critique of this aggressive, macho expression in the landscape. That was never my intent. It was really driven more by my interest in the character of that form in the landscape. More precisely in the *image* of the form in the landscape, and the distance that is forever inscribed in your experience of that form by virtue of the photograph's frame. The land mass itself was created an unfathomable amount of time back in the past; it's a marker of geological time that you can't really conceive of as a human being, so it's already sort of out of reach. The form also has a quality of both coming into being and falling apart. Looking back, a lot of the objects in the images I've used over the years share this same quality, something being made and unmade at the same time.

CW: They have time inscribed within them?

ES: Yeah. But they also somehow exist apart from time. That quality – being both in and out of time – is probably why I always come back to the image in my practice. It's that quality you talked about, Sara, something that is taken in a moment but then is carried forward and accrues all these other sort of associations. Images always have a sort of duality embedded in them.

CW: I think this idea of time is really interesting. David Campany has previously suggested that there's a sort of slowness that's entered into contemporary photography. I think we have long been past Henri Cartier-Bresson's 'decisive moment', but there are some interesting new registers of time that have started to exist in contemporary photography. Lucas, you've talked about the way that time is stacked in your work. Can you address that a little bit?

LB: It was actually something someone said to me very recently. Someone brought up after a talk this idea that in my pictures there's the time of the exposure, but there's also this awareness that something has happened after that. There are these temporal problems or states that are all sitting with each other. I thought it was a really nice way of talking about my pictures. And I guess all of us in some way have that activity going on; the before and after the shutter. Somewhere in there are multiple stacked states of time.

CW: Perhaps this idea of stacking and archaeological layering creates images that have greater depth than the images that we're used to seeing on screens?

ES: You would hope that a complexity gets embedded in that stacking, and contributes to a slowness of looking that runs counter to the speed at which we typically take in images in our daily life. I mean, again, that's perhaps another cliché.

CW: But I think these clichés are really important to understanding the way in which contemporary photographic practice has changed over the past decade. They've become clichés incredibly quickly because ten years ago Instagram didn't exist, for example, and visual literacy was certainly not at the level that it is now. I think we all have to contend with that. Do you feel like you're pushing against something, forcing the viewer to slow down?

LB: Encouraging it for sure. Slowness feels really central. A photograph is an object that's particularly easy to take in all in one glance, and so I think that it collapses the world into something that's really homogeneous. And so when you're working with photography it seems to me it is always about stretching that and putting some pressure on that situation, trying to get it to be less compacted. But I think the pace of looking is definitely not something you get to enforce.

ES: I'm becoming a lot less flexible about that in my work. I actually feel like I try to demand it. I just made a video that is seventy minutes long and has very, very minimal activity. I think a bird flies across the sky once. But for me these videos, like *Roden Crater* and other videos or films I've made in this vein, such as *Moon* [2010], function less like a photograph, or even a moving image, and more like a sculpture. My intention is never for the viewer to sit for the full seventy minutes – my dream viewer doesn't exist!

CW: Are *you* even your dream viewer?

ES: The thing that's so surprising to me is I can sit in my studio and edit it, and it's a deeply pleasing, meditative experience. But then I put it in an exhibition context and it's gone in a flash. It's kind of shocking how time can feel broken up and accelerated in an exhibition space. Everybody talks about slowness, tension and non-fragmentation, and I think it's important to articulate why those things are values. They are in opposition to a culture of speed and quickness, superficiality, sure, but that's not enough. *Why* do we want people to slow down, to pay attention? For me it comes from this belief that an encounter needs time to unfold. It can be a very unsettling and unpleasant to be confronted by art, and the easiest thing to do, the path of least resistance, is pick up your phone and move on to the next thing. But to actually stay with it, with your uncertainty and the not-knowingness, and to find your way through to a half-formed thought that then perhaps turns into something else – that takes time. I've said this before in defence of museums and galleries; these are becoming the only places in our culture to have those kinds of focused, prolonged, hopefully rich experiences. There aren't many spaces like this in our lives any more.

CW: Definitely; it's about a different form of attention, because our attention is scatter-shot all the time now.

LB: I think this anxiety you're talking about is real. I think it is uncomfortable, and I don't think we have great muscles for slow looking. I talk with my students about how people will take the first exit possible out of an artwork. It's like, if you give them a way out – and this can mean a lot of different things – but if there's an easy way to stop looking people will. I really like Duchamp's *delay.* It's an idea that keeps sitting around in the back of my head. How do you get it to be an obstacle in this flow?

ES: I've always been really interested in the strategy of being aggressively plain. I think that's why I respond to your work, Lucas and Sara. There is no mystery; it's not a case of 'what are they showing me?'. It's like, 'oh, it's the bottom of a sneaker' or 'it's some hands on a Picasso'. So then you have to stay and be like 'okay, now what?'. Everything is sort of stretched out in that moment after. I think things that are ordinary are the most mysterious. But that's a sort of general principle in my life.

CW: Sara, how do you work with time?

SC: I was thinking about Erin's video in the show [*Roden Crater*, 2009] and my video in the show [*Soft Film*, 2016]. I actually feel like they have the opposite strategy. I'm packing things in as quickly as possible, intentionally, thinking 'oh no, I'm going to lose the viewer now' or 'that part just got a little too heavy-handed'. At one point I actually say 'pay attention' right after a string of really dry theory, because I know I might have lost the person watching, and I finally snap them back in. It never occurred to me that when you were making such a slow video, Erin, you would also be thinking about the exact same thing.

CW: The fight against the synthetic sheen of Photoshop feels something that's important to a lot of the work you guys make. I was thinking about touch, and the way that seems a factor in all of your work. Your piece, Sara, with the image of *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* with, I guess, your hands touching it [*Women*, 2015]. And Lucas, you've written about drawing as a form of touching. Erin, I feel like the way you deal with photographs is you touch them with light. Can I get everybody to address this haptic relationship to the photograph?

SC: I think about the hand of display in commercial imagery. Like how many hands there are that you don't even notice in the world in images. In *Women* I was interested in touching, but also covering, and how a subtle shift in hand gesture can convey totally different things. I just did a show that was really about that: how a hand can give something away. To go back to the potentially clichéd contemporary photography conversation, everything [in advertising] feels really synthetic and of another world that's never been close to the real, that came from somewhere in the air and never had a relationship to an actual body. To put hands or body parts in things kind of shoves it back to the real world.

LB: I feel like we're all really interested in the body.

ES: You have this really interesting line, Lucas, about wanting to get inside the picture and feel it.

Erin Shirreff
Moon, 2010

LB: I'm interested in the fact that now the picture space is enterable. You can put your hands in there. When I think about using Photoshop I'm not really thinking about manipulating an image as much as working in the sculptural space that the photograph proposes. There's a work in the show called *xxxxxxx* [2011], a gingham backdrop that had a plastic thing in front of it, which then gets totally marked out. For me that operation is happening in the space of that picture, not on the surface. It's not really 'manipulating the image', but rather that inside a contemporary photograph there are now these two spaces. There's worldly space, and there's also this really plastic virtual space; and that space is one that I can access through these tools and manipulate. I think about that as being a very physical activity, of being able to get in there and push things around.

ES: I feel like that's really apparent in your work. So often I think in photography the missing part of the conversation – and it's always surprising to me – is scale. How these pictures actually live in the world after all these manipulations. I meet with students periodically and they show me a series of JPEGs and ask 'what do you think?'. I'm like, what do I think? What do *you* think, what does *anybody* think about a JPEG. Scale, if we're talking about the history of photography, is a really interesting conversation, because there have been times when people have released editions where you can get pictures at 16 x 20 inches, and you can also get them at 30 x 40 inches.

CW: Oh they definitely still do that!

ES: That's so insane! I think so much about the viewer's body in relation to what they're seeing, and the relationship of what is in the image to how it exists in reality. When I'm making a photograph I'll print it out five or six times, varying by an inch or a half an inch, just to feel how the objects in the image function at whichever scale. For me blowing up or miniaturising is *the thing* that's happening in photography.

LB: Totally. The flipside of what I was just trying to describe in relation to the digital is that I'm trying to imagine these activities being physical; that your experience of them as a viewer is in relationship to the body, and that sets up the basic terms. And scale is crazy in photography, because you pick it last. It stays an open question. Everywhere else you kind of pick it first. Sara, has your newest project gotten more scale-related?

SC: Yeah, I've started making things thinking, 'I'm going to make this as big as I possibly can', only being limited by the printer size. Seeing a hand that's bigger than yourself remains a really amazing thing that photography can do, and I know many people have been through the feeling of surprise with photography. But I feel like right now, we're at a moment where you can produce those things better. 8 x 10 inch film and an Epson printer, that particular combination is amazing.

ES: Image scale, in pop culture anyhow, is a non-issue; we see ads on our phones, and the same imagery on billboards on the side of a building in New York, and it doesn't mean anything different. You kind of see through it. Our relationship to it has become a lot more elastic.

LB: Part of the problem of scale for me is trying to make that elasticity crystallise into something very specific: to get the object to really insist on itself as an object.

ES: I've been making photograms for a while, and I realised early on that they were really boring at a small scale. When they got large and started operating in this faux-painterly space they started getting interesting to me; seeing something that looks imagistic but then realising that it's actually in a one-to-one relationship with the object itself. As works they completely pivot on a sense of scale.

CW: The discussion about touch, moving into the discussion around scale, means we're talking about how painting and sculpture have been leeching their way into photography in a potentially unprecedented way in the last ten years. Is that something that you guys recognise?

ES: In what way are you thinking?

CW: I mean perhaps there has been less of a concern with documenting the world, because it seems like the whole world has already been documented. I could go on Google right now and search for pretty much anything, and I will be able to find a view of that. So that old maxim about photography 'it's not how you photograph

something, it's what you stand in front of' has really gone out the window. And I think it's given photographers a lot more leeway to engage with questions that were traditionally questions of sculpture or painting, like gesture, like touch, like scale. Obviously, Andreas Gursky and Jeff Wall were dealing with that as well, but I think they were dealing with it in terms of a history-painting tradition, whereas I feel that you guys are dealing with something quite different.

LB: The thing we're talking about through all of these discussions is attempting to make an embodied object that relates to an embodied viewer. The native space of photographs at this point is disembodied. It is on screens, and caught up in flows of information. Photographs are less important as pictures than they are in their speed, as you were saying about Steyerl and resolution, Sara. Before 2006 if you wanted to make a picture and share it with people you had to make an object. There was no way around that. At some point that was no longer the case. So I think the problem of making a photograph into an object became a different problem, and has taken on all these questions of embodiment in really different ways. Now that the native space of photographs is disembodied space we have to consider the ones that are being pushed out into an embodied space in a very different way.

CW: Sara, you were talking earlier about pulling things back from that luminous space of advertising, space that exists without touch. Every photograph that you consume on Instagram is an advertisement of sorts, either for an actual product or for what is horribly called a 'personal brand'. I was wondering if there is this tension that any of you guys have with this world of advertising?

SC: Perhaps the intentions and strategies of advertising were clear in the past, whereas you kind of forget that today that's happening all around you. We're participating in it even in our leisure time now: when we think we're doing something for ourselves we're really doing something for a corporation. There's something in my work about looking back at how clear advertising's forms and structures seemed in the past, as opposed to today when it's happening in a much more sophisticated, insidious way. Maybe something you *can* touch on, or think about, or grasp in the past that you can't in the present. My work is definitely critical of advertising, but I do love that stuff also. A mix of love and hate, and that's probably true of most of us.

CW: Something I hadn't really thought before is that right now in contemporary photography there is a sense of a real push and pull between the love of advertising and the refusal of advertising. Thinking about somebody who's not in the show, Roe Ethridge, or someone who is, like Wolfgang Tillmans – their work really straddles that line very intensely. Their work was a critical moment in the transition out of the cinematographic photography of, say, Crewdson or Wall, into the moment we have now. Perhaps it is about the image becoming a promiscuous thing.

LB: When I started making pictures in the studio a lot I was thinking 'how do you do this?' and many of the things that I looked back at and learned from, whether they were pure advertising or not, had at least one foot in that. Jeff Wall said something really nice in an interview that I did with him about how advertising sort of *eats* still life photography, almost in total, starting in the 1920s. And it's true, you know? When I first started using Photoshop the only people using it were commercial photographers and artists. Basically what was available to me was to make a sort of burlesque of studio practice, which inevitably has a foot in commercial picture making. But as I went on I felt more flexibility and started thinking about relationships to objects that might have been cancelled out or overwhelmed by commodification. What other relationships could objects that occupy my pictures have? The advertising image is a reductive situation, which produces a certain kind of desire. And I started thinking about how I could produce pictures that might have relationships outside that. So the history of commercial pictures shaped my work, but I don't feel like I'm participating in it.

CW: Sara, you came to some of your fine art practice through making advertising, right?

