

## **Wolfgang Tillmans**

“Summer Storm Rain Drops Freeze Frame”

26 April - 13 July 2024

Wolfgang Tillmans has devoted himself to creating pictures that negotiate between the things he makes, the things he finds, and the choices he makes recording, preserving, and translating the three-dimensionality of the material world. Tillmans's new exhibition at Galerie Buchholz attests to his ongoing interest in this significant aspect of his practice: the recording of materiality and sculptural forms in his work.

While rooted in the material world, Tillmans's works are the result of an interplay of optical translations of matter, which the artist transforms through the technological use of the camera. Under his gaze, purposeful objects cease to have their specific functionality and are morphed into sculptural objects of meditation, pointing beyond their intended purpose: a steel urinal radiates sensations of texture and reflection; a large, seemingly stranded, freight container, exhibited at a 1:1 scale, invites us to look at its sheer presence and mediate on its size, color, and shape; a gigantic advertising structure acts as pure material distortion; and a tower of brussel sprouts becomes an active element in an examination of play and scale in the making of a picture.

Tillmans often makes his pictures in moments of heightened awareness, moments in which he encounters a shift in his surroundings, or in moments when shifts in his surroundings activate his gaze. He finds his subjects as much as his subjects find him, a fact that is made apparent in the relatability of his pictures.

In a view from the artist's Berlin studio on a rainy day, Tillmans captures rain as it falls, freezing the raindrops with the use of new camera technology, allowing each drizzling drop to appear like a glass sphere in which the world around is mirrored as seen through a lens, upside down.

Tillmans's specific pictorial strategy is also an inquiry into the workings of our cognitive apparatus that transforms visual experiences into cognitive ones. He looks at very ordinary things, often staging them, to try to make them reachable, to make them understandable. In his still lifes nothing is purposeful, and yet they convey a sense of the constructedness of the picture that finds its echo in the constructedness of the world, which we often deem as given.

Traversing the two main galleries is a sculptural display structure made of five different building-site planks, which take the artist's interest in horizontal displays to a new distinct direction. These displays expose the exhibits laid unprotected on top, emphasizing the purity of their material presence. The leporello offset-prints and laser-prints Tillmans made for this installation are present as much as sculptural paper objects as carriers of imagery and media of information.

Punctuating the exhibition are Tillmans's *Lighter* works, which negotiate fundamental aspects of photographic image-making as they address the distribution of light and the distribution of space onto a given surface of paper. These folded chromogenic prints, which depict their own three-dimensional shape through shades and gradations of color, are the result of their own three-dimensional materiality exposed to light in the darkroom. Tillmans's *Lighter* works always act like borders between two distinct areas of experience, of light meeting space, thereby creating color and depth through purely material means.

Coinciding with the exhibition is the release of Tillmans's second album *Build From Here*. Driven by a desire to explore and to expose, the album navigates joy and heartbreak amid ruin and rebuilding, embodying defiance in uncertain futures, and extending Tillmans's multifaceted and open approach to making as a gesture towards hope. Co-produced by Tillmans with Tim Knapp and Bruno Breitcke, the album is released as a 12" vinyl record, a CD, a download, and is available on streaming sites.

This exhibition marks the 13th solo show by Tillmans at Galerie Buchholz. 8 years have passed since his 2016 exhibition at the gallery in Berlin which also coincided with Gallery Weekend. In this time the artist has had a major retrospective - *To look without fear* - which opened at the Museum of Modern Art, New York in 2022, and travelled to the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto in 2023, and closed in March 2024 at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. In addition to the North American retrospective, the exhibition *Sound is Liquid* was shown at the Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, Vienna in 2021 and included the premiere of his *Moon in Earthlight* video album. The exhibition *Today Is The First Day* was presented at WIELS, Brussels in 2020; and his show *Rebuilding the Future* was on view at the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin in 2018-2019. From 2018 to 2022, Tillmans embarked on a major touring exhibition on the African continent titled *Fragile* which opened at the Musée d'Art Contemporain et Multimédias, Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo, organized by the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen, Stuttgart, and traveled throughout Africa, including The GoDown Arts Centre, Nairobi, Kenya, the Johannesburg Art Gallery, South Africa, the Modern Art Museum-Gebre Kristos Desta Center, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the Contemporary Art Gallery, Yaoundé, Cameroon, the Museum for Science and Technology, Accra, Ghana, the Musée des Cultures Contemporaines Adama Toungara, Abobo/Abidjan, Ivory Coast, and the Art Twenty One and Centre for Contemporary Art, Lagos, Nigeria. In 2017, Tate Modern in London presented a large-scale survey of Tillmans's work. To coincide with the show, Tillmans developed the light and sound installation *South Tank* transforming the Tate's subterranean former oil tank, and that same year the Fondation Beyeler in Basel mounted a major solo exhibition, its first devoted to an artist primarily using photography.

Born in 1968 in Remscheid, Germany, Wolfgang Tillmans lives and works in Berlin and London. He studied at Bournemouth and Poole College of Art and Design from 1990-1992. Following his earliest reception in the 1990s - a time in which he worked between London and New York - Wolfgang Tillmans was the first photographer and the first non-British artist awarded the prestigious Turner Prize, presented by Tate Britain in London. Tillmans was a professor at Städelschule in Frankfurt from 2003-2009, and in 2009 was elected to serve as an artist trustee on the board of Tate. In 2012 he was inducted into the Akademie der Künste in Berlin and in 2013 was appointed a member of the Royal Academy of Arts, London. He was the 2015 recipient of the Hasselblad Foundation's International Award in Photography. In 2018 he was presented with the Kaiserring from the city of Goslar, one of Germany's most prestigious art prizes. Wolfgang Tillmans was named one of the *TIME 100 Most Influential People* of 2023.

Since 2006, Wolfgang Tillmans has operated the non-profit exhibition space Between Bridges in locations in London and Berlin, opening a new location in 2022 at Adalbertstraße 43 in Berlin. In addition to providing a venue for artists, Between Bridges has since 2017 been a foundation committed to the advancement of democracy, supporting LGBT+ rights and anti-racism work. Political activism has been a core component of Wolfgang Tillmans's work, with direct involvement in the anti-Brexit campaign in Britain and more recently with responses to the rise in right-wing populism in Germany. At the onset of the Covid pandemic he organised the *2020 Solidarity* fundraising project connecting over 50 artists' posters with 100 cultural organisations in 18 countries.