SC: Yeah, I used to art direct. You know, like 'move that steak a little to the left'. I still work a bit like an art director or graphic designer, arranging things in space. And it was interesting working in advertising and in graphic design. There's an idea that you're not doing the same thing that everyone before you did, or that somehow it's better now, or it's not evil or it's not tricking anyone. I feel that a lot of former graphic designer-turned-artists go through this thing where they become increasingly disillusioned until they can't do it any more. I started off as a wide-eyed, excited graphic designer, and then over a period of time it wasn't a sustainable thing to spend my life on any more. I still think constantly about why that is, and what part of that could be useful to talk about in terms of making art.

CW: What are the provisional conclusions that you draw?

SC: On commercial jobs we'd have all these conversations about how people were going to understand pictures, and you realise that you can't control that in any way. Every image can circle back, and is going to have a total life of its own, and no matter how many smart people you put in a room, you really can't do anything about how the public reads an image. That was *so* interesting to witness from the inside.

CW: One of the things in your photographs that doesn't get addressed, Lucas, particularly because there's so much digital manipulation, is the objects. Which to me seems really weird, because they are fundamentally photographs of objects.

LB: People talk about how the pictures get made more than anything else. Which is partially my fault. You build these things up over a long time, and this was the story that I felt needed to be told earlier on, and now it's *the story*.

CW: Well let's redress that, because I think it's the objects that separate your work from a lot of other work that's out there that uses similar sort of ham-fisted digital techniques – mostly influenced by you. They are the things that really make the photographs stick. Why is that do you think?

LB: I care about them in a way. For me, making a photograph is primarily about trying to relate to the thing I'm photographing. I'm trying to have a relationship with this thing. Theoretically I can relate to anything, but this isn't really the case. There are objects that I have a much easier time relating to than others; there are things that draw out ideas and thoughts or feelings in me that I am drawn into. This starts to be the basic structure of the picture. I think that the objects started off as replacements, stand-ins for other things, and the joke was kind of that the wrong thing was there. And then – I think fairly quickly – I started picking things that I felt more excited by, but still things that didn't necessarily feel like they should be in front of the camera, like sponges for example. It might be a colourful object, but it also wasn't really made to be looked at. With the hot dogs, I liked that they made me feel gross while I was making a picture. Their smelling bad and being wet was part of what made them so attractive. While I was taking those photographs I realised they were also photographic analogues – machine-made representations of sausages. I feel intuition is always important. I walk around and find things I'm starting to relate to, and I bring them into the studio and continue to try to develop that relationship. That's true of people too; all the people in my photographs are people very close to me. I think that's important; it gives me a lot to work with. The relationships can be kind of dense. But there's not a set class of objects. I could theoretically play the game with a lot of things.

CW: And I think that question can be extended to both Erin and Sara too. How do we get beyond this generalisation of 'it's all about image culture' and some of the platitudes about contemporary photography, and down to the content of your work? What is it that anchors you to the specific images that you choose?

ES: I have, for a long time now, been obsessed with the conditions and constraints of the photograph itself – that you're never, obviously, given access to the full dimensionality of what you're looking at. It's a basic, inherent quality of photography of course, but for me this has often become the content of my work. There's something about looking at an object that's at a temporal and physical remove from you that is actually a very permissive, generative and imaginative experience. How an object plays out in space versus the image, and the implications of this difference, is what has fed my work in sculpture and video for a long while.

LB: I like that. But I feel there's the other side of this, where you make a picture out of this object. Aesthetics could be seen as a way to figure things out, to develop relationships to things that you might not otherwise. The objects in my work are often underdogs. They're having a hard time. There's something in that which is part empathy and part other stuff. I make a lot of pictures that don't work,

Lucas Blalock
NM in stripes, 2011

so these relationships are not always successful. But I am working out something for myself. So it's about trial and error, and through this, about developing the nuances of my own relationship to the material world, outside the way that it is otherwise pictured. Then flipping that around, hoping that some of this activity allows for other people to develop weirder relationships to these things too, and to digital space, which is a significant aspect of what is being pictured.

CW: Sara, what about your relationships with some of the objects and images that you're re-photographing, what *sticks* for you in that selection process?

SC: I pick almost entirely things that were made with great idealism or fashion or style. I can sort of imagine the state of mind of their making, in that they were the height of style, or had value, and they now have faded out of that. That can be an encyclopaedia reproduction of a Picasso, or it can be a plastic cup that's really yellowed. One of my favourite things is the way that plastic yellows over time. Lucas, I liked how you said that you're always frustrated that people don't look at the objects as much as they look at the image of the object. In the last year, especially in the video that's in the show [*Soft Film*, 2016], I have become more interested in an anthropological approach to objects, and why objects are meaningful. For example, the way that things bear the marks of human use over time, or thinking about how the value of something could be so subjective. Saying that, the more I read and think about the way other people have theorised why objects are important to people, the more it seems impossible to explain. That's where I'm at right now, actually.

CW: Is it a question of finding texture and value in an object that goes beyond its slick advertising surface? An object that has a *life* rather than an object that exists in another realm?

SC: I just like how you can see humans in objects when they have worn down over time.

CW: One of the things we danced around a little bit, that I want to bring back, that we're all talking about in our personal lives right now …

ES: The election?

CW: … is the election, sort of, yeah, but also capitalism. I think that is kind of what we've been talking about with advertising. In your work, Sara, there is the idea that objects have a life, but they also have a kind of death when they fall out of fashion. Lucas, your objects, they're ridiculous and pathetic in a way that has something to say about capitalism, and I'm surprised that no one has said anything about that. And your work, Erin, has a quality of attention and a physical presence that seems anathema to the speed and crassness of capitalism. A lot of contemporary photography has been attacked as being solipsistic, navel gazing, being only about itself, and not about the world in the way traditional serious photography was. Do you think that's the case, and if not, how does photography shift now? What does photography do to address the fact that the world has become a vastly more unstable place?

LB: One of the most powerful things about photography in the twentieth century is that it did this really good job of accounting for public space. Public space is now as likely to be digital and virtual as it is to be in the street, and I think photography is struggling to deal with that. And I don't think there is an easy answer. In the twentieth century there was a way in which photography's level of abstraction of the self from the world was a good analogue for the way people were actually feeling. The photographic picture was a good picture of life. And as we've gotten further, photography has lost this analogous relationship. So to me it feels a more complicated question than it may appear, because the reframing of the public sphere has really complicated what that kind of [public] picture is. The photojournalist was this person who was outside somehow looking in, and that relationship just seems in *real trouble.*

CW: Well also there was a quality of photojournalism that was, at least tentatively, related to the truth, and the Oxford English Dictionary has proposed that this is the year of post-truth. We've been talking about this idea of the erosion of truth in photography for a long time, but now it's bled into *everything*.

ES: Yes, it's less about the truth of a photo, and more now about how information is reconciled by the viewer. This election has shown that there's a real broad spectrum of what people will take seriously.

CW: It's also about the proliferation of platforms on which information can be consumed. Sara, you were talking earlier about the possibly illusory halcyon age when we could really get a handle on all the images that exist in the world, and all the information, because there were only a limited number of platforms. But now, if you're a neo-Nazi or a climate-change denier, or a radical left-wing anarchist, you have a news source that is specifically tailored to you, and that will confirm every bias you have and pat you on the back and send you along your merry ideological way. When, for example, political art is consumed at Art Basel, presumably at least a good amount of the audience is from the global ruling class who are, ostensibly at least, right-thinking liberals, or at least will pretend to be at cocktail parties. And the function of political art is that it allows those people to look at it and then pat themselves on the back and say 'I'm very good, I know what this means, I like this, and therefore I'm not a bad person, let's continue on as before'. In some ways this is the deleterious quality of propagandistic political art. It confirms prejudices or confirms the notion that you're a good person.

ES: It's toothless, ultimately. I think your question to us as makers is: how will the current political situation actually impact what goes on in the studio? It's something I presume, for myself anyhow, will be very alive and changing. I feel obsessed by all of it right now.

SC: I've been thinking about how to get outside the bubble, and not just speak to a group of people who already know. That feels like a big question right now. After a period of thinking 'I'm retiring from art, this feels ridiculous', which I'm sure a lot of people have gone through, I'm starting to think about a way of making something digestible, or presenting information in a different way, and what that could mean. I think that's why I've been making video art, because there's more of an opportunity with that to say something. But the question of what art does that isn't better said feels more impossible to parse right now. I'm not a political artist in a traditional sense, but of course most artists are very political citizens of the world. It's really tempting to just jump over to the other side [into making political art], but it probably wouldn't serve anything, so let's just say that I don't have an answer.

LB: I think about it all the time. The question is how to be a citizen in this situation, and then how to be an artist, and they are bound to be somewhat mixed. It's very hard to address directly political questions, because what people take away from your work you have little control over, it's not yours, you don't get to author that. So it's hard to say what you can do with an artwork, but I feel like the relationships that I want to develop in my work – and I imagine that we would all be somewhat on the same page about this – are things that carry a different feel, and address a different subject than any of this crap is addressing, you know? Imagining our connectivity differently than whatever the current political moment is imagining it as. What else do you do? You've got to keep going.

Now is Then is Now
David Campany

The earliest of the images gathered for *You Are Looking at Something That Never Occurred* are around forty years old. It was in 1977 that the artist Richard Prince began to photograph and enlarge details from the advertising pages of consumer magazines, while Cindy Sherman was beginning to photograph herself as if she were fictional characters in remembered movies. Re-photography, postmodern photography, appropriation art, dissimulation: several descriptions were given to the strategies of Prince, Sherman and the many artists of what came to be called the Pictures Generation. And while those terms might conjure up a particular period or specific turn in the role of photography in art, much of the art itself can still seem disarmingly fresh. *Contemporary*, even.

Cindy Sherman
Untitled Film Still #21, 1978

[1] See for example, Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition* (1979), Manchester University Press, 1984.

[2] See, for example, Siegfried Kracauer, 'Photography' (1927), *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 19, No. 3, Spring 1993; and Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (1936), in *Illuminations*, Random House, 2002.

Although the intervening years have brought major transformations in the production and circulation of images – notably digital photography and the internet – such art from the late 1970s does not appear to belong to an era so different from our own. In many ways, it *anticipated* the present moment. But if, in 1977, you were to have looked back four decades to the photographic art of 1937, would the differences have been far more stark? Was history beginning to come to an end in the late 1970s, as implied by so many of the early commentators on postmodern art and society?[1] Was time slowing to a standstill? And if that work does still feel contemporary, is it because art and society are stuck?

Not exactly, although feelings of *déjà vu* are inescapable. Many of the central challenges facing artists today would be entirely recognisable to those artists of 1977. Whatever else it does, *You Are Looking at Something That Never Occurred* charts the spiralling persistence of interest shown by artists in the 'image world', that nebulous, seductive and repellent archive that has been growing constantly in the mind, in popular culture and in informal archives. This interest first emerged around a century ago, in the Dadaist collages of printed matter, and in early Cubism's use of scraps of mass media ephemera, such as news clippings. (Indeed, the contemporary worry that we live in a flood tide of images was first voiced in the 1920s and 1930s, notably in the writings of Siegfried Kracauer and Walter Benjamin. It's not a new phenomenon. [2]) That interest mutated into the Surrealists' subversion of the authoritative photographic document and their undermining of the glamour portrait, then into the Situationists' *détournements* of popular spectacle and Pop Art's equivocations with consumerism and celebrity. In the Conceptual Art of the late 1960s and early 1970s the engagement with non-art images shifted yet again to the estrangement of common photographic protocols: the collection, image-text relations, the snapshot, and so forth.

Whether intuitive or calculated the art that followed, typified by Prince and Sherman, seemed to internalise all of that art history, reworking signs and symbols in ways with which each of those movements would have been able to identify. There's a distinct line to be traced back from Sherman's imaging of fictive female personae to the interwar photography of Claude Cahun and the media montages of Hannah Höch. Prince's sly take on advertising can be traced back to Marcel Duchamp, via Andy Warhol and Guy Debord.

Those lines go forward too, and they are mapped out quite clearly by *You Are Looking at Something That Never Occurred*. However, where Dada, Surrealism, Situationism, Pop and Conceptual Art reconfigured the popular imagery of their own moments, the artists in the present exhibition face the quandary of what the contemporary really means. In an era of unprecedented access to the past, what is *now*?

To be sure, some of the more recent works, for example those by Lucas Blalock, explore specifically digital matters that were not present in 1977. Nevertheless, Blalock's mise-en-scènes (his colour palette, the calculated gaucheness of his still life arrangements) conjure a generalised not-quite-now of consumer culture. Elad Lassry makes similar slippages, with motifs and treatments that reimagine some just forgotten mail-order catalogue, or out-of-date greetings card. Sara Cwynar's *Soft Film,* 2016, an exploration of the psycho-sexual charge of manufactured objects, and Anne Collier's reworking of sunsets and vinyl record

sleeves really could have been made at any point since the 1970s. Erin Shirreff's silent movie *Roden Crater,* 2009, made by slowly cross-fading studio lights over a printed internet image of the extinct Arizona volcano, feels like a hybrid of Prince's early work and a lost film by Stan Brakhage from around 1972. With her series of *Hidden Poem* works, started in 2010, Natalie Czech photographs pages of publications upon which she has highlighted words to reveal poems by Frank O'Hara, Jack Kerouac and others, but her raw material includes old copies of *Life* magazine, which ceased full publication in 1972, along with art catalogues – one of which even includes a reproduction of a Prince re-photograph of a Marlboro cigarette advert. To risk an oxymoron, might this doubt about the particularity of the present be precisely what distinguishes these works from their antecedents, precisely what does make them contemporary?

If artistic time *has* stood still it is partly because the past, or at least the volume of images from the past, now weighs upon the imagination as never before. For most of the twentieth century, artistic modernism could push on at its famously breathless pace because the past could be so easily ignored or forgotten, or was never even known. Illustrated catalogues were few and far between, museums were far less plentiful, magazines came and went. A great deal of modern progress was built on erasure and ignorance. And we may note just how many of the recent survey exhibitions about the art of the last century have been motivated by discoveries of precedents and parallels that ask us to rethink what we thought we knew.

Today the twentieth century and its various modernisms are being archived in unimaginable detail, and those archives are mined, revisited and recuperated. It is rescued, brought back from near oblivion, like an old negative dusted off, digitally scanned and repurposed. Blessed and cursed by the internet, we are faced with the task of making sense of the enormity of the last century –

Jeff Wall
The Drain, 1989

Jeff Wall
Still Creek, Vancouver, winter 2003, 2003

its achievements, its failures and its blind spots. A corollary task, which is only just beginning to be contemplated, is to figure out how to move onwards, not by ignoring the past (for you cannot unring a bell) but by coming to terms with its lessons. Through the individual works gathered in *You Are Looking at Something That Never Occurred*, we can glimpse something of these tasks, or at least some symptoms of them.

At first glance, the exception to this legacy might be the work of the Canadian photographer Jeff Wall. In 1977 (yes, that year again) Wall began to make singular, large-scale tableau photographs. (The Germans Thomas Ruff and Andreas Gursky followed a little later, although these two entered the image world's hall of mirrors soon enough, Ruff with his mimicry of the anonymous passport photo and his blow-ups of low resolution internet JPEGs, Gursky in his exploration of the spatially flattened digital composite.) Wall's work appeared to embody a very different attitude, one that connected with a longer history of the picture. Indeed, Wall has understood the term 'Picture' in a very different way from the Pictures Generation. For him, the Picture is the exemplary canonical art form. It belongs not to the base popular culture that proliferated in the twentieth century, but to the classical picture gallery, and it can be traced back through the history of western painting.

In the early part of the twentieth century the picture gallery was transformed and displaced by the modern 'white cube', the supposedly transcendental space set aside from the pressing chaos of modern life and mass culture. But as soon as this transformation was under way, artists began to incorporate the imagery of mass culture into their work. They relied on the white cube to dramatise their transgression. Art that borrows non-art imagery plays strategically upon the idea of not quite belonging in the modern gallery, inhabiting it only with irony

and distance, inviting spectres of the magazine page and the movie screen into the exhibition space. Nevertheless, this space is pivotal to the reception of such art. Works that engage with the reproduction of mass media forms find their most powerful expression in the one cultural arena that privileges originality and the singular object. This important lesson was developed in the Pop exhibitions of Robert Rauschenberg and Warhol, where art received its scandalous charge not just from the enlargement of Pop-cultural material, but from the sheer fact of being exhibited at all.

Today, of course, that sense of scandal has dissipated, and the artist's appropriation of mass media iconography is today almost as venerable as oil painting. If any scandal remains it is the waning of affect that comes when there is so little difference between mass culture and the art culture that appropriates it.

Jeff Wall made a very different bid for the specificity of the gallery encounter, since his life-scale photographs in backlit lightboxes invited a form of beholding and spectatorship that required it. Where photographic modernism from the 1920s to the 1970s had occupied the gallery and printed page almost interchangeably (as many of its achievements were books as exhibitions), Wall put forward a sovereign claim for the exhibited photograph. While his images do reproduce on the page, they belong to the gallery.

It has often been argued that photography in art is split between the exemplary composition that respects the pictorial practices of the past and the mediated culture of the copy. Or think of it as the pictorial and the anti-pictorial, the classical 'maker' and the 'bricoleur', or even the 'photographer' and the 'artist using photography' – a distinction that really took hold in the 1970s.[3] But are the differences really so clear-cut? In *You Are Looking at Something That Never Occurred,* Wall is represented by *Still Creek, Vancouver, winter 2003*, 2003, a photograph showing a stream emerging from a man-made tunnel in a thickly forested gully. It is a gentle image of compromise between nature and the modern world. On an immediate level, nothing could be further from an art of quotation and copy. However, Wall was photographing the very same location where in 1989 he had staged his dramatic night-time tableau, *The Drain*. In this earlier image two adolescent girls enact, rather archly, some mysterious ritual, and what we see could be a fragment from an updated fairy tale or allegory. The girls are in that wooded space, at night, but in being so artificially illuminated they feel 'planted' too, like figures in the painter Edouard Manet's more forthright provocations (think of the social cyphers in *Fishing,* 1862, or the more well-known *Olympia* and *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe*, both 1863).

What prompted Wall to return to that location? Was it a shift in interest from the representation of drama to the drama of representation itself? A feeling that the setting was as significant as any performance within it? A preference for day over night? A realisation that the place hadn't changed much in the intervening fourteen years? Was Wall reworking his established field, as all artists do? We cannot know. But *Still Creek* is a remake, of sorts.

In a 1996 essay on Wall's work, the critic Thierry de Duve looked at *The Drain* and asked the reader/viewer to imagine it without the girls.[4] Remove them and the picture becomes a different kind of treatise on photographic representation, its illusion of depth undercut by the flat black void of the tunnel that blots out the natural position of the vanishing point. To make *Still Creek*, Wall has stepped back a little, but the sense remains that the space before the camera is a natural instance of the space of the camera itself: a shrouded arena pierced by a black opening. *Still Creek* is as much a photograph about representation as any work of appropriation art. And yet, this does not preclude *Still Creek* from being a document of what was before Wall's camera, just as Prince's photographs are records of what was before his.

Photography is only around 180 years old. For quite a while this newness was its calling card. It was not burdened by art historical baggage. It could throw off the past while recording the present as never before. It could embody the now and forge new paths. But just as news archives began to groan under the weight of photographic documents, so photographic art has had to come to terms with its burgeoning past. This medium now has a history as complex as any other. And part of growing up is bound to entail getting used to looking backwards in order to move forwards.

[3] See, for example, Michael Fried's book *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before*, Yale University Press, 2008, and Jean-Francois Chevrier's 1989 essay, 'The Adventures of the Tableau Form in the History of Photography', in Douglas Fogle ed., *The Last Picture Show: Artists Using Photography 1960-1982*, Walker Art Centre, 2003. Fried and Chevrier have both written extensively on the work of Jeff Wall.

[4] Thierry de Duve, 'The Mainstream and the Crooked Path', in de Duve et al., *Jeff Wall*, Phaidon, 1996.

Biographies

Lucas Blalock
b. 1978, Asheville, NC, USA. Lives and works in New York.
Lucas Blalock's photographic process shares much with drawing: creating and erasing layers of visual information to build playful and intriguing compositions. His approach encompasses abstract and figurative imagery, and digital and analogue techniques. A large-format film camera is used in the studio and on location, with Photoshop then employed to erase elements or add pictorial material. Blalock's work creates connections between many strands of visual culture, from modern art and advertising to personal snaps of everyday surroundings.

Anne Collier
b. 1970, Los Angeles, CA, USA. Lives and works in New York.
Anne Collier works by re-photographing existing images in the studio using a large-format plate camera. Book covers, magazines, record sleeves drawn from American subcultures of the 1960s, 70s and 80s are documented in a manner that emphasises their spatial flatness. Complex tensions between consumerism, feminism and voyeurism are pared down into succinct images. Collier opens up questions of the packaging of identity by emphasising how photography cuts up and frames information.

Sara Cwynar
b. 1985, Vancouver, Canada. Lives and works in New York.
Sara Cwynar explores how objects of desire can lose or gain an aura over time. Gathering items from eBay and second-hand stores, she arranges, photographs, prints, collages and re-shoots this material to form new arrangements and associations while referencing images from cultural memory. Recently Cwynar has experimented with essayistic narrated videos, such as *Soft Film,* 2016, combining footage shot in the studio with fragments of scripted text to further examine the way discarded images might indicate how value and power are assigned in society.

Natalie Czech
b. 1976, Neuss, Germany. Lives and works in Berlin.
Natalie Czech's work makes links between photography, text and systems of signification. In magazine articles, album covers, or product packaging she finds and reveals existing modernist and minimalist poems by the likes of Robert Creeley and Rolf Dieter Brinkmann. Highlighting these by hand, the original material is then photographed and presented as framed pictures. In her recent series *To [Icon]*, Czech locates recognisable computer program pictograms within fashion advertising images, and outlines their presence in plastic forms mounted directly on the photograph. Lists describing the icons' differing applications are added to the composition, expressing the evolution of visual literacy as 'poem labels'.

Andreas Gursky
b. 1955, Leipzig, Germany. Lives and works in Düsseldorf.
Andreas Gursky is known for his distinctive large-scale, full-colour photographs documenting the impact of modernity on the surface of the planet. These vast views are taken from high, detached perspectives, enabling the viewer to take in an overall scene, or to get lost inside it. Digital manipulation is sometimes used to isolate, multiply and layer elements, increasing a sense of overwhelming detail and reaching towards a contemporary sublime. These epic vistas have been interpreted as an allegory for the sensations of late capitalism and globalisation, with Gursky following in the traditions of history painting.

Elad Lassry
b. 1977, Tel Aviv, Israel. Lives and works in Los Angeles.
Through photography, film, sculpture and drawing, Elad Lassry tests our relationship to images. Channelling the look and feel of popular photographic forms, the traditional genres of still life and portraiture are reformatted into enigmatic works, consistent in their small scale and distinctive framing. Lassry translates the effect of his photographic work into moving image, opening up the mechanics of perception via the camera's shifting focus and unexpected movements. His hybrid sculptures are often in dialogue with other bodies of work, reframing physical forms as abstract carriers of meaning capable of existing across multiple dimensions.

Richard Prince
b. 1949, Panama Canal Zone, Panama. Lives and works in New York.
Richard Prince deals with the act of making pictures to reveal how images become containers for the projection of identity or, conversely, how the repetition of motifs and themes can numb meaning. Prince first rose to prominence using the technique of re-photographing advertising imagery in a direct, unadorned manner. More recent work has adapted this process for contemporary technology using screenshots to capture directly from Instagram. Shifting the circulation of such images into the realm of contemporary art, Prince highlights their standardised qualities and the necessity of context in our readings of visual material.

Thomas Ruff
b. 1958, Zell am Harmersbach, Germany. Lives and works in Düsseldorf.
Since the mid-1980s Thomas Ruff has produced distinctive and influential photographic series, investigating a diverse set of subject matter and techniques. These include monumental portraits and reproductions of images selected from archives and the internet. Working with both analogue and digital processes to produce physically imposing pictures, Ruff repeatedly finds surprising ways to explore the aesthetic and conceptual parameters of the mechanical image.

Cindy Sherman
b. 1954, Glen Ridge, NJ, USA. Works and lives in New York.
In her series *Untitled Film Stills*, 1977–80, Sherman adopts the multiple roles of author, model, stylist, director and photographer. Capturing herself in various settings wearing a variety of costumes and make-up, she presents a range of characters drawn from the clichés of cinema. The series has become a key touchstone within postmodern and feminist debates around performing the self and the gaze of the viewer. Extending this inquiry to engage with differing moments in art history, Sherman's subsequent work has included reworkings of painterly portraits and tropes of Surrealism and Dada in images depicting both dark and banal aspects of the human condition.

Erin Shirreff
b. 1975, Kelowna, Canada. Lives and works in New York.
Erin Shirreff's works in sculpture, moving image and photography revolve around the material and temporal qualities of objects and images, and acts of visual translation. In her series of durational videos, Shirreff seems to document the passing of time in nature. However, as the works unfold they reveal themselves to be digital animations made up of artificially lit images shot on the wall of her studio. In three-dimensional works, minimalist sculpture is re-envisioned as hollow, angular forms that appear to alter in response to the audience's viewing position. These investigations into the uncertainty of visual experience feel particularly pertinent in a world where image manipulation has become the norm.

Wolfgang Tillmans
b. 1968, Remscheid, Germany. Lives and works in London and Berlin.
Emerging in the early 1990s, Wolfgang Tillmans' striking aesthetic of low-key beauty offered a new direction for the documentary tradition and reflected a youthful atmosphere of underground creativity and freedom. During his career he has become equally recognised for testing the possibilities of photographic image making and exhibition display. Consistently exploring a wide array of genres, he interweaves still life, landscape and abstraction into constellations of images, alongside formal experimentation with non-camera dark room processes. Tillmans has also remained keenly attuned to shifting politics, using his art to engage in social activism.

Sara VanDerBeek
b. 1976, Baltimore, MD, USA. Lives and works in New York.
Sara VanDerBeek examines contemporary surroundings through the prism of temporality, transience and history. Her work often consists of flat depictions of carefully constructed three-dimensional assemblages involving references to art history and classical aesthetics. These are built in her studio and survive only in her photographs. The illusion of depth and movement through the play of light and shadow is a recurring motif. More recently VanDerBeek has introduced sculptural elements such as columns and stacks into her installations, which are displayed alongside photographic prints.

Jeff Wall
b. 1946, Vancouver, Canada. Lives and works in Vancouver.
Jeff Wall analyses and reconstructs how pictures can be made and what they might mean. His approach embraces both the preconceived and the unexpected, primarily falling into two categories: unstaged pictures documenting locations, and cinematographic images produced with the use of actors, sets, crews and sometimes digital postproduction. Wall often presents photographs as large transparencies on lightboxes, echoing classical painting and the movie screen. Referring to these works as 'prose poems', after the writer Charles Baudelaire, he indicates they should be experienced as autonomous pictures added to the world.

Christopher Williams
b. 1956, Los Angeles, CA, USA. Lives and works in Los Angeles, Chicago, and Cologne.
Christopher Williams has developed a practice that addresses the conventions, mechanisms and aesthetics of the photographic medium and the art exhibition. This includes the precise texture of images, the constructed space of the studio, and the nature of captions and promotional texts. Williams references the iconography and aesthetic of mid-twentieth century advertising, and weaves connections between the histories of modern art, cinema and political radicalism. Williams's approach is deeply rooted in conceptualism and institutional critique, offering a visually sumptuous analysis of industrial culture, in particular its structures of representation and classification.

Contributors
David Campany writes, curates exhibitions and makes art. His books include *A Handful of Dust*, 2014, *Art and Photography*, 2003, *Gasoline*, 2013, and *Jeff Wall: Picture for Women*, 2010. He has written over two hundred essays for museums and monographic books, and contributes to *Frieze*, *Aperture*, *Source* and *Tate Etc.* magazines.

Chris Wiley is an artist, writer and contributing editor at *Frieze* magazine. In 2015, he acted as a curatorial adviser and chief catalogue writer for the 55th Venice Biennale. His work has appeared in exhibitions at MoMA PS1, Atlanta Contemporary, Hauser and Wirth, Marian Goodman and Nicelle Beauchene Gallery.

List of Illustrations
Works from the Zabludowicz Collection unless marked*.

Wolfgang Tillmans
Mardi Gras, 2000
Photographic print framed
34.5 x 25.5 x 2.5
part of *Berlin Installation 1995-2000*, 2000
Courtesy the artist and Maureen Paley, London
© Wolfgang Tillmans
p. 9

Thomas Ruff
Maschinen 0923, 2004
C-print face-mounted to Diasec in artist's frame
130 x 166
Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner Gallery, New York
© DACS 2017
p. 10

Elad Lassry
Skunk, 2009
C-print mounted on Plexiglas
27.9 x 35.5
Courtesy 303 Gallery, New York © Elad Lassry
p. 13

Sara Cwynar
Color Column 1, 2014
C-print, framed 76.2 x 61
Courtesy the artist and Foxy Production, New York
p. 17

Erin Shirreff
Moon, 2010
Colour video, silent 32:00 min loop
Courtesy the artist and Sikkema Jenkins & Co, New York
p. 20

Lucas Blalock
NM in stripes, 2011
C-print 57 x 46
Courtesy the artist and Ramiken Crucible, New York
p. 24

Cindy Sherman
Untitled Film Still #21 , 1978*
Black-and-white photograph
20.5 x 25
Courtesy the artist and Metro Pictures, New York
p. 26

Jeff Wall
The Drain, 1989*
Transparency in lightbox
229 x 290
Courtesy the artist
© Jeff Wall
p. 28

Jeff Wall
Still Creek, Vancouver, winter 2003, 2003
Transparency in lightbox
202.5 x 259.5
Courtesy the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery, London
© Jeff Wall
p. 29

List of Works

All works from the Zabludowicz Collection.

Works are included in the exhibition unless marked*. Dimensions given in centimetres.

Lucas Blalock
Athena's Fruit Dish, 2012
C-print 29 x 37
Courtesy the artist and Ramiken Crucible, New York
p. 41

Lucas Blalock
Picture For Owen, 2011
Silver gelatin print 130 x 104
Courtesy the artist and Ramiken Crucible, New York
p. 42

Lucas Blalock
Gaba with Fans, 2012
C-print 154 x 122
Courtesy the artist and Ramiken Crucible, New York
p. 43

Lucas Blalock
Tree on Keystone, 2011
C-print 113 x 90
Courtesy the artist and Ramiken Crucible, New York
p. 44

Lucas Blalock
untitled study, 2011
C-print 60 x 73
Courtesy the artist and Ramiken Crucible, New York
p. 45

Lucas Blalock
xxxxxxx, 2011
C-print 92.7 x 73.7
Courtesy the artist and Ramiken Crucible, New York
p. 46

Lucas Blalock
Coffee Pot, 2012
C-print 62.4 x 50
Courtesy the artist and White Cube, London
p. 47

Anne Collier
Album (The Amazing), 2015*
C-print 118.7 x 153.5
Courtesy the artist and Anton Kern Gallery, New York; Galerie Neu, Berlin; The Modern Institute/ Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow; Marc Foxx Gallery, Los Angeles © Anne Collier
p. 48

Anne Collier
Positive (California), 2016
C-print 226.4 x 180.3
Courtesy the artist and Anton Kern Gallery, New York; Galerie Neu, Berlin; The Modern Institute/ Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow; Marc Foxx Gallery, Los Angeles © Anne Collier
p. 49

Anne Collier
Studio Sunset, 2007
C-print 160.5 x 127
Courtesy the artist and Anton Kern Gallery, New York; Galerie Neu, Berlin; The Modern Institute/ Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow; Marc Foxx Gallery, Los Angeles © Anne Collier
p. 50

Anne Collier
Studio Moonlight, 2008
C-print 163.1 x 127
Courtesy the artist and Anton Kern Gallery, New York; Galerie Neu, Berlin; The Modern Institute/ Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow; Marc Foxx Gallery, Los Angeles © Anne Collier
p. 51

Sara Cwynar
Corinthian Column (Plastic Cups), 2014
C-print, framed 76.2 x 61
Courtesy the artist and Foxy Production, New York
p. 52

Sara Cwynar
Islamic Dome (Plastic Cups), 2014
C-print, framed 76.2 x 61
Courtesy the artist and Foxy Production, New York
p. 53

Sara Cwynar
Soft Film, 2016
Stills from 16mm film on video with sound, 7:06 mins running time
Courtesy the artist and Foxy Production, New York
p. 54

Sara Cwynar
Soft Film, 2016
(installation view)
16mm film on video with sound, 7:06 mins running time
Courtesy the artist and Foxy Production, New York
p. 55

Sara Cwynar
Women, 2015
Archival pigment print mounted on Plexiglas 81.3 x 63.5
Courtesy the artist and Foxy Production, New York
Photographer: Mark Woods
p. 56

Sara Cwynar
Women, 2015 (detail)
Archival pigment print mounted on Plexiglas 81.3 x 63.5
Courtesy the artist and Foxy Production, New York
p. 57

Natalie Czech
A hidden poem by Robert Lax, 2012
C-print 77 x 105
Courtesy the artist and Kadel Willborn, Düsseldorf
pp. 58-59

Natalie Czech
Three hidden poems by Velimir Khlebnikov, 2011
Different colours on C-print, 2 prints 65 x 47, 1 print 39 x 35
Courtesy the artist and Kadel Willborn, Düsseldorf
pp. 60-61

Natalie Czech
A hidden poem by Aram Saroyan, 2012
C-print 42.5 x 55
Courtesy the artist and Kadel Willborn, Düsseldorf
pp. 62-63

Andreas Gursky
May Day II, 1998*
Framed and Plexiglas glazed photograph 183 x 226
Courtesy Sprüth Magers
© Andreas Gursky / DACS
pp. 64-65

Andreas Gursky
Leipzig, 1995
C-print 181.6 x 242.6
Courtesy the artist/ DACS 2016
Photographer: Tim Bowditch
pp. 66-67

Andreas Gursky
Chicago Board of Trade II, 1999
C-print mounted on Plexiglas in artist's frame 207 x 337
Courtesy Sprüth Magers © Andreas Gursky / DACS
pp. 68-69

Elad Lassry
Sea (Puzzle), 2010
C-print in artist's frame 29.2 x 36.8 x 3.8
Courtesy 303 Gallery, New York © Elad Lassry
p. 70

Elad Lassry
Woman (Coral), 2011
Silver gelatin print with walnut frame 36.8 x 29.2 x 3.8
Courtesy 303 Gallery, New York © Elad Lassry
p. 71

Elad Lassry
Egyptian Mau, 2010
C-print with painted frame 36.8 x 29.2 x 3.8
Courtesy the artist
p. 72

Elad Lassry
Sculpture (Zebrawood), 2010
C-print with wooden frame 36.8 x 29.2 x 3.8
Courtesy 303 Gallery, New York © Elad Lassry
p. 73

Elad Lassry
Untitled (Two Cats), 2014
Acrylic glass, silver gelatin print, wire, tubing, pigment, stainless steel and ceramic beads 59.4 x 44.2 x 5
Courtesy the artist and White Cube, London
Photographer: Fredrik Nilsen Studio
p. 74

Elad Lassry
Woman (Ball A), 2014
C-print with painted frame 36.8 x 29.2 x 3.8
Courtesy the artist and David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles
p. 75

Richard Prince
Untitled (Cowboy), 1994
Ektacolour photograph 154.9 x 104.1
Courtesy the artist and Barbara Gladstone Gallery, New York
p. 77

Richard Prince
Untitled (four women looking in the same direction), 1977
Set of 4 Ektacolour prints each 50.8 x 60.9
Courtesy the artist and Barbara Gladstone Gallery, New York
pp. 78-79

Thomas Ruff
Stoya, 1986
C-print 210 x 165
Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner Gallery, New York
© DACS 2017
p. 80

Thomas Ruff
Untitled Portrait, 1987
C-print 210 x 165
Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner Gallery, New York
© DACS 2017
p. 81

Thomas Ruff
jpeg ny15, 2007
C-print face-mounted to Diasec 263 x 188
Courtesy the artist and Mai 36 Galerie, Zürich
p. 82

Thomas Ruff
19h 10m/-30°, 1992*
C-print 260 x 188
Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner Gallery, New York
© DACS 2017
p. 83

Thomas Ruff
Substrat 8 II, 2002*
Colour coupler print face-mounted to Diasec 164.5 x 305
Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner Gallery, New York
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p. 84-85

Cindy Sherman
Untitled Film Still #41, 1979
Black-and-white photograph 20.5 x 25
Courtesy the artist and Metro Pictures, New York
pp. 86-87

Cindy Sherman
Untitled #124, 1983*
Colour photograph 62.2 x 83.8
Courtesy the artist and Metro Pictures, New York
p. 88

Cindy Sherman
Untitled #127, 1983*
C-print 82.6 x 54.6
Courtesy the artist and Metro Pictures, New York
p. 89

Erin Shirreff
Roden Crater, 2011
Stills from colour single channel video, silent
14:34 mins loop
Courtesy the artist and Sikkema Jenkins & Co, New York
pp. 90-93

Erin Shirreff
Signatures, 2011
Two archival pigment prints each 59.69 x 88.9
Courtesy the artist and Sikkema Jenkins & Co, New York
pp. 94-95

Wolfgang Tillmans
Berlin installation 1995-2000, 2000
31 parts, installation
280 x 1200
Courtesy Maureen Paley, London © Wolfgang Tillmans
pp. 96-105

Wolfgang Tillmans
wool, 1998
Photographic print framed
44 x 34 x 2.5
part of *Berlin Installation 1995-2000*, 2000
Courtesy Maureen Paley, London © Wolfgang Tillmans
p. 96

Wolfgang Tillmans
Lutz in sand dunes, 2000
Photographic print framed
44 x 34 x 2.5
part of *Berlin Installation 1995-2000*, 2000
Courtesy Maureen Paley, London © Wolfgang Tillmans
p. 97

Wolfgang Tillmans
Faltenwurf (green), 2000
Photographic print framed
44 x 34 x 2.5
part of *Berlin Installation 1995-2000*, 2000
Courtesy Maureen Paley, London © Wolfgang Tillmans
pp. 98-99

Wolfgang Tillmans
Selbstportrait, 1988
Photographic print framed
44 x 34 x 2.5
part of *Berlin Installation 1995-2000*, 2000
Courtesy Maureen Paley, London © Wolfgang Tillmans
p. 100

Wolfgang Tillmans
I don't want to get over you, 2000
Photographic print framed
64 x 54.3 x 2.5
part of *Berlin Installation 1995-2000*, 2000
Courtesy Maureen Paley, London © Wolfgang Tillmans
p. 101

Wolfgang Tillmans
shooting cloud, 1999
Photographic print framed
44 x 34 x 2.5
part of *Berlin Installation 1995-2000*, 2000
Courtesy Maureen Paley, London © Wolfgang Tillmans
p. 102

Wolfgang Tillmans
Nightswimmer, 1998
Photographic print framed
64.3 x 54.3 x 2.5
part of *Berlin Installation 1995-2000*, 2000
Courtesy Maureen Paley, London © Wolfgang Tillmans
p. 103

Wolfgang Tillmans
windowbox, 2000
Photographic print framed
54.3 x 64.3 x 2.5
part of *Berlin Installation 1995-2000*, 2000
Courtesy Maureen Paley, London © Wolfgang Tillmans
pp. 104-105

Wolfgang Tillmans
truth study center Table XVIII, 2005
Wood, glass, c-type prints
85 x 185 x 46
Courtesy the artist and Maureen Paley, London
© Wolfgang Tillmans
p. 106

Wolfgang Tillmans
truth study center Table XXIII, 2005
Wood, glass, C-type prints
85 x 185 x 46
Courtesy the artist and Maureen Paley, London
© Wolfgang Tillmans
p. 107

Wolfgang Tillmans
dark side of gold, 2006
C-print 174 x 234
Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner, New York; Galerie Buchholz, Cologne/Berlin;
© Wolfgang Tillmans
p. 108

Wolfgang Tillmans
Jeddah mall III, 2012
C-type print mounted on Dibond in artist's frame
212.5 x 145
Courtesy the artist and Maureen Paley, London
© Wolfgang Tillmans
p. 109

Sara VanDerBeek
An Open Problem, 2010
Digital C-print 51 x 41
Courtesy the artist and The Approach, London
p. 110

Sara VanDerBeek
Baltimore Arrival, 2010
Digital C-print 51 x 41
Courtesy the artist and The Approach, London
p. 111

Sara VanDerBeek
Absent, 2010
Digital C-print 51 x 41
Courtesy the artist and The Approach, London
p. 112

Sara VanDerBeek
Baltimore Departure, 2010
Digital C-print 51 x 41
Courtesy the artist and The Approach, London
p. 113

Jeff Wall
Still Creek, Vancouver, winter 2003, 2003
Transparency in lightbox
202.5 x 259.5
Courtesy the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery, London
© Jeff Wall
pp. 114-115

Christopher Williams
Plaubel Makinette 67
Early transparent prototype of the
Plaubel Makna 67 rangefinder camera,
for rollfilm typ 120, 10 Exp.
Build Nov. 03 1976 as
Plaubel Makinette 6x7
by Götz Schrader for presentational
purposes at the Photokina 1976, Cologne
This prototype looks quite different from the later produced serial model.
Lens: Especially for Plaubel designed
extra flat Nikon, Nikkor 1:2,8 f=8mm.
multicoated, six elements, four groups
Serial # 502407
Seiko shutter, Seiko Corporation in Tokyo
The serial Makina was reconstructed by
Konica, Konica Corporation, Tokyo and
Mamiya, Mamiya Corporation, Tokyo.
Serial production by Mamiya, Mamiya Co.
Tokyo between 1978 and 1984
Los Angeles, May 8th and 9th 2008, (rear view)
2009

each:
C-print 50.8 x 60.8
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne
pp. 116-117

Christopher Williams
Linhof Technika V fabricated in Munich, Germany. Salon Studio Stand
fabricated in Florence, Italy.
Dual cable release. Prontor shutter. Symar-s
lens 150mmm/f 5.6 Schneider kreuznach. Sinar fresnel lens placed with black
tape on the ground glass. (Yellow)
Dirk Schaper Studio, Berlin, June 19, 2007
2008
C-print
50.8 x 40.6
Courtesy David Zwirner, New York/London
p. 118

Christopher Williams
Model: 1964 Renault Dauphine-Four, R-1095. Body Type & Seating: 4-dr sedan-4 to 5 persons. Engine Type: 14/52. Weight: 1397 lbs. Price: $1,495.00 USD (original)
ENGINE DATA: Base four: inline, overhead-valve four-cylinder. Cast iron block and aluminum head. W/removable cylinder sleeves. Displacement: 51.5 cu. in. (845 oc.). Bore and Stroke: 2.23 × 3.14 in. (58 × 80 mm). Compression Ratio: 7.25:1. Brake Horsepower: 32 (SAE) at 4200 rpm. Torque: 50 lbs. at 2000 rpm. Three main bearings. Solid valve lifters. Single downdraft carburetor
CHASSIS DATA: Wheelbase: 89 in. Overall length: 155 in. Height: 57 in. Width: 60 in. Front Thread: 49 in. Rear Thread: 48 in. Standard Tires: 5.50 × 15
TECHNICAL: Layout: rear engine, rear drive. Transmission: four speed manual. Steering: rack and pinion. Suspension (front): independent coil springs. Suspension (back): independent with swing axles and coil springs. Brakes: front/rear disc. Body construction: steel unibody
PRODUCTION DATA: Sales: 18,432 sold in U.S. in 1964 (all types). Manufacturer: Régie Nationale des Usines Renault, Billancourt, France. Distributor: Renault Inc., New York, N.Y., U.S.A.
Serial Number: R-10950059799
Engine Number: Type 670-05 # 191563
California License Plate Number: UOU 087
Vehicle ID Number: 0059799 (For R.R.V.)
Los Angeles, California January 15, 2000 (No. 5)
2000
Gelatin silver print
27.9 x 35.6
Courtesy David Zwirner, New York/London
p. 119

You Are Looking at Something That Never Occurred
30 March – 9 July 2017
Zabludowicz Collection
176 Prince of Wales Road, London NW5 3PT
Curated and edited by Paul Luckraft

Printed in an edition of 500 by Cassochrome, Belgium
Designed by Burgess & Beech
Proofread by Penny Williams
Biographies compiled by Rachel Cunningham Clark
Front cover: Lucas Blalock, *Athena's Fruit Dish*, 2012

Zabludowicz Collection would like to thank: the artists and their studios; David Campany; Chris Wiley; Charles Taylor, Melissa Dewitt and Gregory Barker at *Hotshoe* magazine; Edward Dimsdale; Giada Vaghi at Photo London; The Photographers' Gallery, London; Altman Siegel, San Francisco; Anton Kern Gallery, New York; The Approach, London; Barbara Gladstone Gallery, New York; Galerie Buchholz, Cologne/Berlin; Capitain Petzel, Berlin; Cooper Cole, Toronto; David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles; David Zwirner, New York/London; Foxy Production, New York; Galerie Francesca Pia, Zürich; Gagosian Gallery, London; Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne; Galerie Kadel Willborn, Düsseldorf; Mai 36 Galerie, Zürich; Marc Foxx Gallery, Los Angeles; Marian Goodman Gallery, London; Maureen Paley, London; Metro Pictures, New York; The Modern Institute, Glasgow; Galerie Neu, Berlin; Ramiken Crucible, New York; Regen Projects, Los Angeles; Rodolphe Janssen, Brussels; Sadie Coles, London; Sikkema Jenkins & Co, New York; Sprüth Magers, Berlin; White Cube, London; 303 Gallery, New York.

ISBN: 978-1-907921-25-4

The information in this publication is based on material supplied to Zabludowicz Art Projects.

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Registered charity number 1120067.
Registered office: 41 Dover Street, London, W1S 4NS

Lucas Blalock
Athena's Fruit Dish, 2012

Lucas Blalock
Picture For Owen, 2011

Lucas Blalock
Gaba with Fans, 2012

Lucas Blalock
Tree on Keystone, 2011

Lucas Blalock
untitled study, 2011

Lucas Blalock
xxxxxxx, 2011

Lucas Blalock
Coffee Pot, 2012

Anne Collier
Album (The Amazing), 2015

Anne Collier
Positive (California), 2016

Anne Collier
Studio Sunset, 2007

Anne Collier
Studio Moonlight, 2008

Sara Cwynar
Corinthian Column (Plastic Cups), 2014

Sara Cwynar
Islamic Dome (Plastic Cups), 2014

Sara Cwynar
Soft Film, 2016

Sara Cwynar
Women, 2015

A hidden poem by
Robert Lax

does
eve
ry
riv
er
run
to
the
sea

&
is
the
sea
a
home
for
me
?

the
sea
's
the
home
from
which
i
rose

&
home
ward
now
the
riv
er
goes

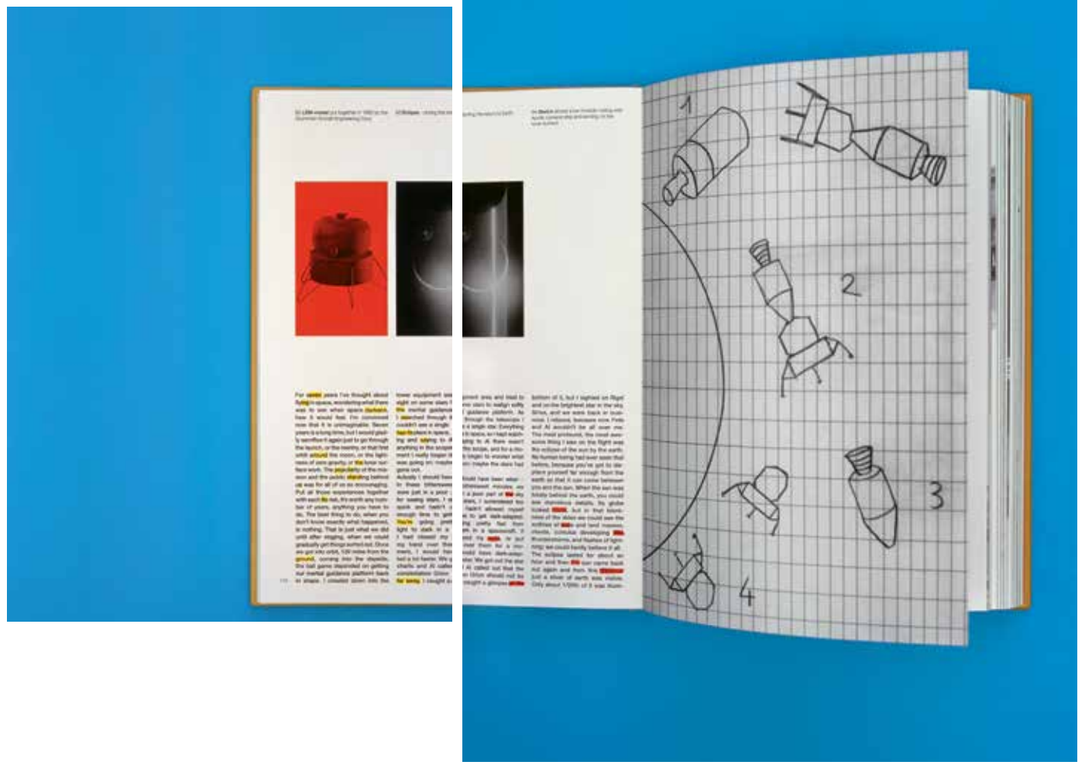
Natalie Czech
A hidden poem by Robert Lax, 2012

Three hidden poems by
Velimir Khlebnikov

Things today
are soft
and wise—
sweet surrender
sails the skies.

Evening darkens round
the poplar stands its ground
the sea has its say
you're far away.

The eyes of the Black
Sea into the distance.



Natalie Czech
Three hidden poems by Velimir Khlebnikov, 2011

The salvaging of the Costa Concordia, a capsized cruise ship off the coast of Italy, could become the most complicated marine salvage operation in history. As hope fades for more survivors, finger-pointing begins.

View of the stricken cruise ship which ran aground and capsized near the island of Giglio in Italy on 13 January. The image was taken on 17 January. *Photo: AP*

The $563 million ship, owned by Costa Cruises, a subsidiary of Carnival Corporation, departed from its normal route on Jan. 13 and struck rocks that tore a gash in the hull. The search of the shipwreck was suspended for most of Friday, after the wreckage shifted about five inches toward the open sea. After concluding that the risk to divers had fallen as

down to all the submerged parts of the ship. Among the most recent items recovered from the ship were a Madonna and baby Jesus from the ship's chapel, retrieved Thursday night and early Friday. The ship's captain, Francesco Schettino, 51, is under house arrest near Naples as prosecutors prepare formal charges that are likely to include manslaughter, causing a ship-

notify the coast guard promptly and climbing into a lifeboat while hundreds of the 4,200 passengers and crew members were still scrambling to escape. Rogelio Barista, a Filipino chef and crew member who was working the night of the shipwreck, told the GMA Network in the Philippines that Captain Schettino had insisted on dining with a young woman and even

The woman who has been identified as the captain's dining companion that night, Domnica Cemortan, a 24-year-old blond Moldovan who had formerly worked for the cruise company but was traveling as a paying passenger, vigorously defended him in an interview with Adavarul, a Moldovan newspaper. Her version was different to some news media accounts, as she said, Captain

A hidden poem by
Aram Saroyan

a man stands
on his
head one
minute–

then he
sit
down all
different

Natalie Czech
A hidden poem by Aram Saroyan, 2012

Andreas Gursky
May Day II, 1998

Andreas Gursky
Leipzig, 1995

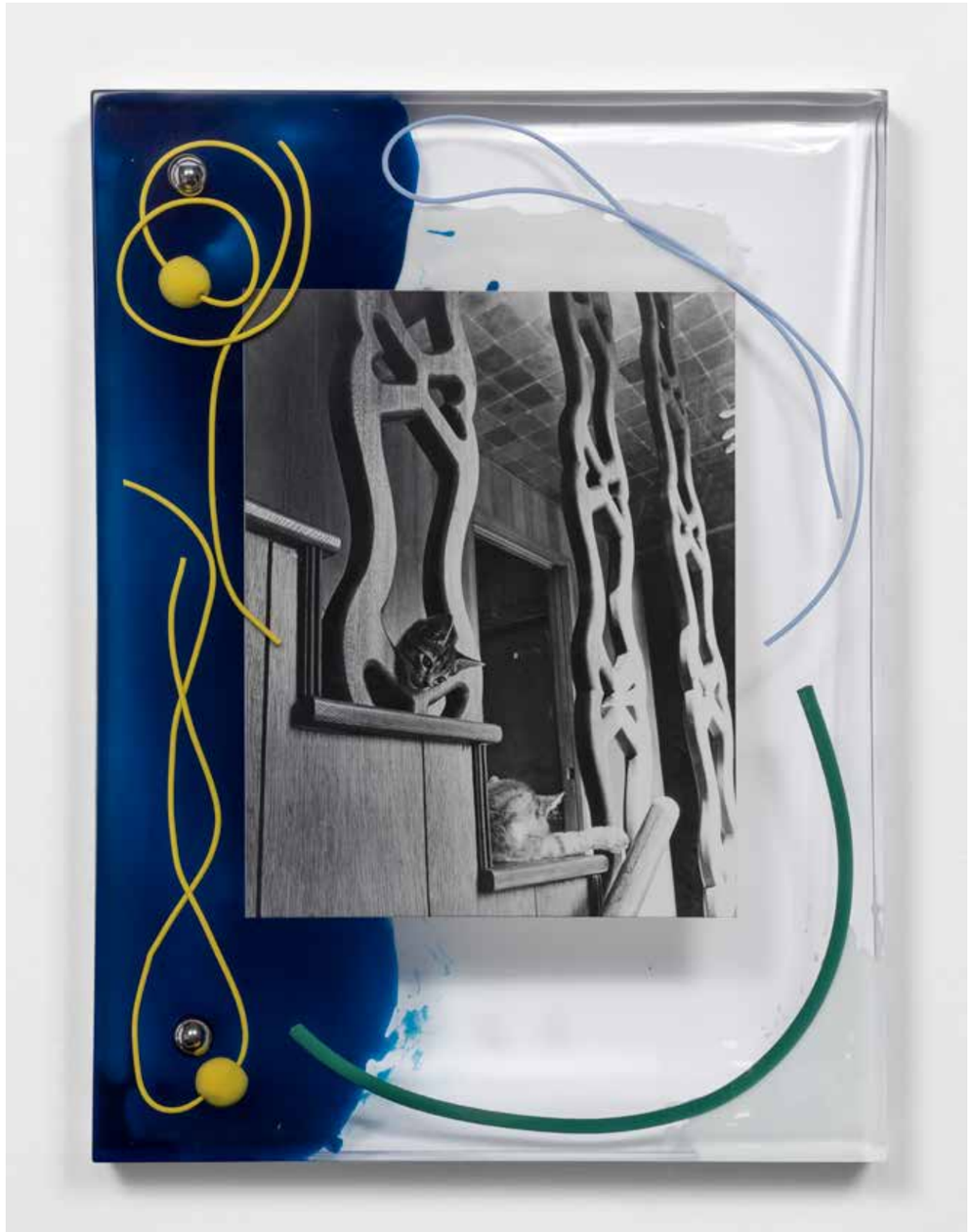
Andreas Gursky
Chicago Board of Trade II, 1999

Elad Lassry
Sea (Puzzle), 2010

Elad Lassry
Woman (Coral), 2011

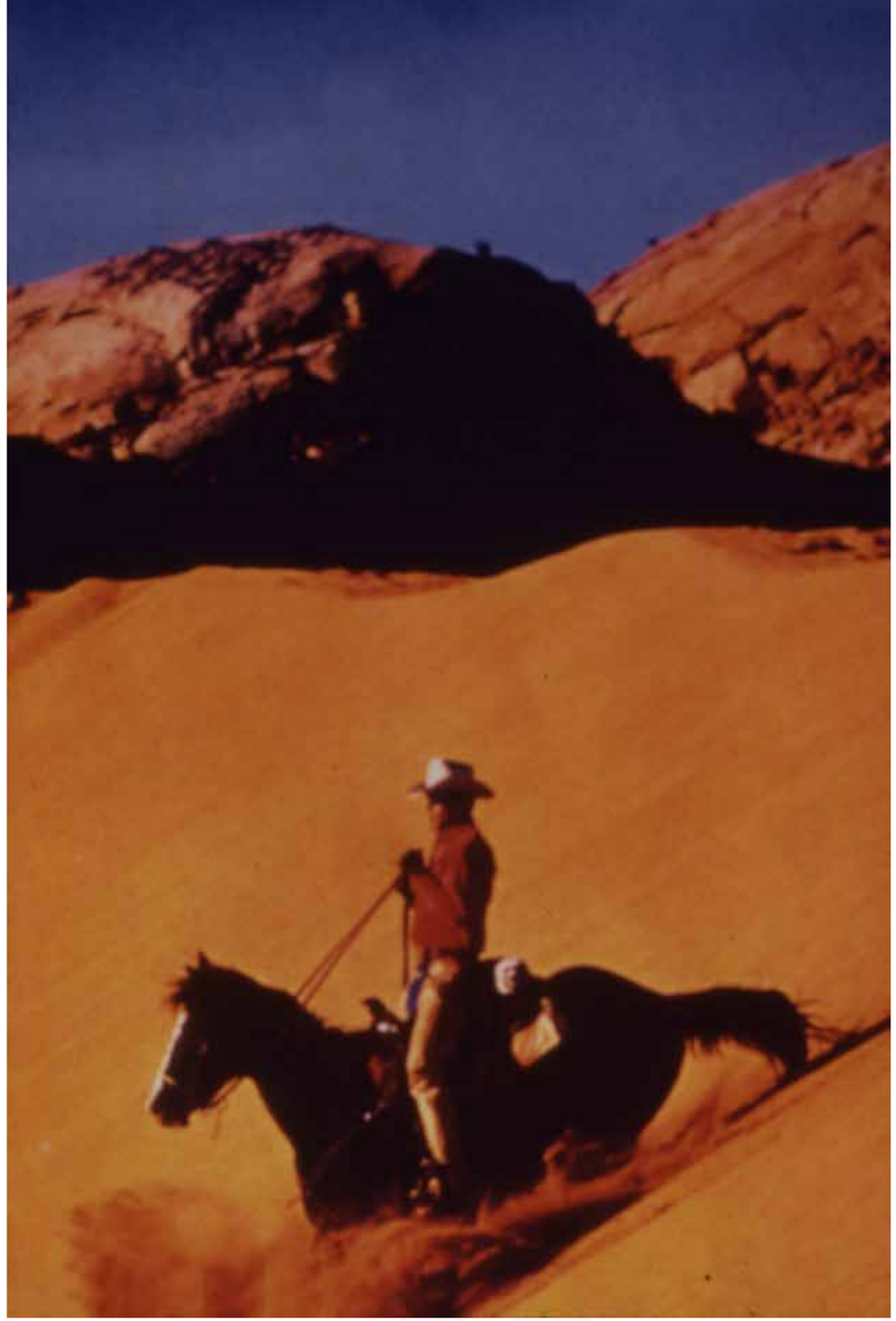
Elad Lassry
Egyptian Mau, 2010

Elad Lassry
Sculpture (Zebrawood), 2010



Elad Lassry
Untitled (Two Cats), 2014

Elad Lassry
Woman (Ball A), 2014



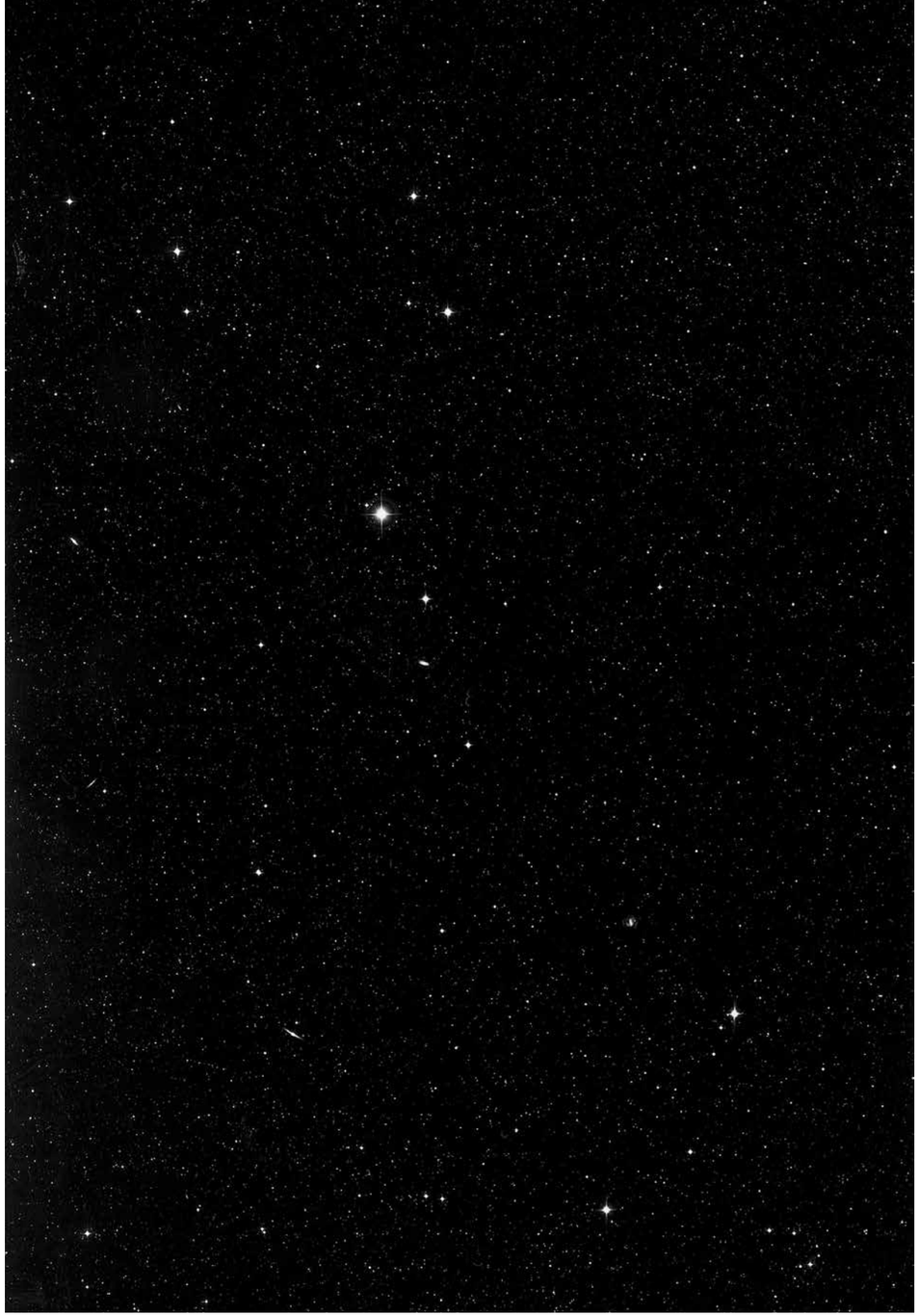
Richard Prince
Untitled (Cowboy), 1994

Richard Prince
Untitled (four women looking in the same direction), 1977

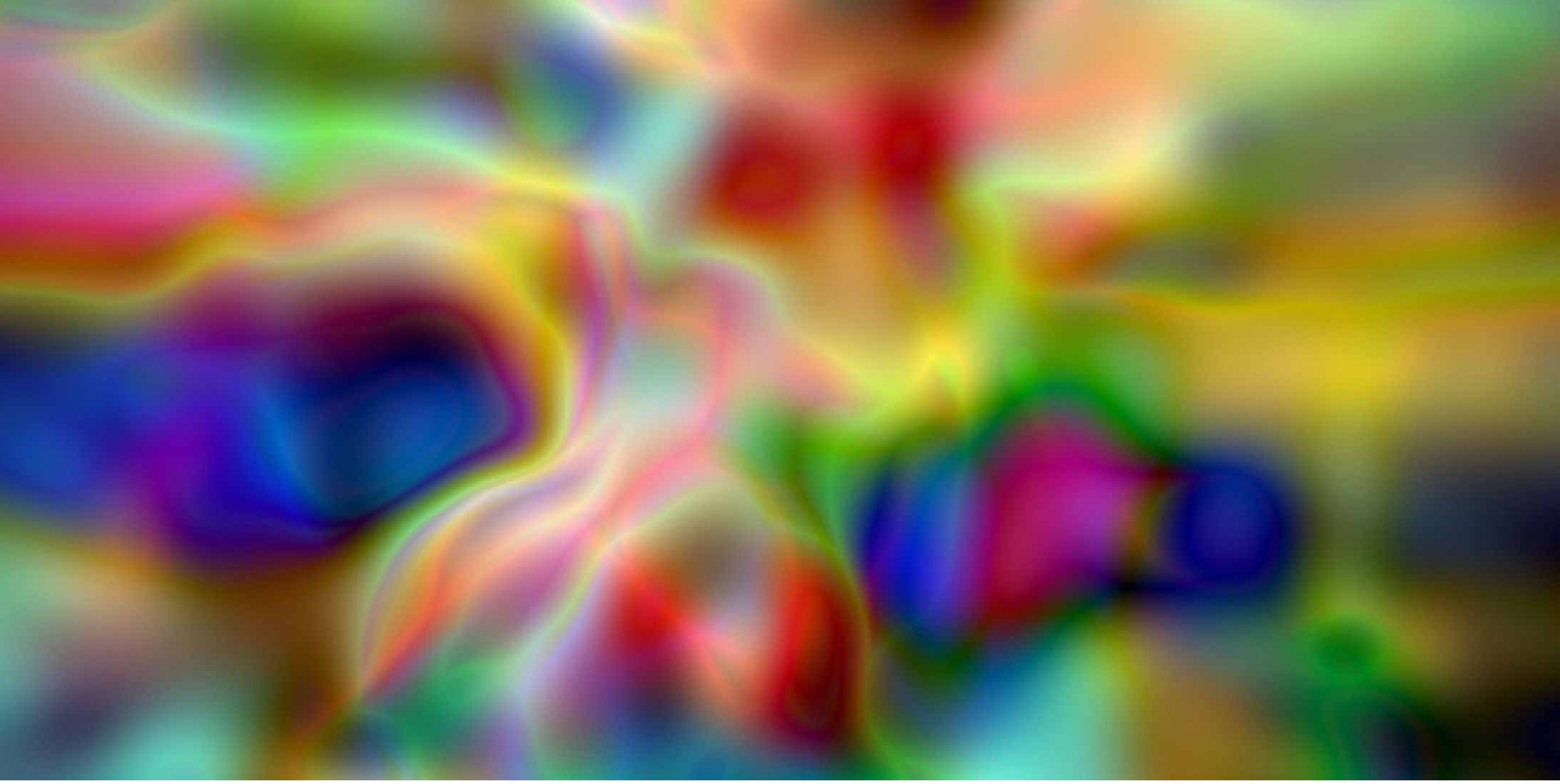
Thomas Ruff
Stoya, 1986

Thomas Ruff
Untitled Portrait, 1987

Thomas Ruff
jpeg ny15, 2007



Thomas Ruff
19h 10m/-30°, 1992



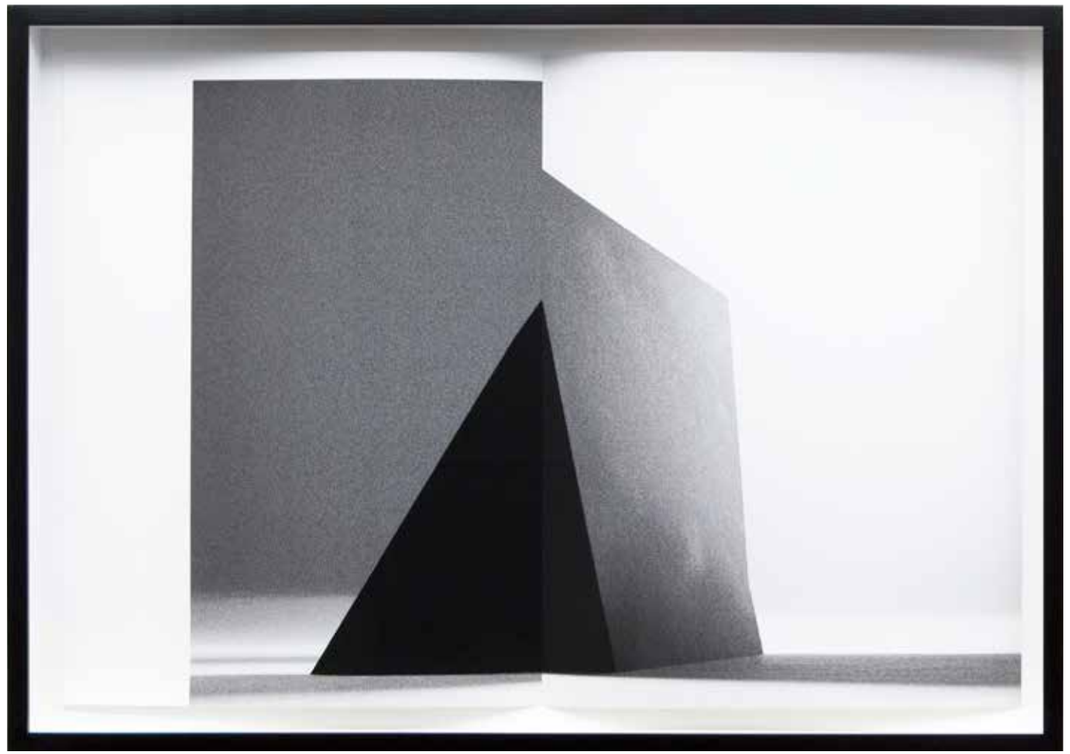
Thomas Ruff
Substrat 8 II, 2002

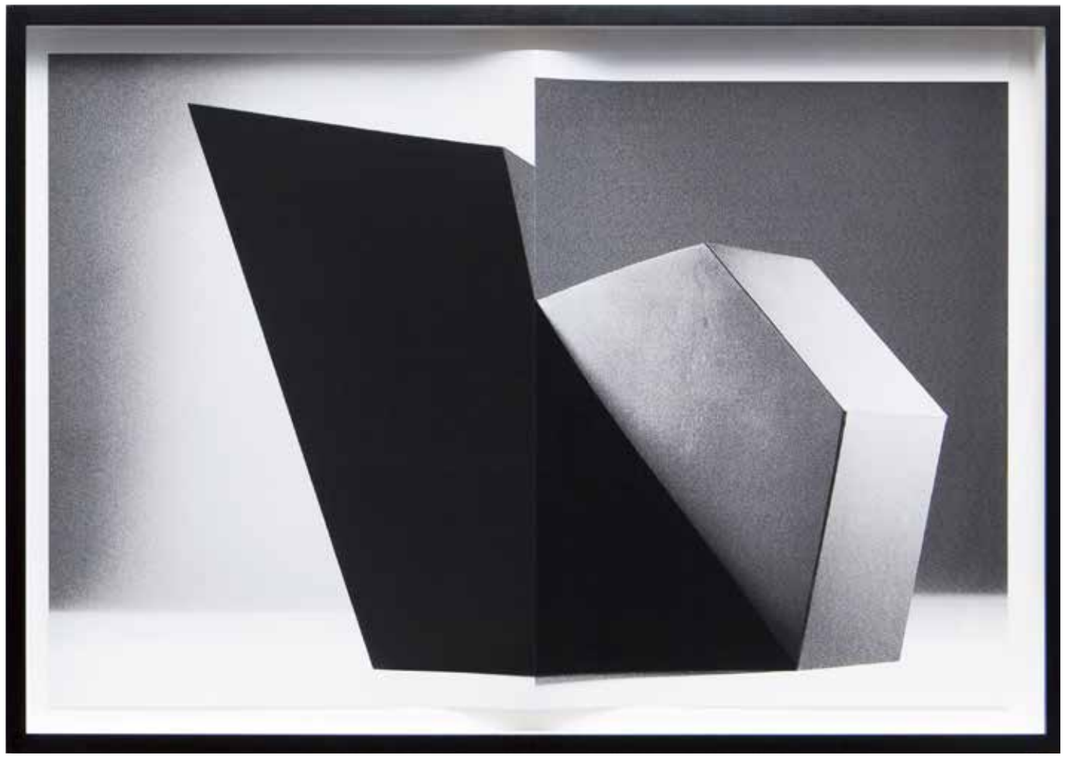
Cindy Sherman
Untitled Film Still #41, 1979

Cindy Sherman
Untitled #124, 1983

Cindy Sherman
Untitled #127, 1983

Erin Shirreff
Roden Crater, 2011



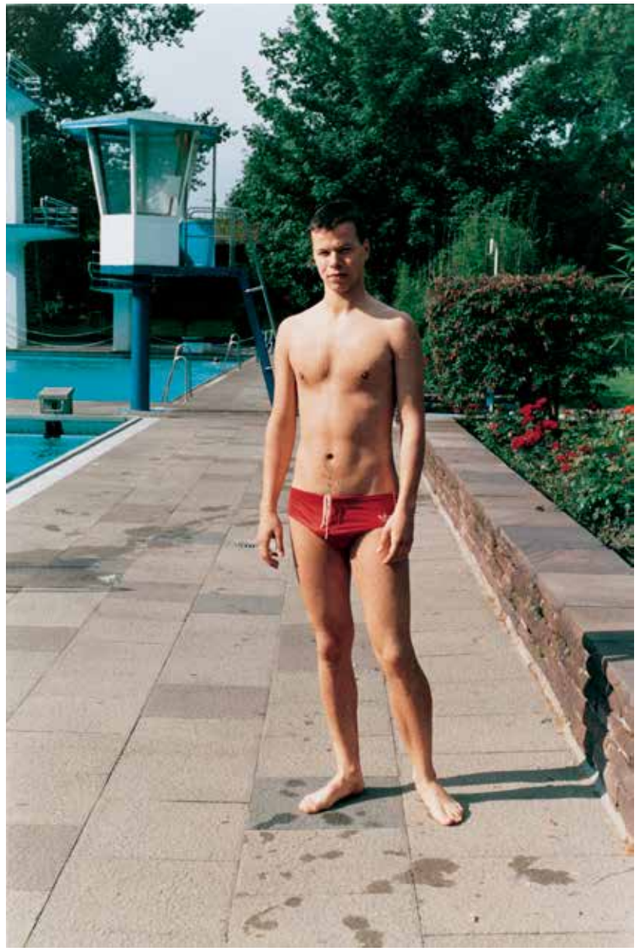


Erin Shirreff
Signatures, 2011

Wolfgang Tillmans
wool, 1998. Part of *Berlin Installation 1995-2000*, 2000

Wolfgang Tillmans
Lutz in sand dunes, 2000. Part of *Berlin Installation 1995-2000*, 2000

Wolfgang Tillmans
Faltenwurf (green), 2000. Part of *Berlin Installation 1995-2000*, 2000



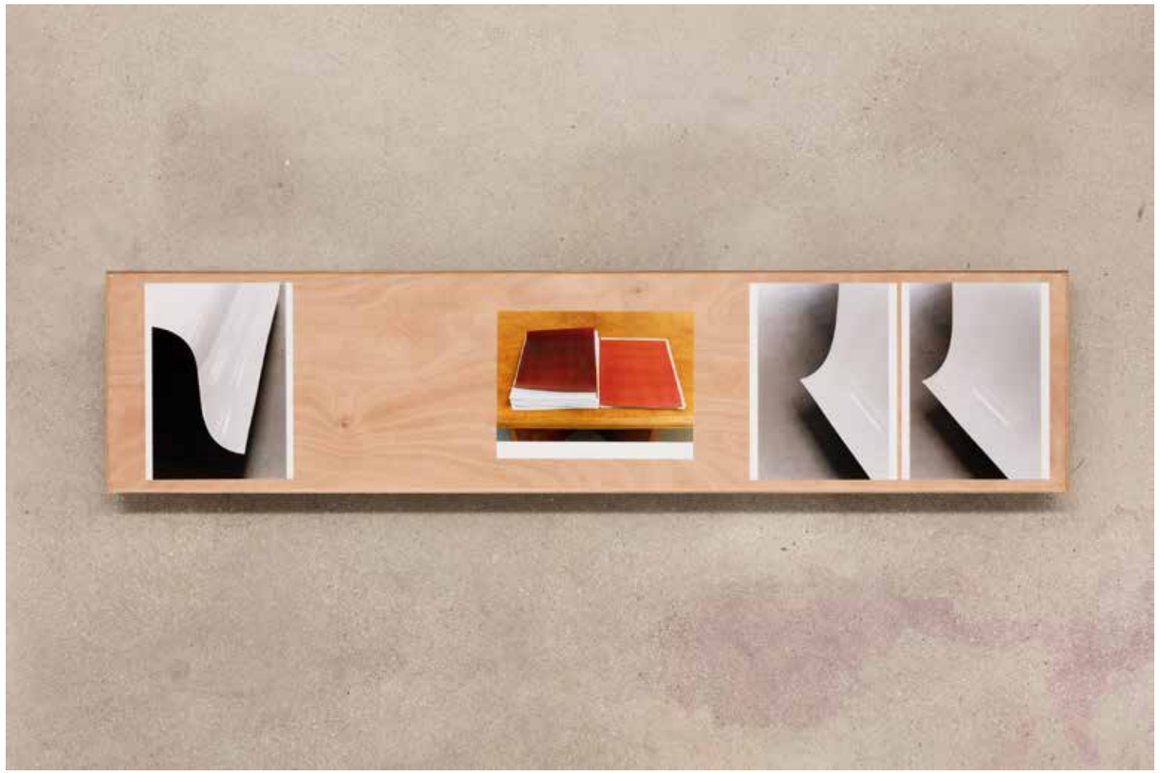
Wolfgang Tillmans
Selbstportrait, 1988. Part of *Berlin Installation 1995-2000*, 2000

Wolfgang Tillmans
I don't want to get over you, 2000. Part of *Berlin Installation 1995-2000*, 2000

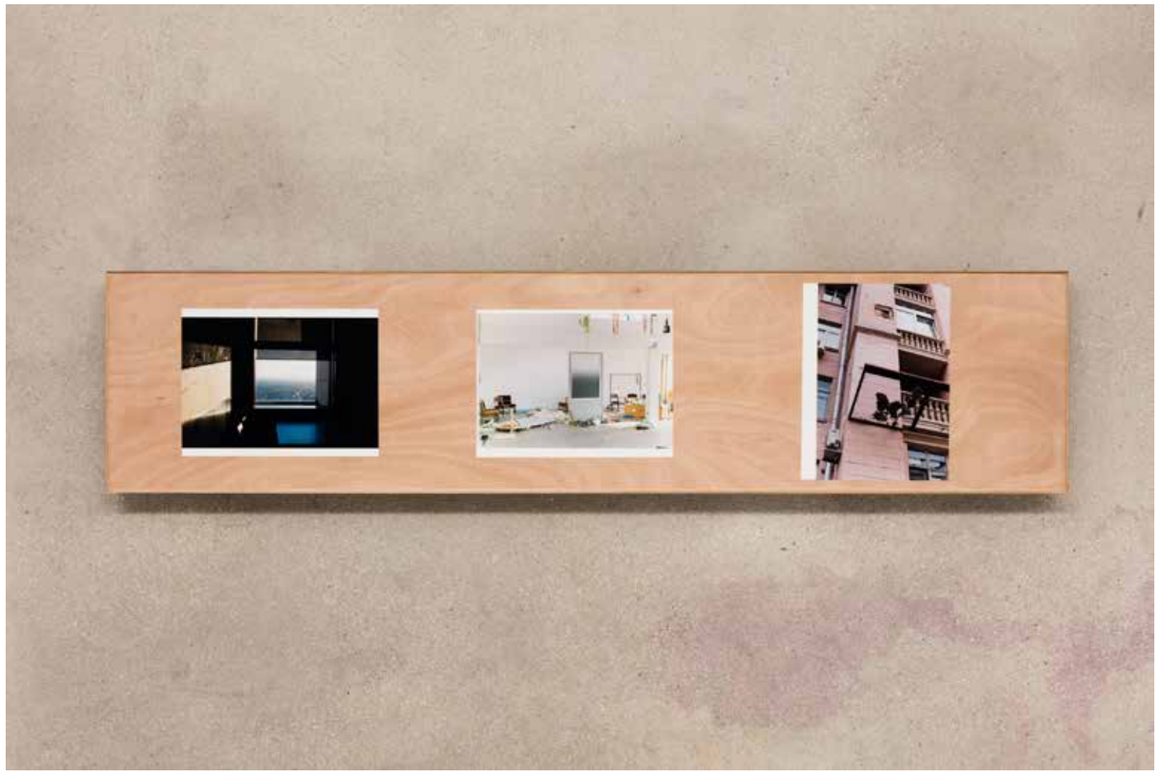
Wolfgang Tillmans
shooting cloud, 1999. Part of *Berlin Installation 1995–2000*, 2000

Wolfgang Tillmans
Nightswimmer, 1998. Part of *Berlin Installation 1995–2000*, 2000

Wolfgang Tillmans
windowbox, 2000. Part of *Berlin Installation 1995-2000*, 2000



Wolfgang Tillmans
truth study center Table XVIII, 2005



Wolfgang Tillmans
truth study center Table XXIII, 2005

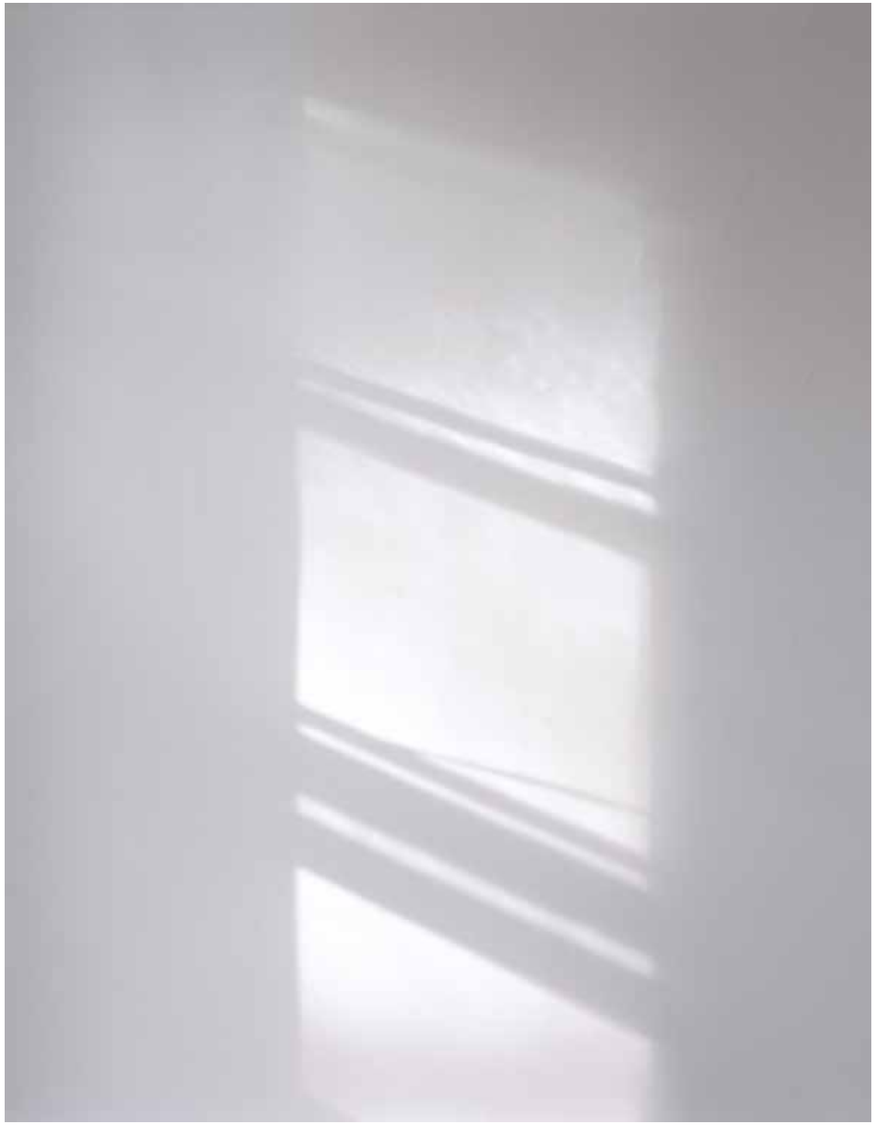
Wolfgang Tillmans
dark side of gold, 2006

Wolfgang Tillmans
Jeddah mall III, 2012

Sara VanDerBeek
An Open Problem, 2010

Sara VanDerBeek
Baltimore Arrival, 2010

Sara VanDerBeek
Absent, 2010



Sara VanDerBeek
Baltimore Departure, 2010

Jeff Wall
Still Creek, Vancouver, winter 2003, 2003

Christopher Williams
Plaubel Makinette 67
Early transparent prototype of the
Plaubel Makna 67 rangefinder camera,
for rollfilm typ 120, 10 Exp.
Build Nov. 03 1976 as
Plaubel Makinette 6x7
by Götz Schrader for presentational
purposes at the Photokina 1976, Cologne
This prototype looks quite different from the
later produced serial model.
Lens: Especially for Plaubel designed
extra flat Nikon, Nikkor 1:2,8 f=8mm.
multicoated, six elements, four groups
Serial # 502407
Seiko shutter, Seiko Corporation in Tokyo
The serial Makina was reconstructed by
Konica, Konica Corporation, Tokyo and
Mamiya, Mamiya Corporation, Tokyo.
Serial production by Mamiya, Mamiya Co.
Tokyo between 1978 and 1984
Los Angeles, May 2nd 2008, (front view)
2009

Christopher Williams
Plaubel Makinette 67
Early transparent prototype of the
Plaubel Makna 67 rangefinder camera,
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Build Nov. 03 1976 as
Plaubel Makinette 6x7
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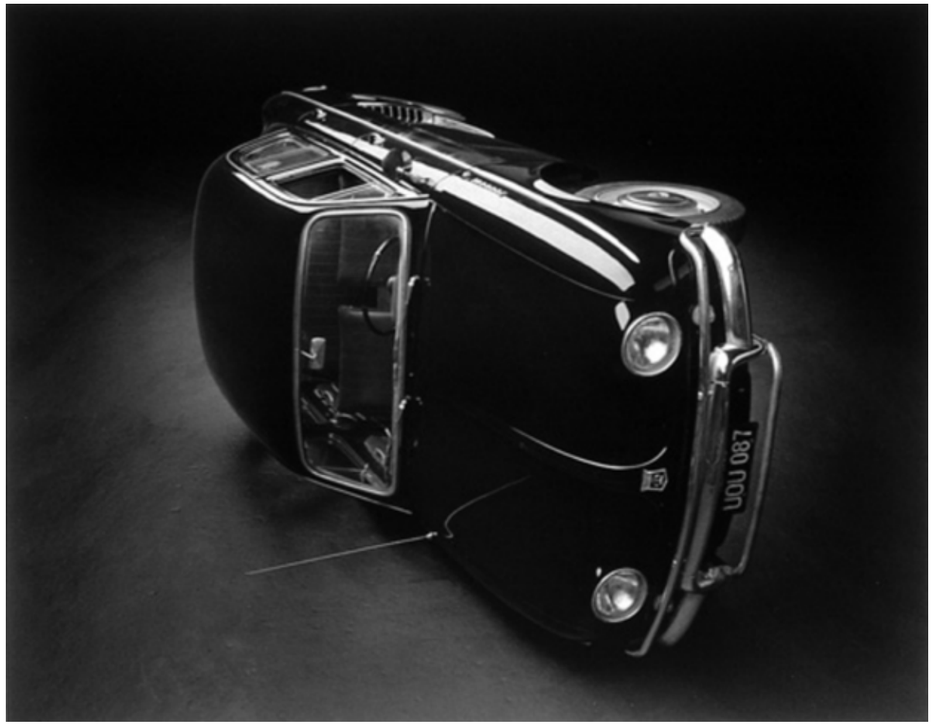
Serial production by Mamiya, Mamiya Co.
Tokyo between 1978 and 1984
Los Angeles, May 8th and 9th 2008, (rear view)
2009

Christopher Williams
Linhof Technika V fabricated in Munich, Germany. Salon Studio Stand fabricated in Florence, Italy. Dual cable release. Prontor shutter. Symar-s lens 150mmm/f 5.6 Schneider kreuznach. Sinar fresnel lens placed with black tape on the ground glass. (Yellow)
Dirk Schaper Studio, Berlin, June 19, 2007
2008



Christopher Williams
Model: 1964 Renault Dauphine-Four, R-1095. Body Type & Seating: 4-dr sedan-4 to 5 persons. Engine Type: 14/52. Weight: 1397 lbs. Price: $1,495.00 USD (original)
ENGINE DATA: Base four: inline, overhead-valve four-cylinder. Cast iron block and aluminum head. W/removable cylinder sleeves. Displacement: 51.5 cu. in. (845 oc.). Bore and Stroke: 2.23 × 3.14 in. (58 × 80 mm). Compression Ratio: 7.25:1. Brake Horsepower: 32 (SAE) at 4200 rpm. Torque: 50 lbs. at 2000 rpm. Three main bearings. Solid valve lifters. Single downdraft carburetor
CHASSIS DATA: Wheelbase: 89 in. Overall length: 155 in. Height: 57 in. Width: 60 in. Front Thread: 49 in. Rear Thread: 48 in. Standard Tires: 5.50 × 15
TECHNICAL: Layout: rear engine, rear drive. Transmission: four speed manual. Steering: rack and pinion. Suspension (front): independent coil springs. Suspension (back): independent with swing axles and coil springs. Brakes: front/rear disc. Body construction: steel unibody
PRODUCTION DATA: Sales: 18,432 sold in U.S. in 1964 (all types). Manufacturer: Régie Nationale des Usines Renault, Billancourt, France. Distributor: Renault Inc., New York, N.Y., U.S.A.
Serial Number: R-10950059799
Engine Number: Type 670-05 # 191563
California License Plate Number: UOU 087
Vehicle ID Number: 0059799 (For R.R.V.)
Los Angeles, California
January 15, 2000 (No. 5)
2000