

**Jan Groover**

*The 30x40's*

**NOV 1 – DEC 20, 2024**

We are delighted to announce 'The 30x40s', the second solo exhibition with works by Jan Groover (USA, 1943–2012).

A selection of one of her most important and fascinating groups of works will be on show here in Germany for the first time – colour prints from the late 1980s/early 1990s, in which the artist culminates her conceptual and formal ideas in striking pictorial compositions.

Before Jan Groover dedicated herself to photography, she was a painter. Groover turned away from abstract painting in the early 1970s to experiment with the medium of photography – a medium that seemed more open than the restrictive and male-dominated painting of the time.

From the very beginning, Jan Groover was interested in photographic images that seemed precisely planned and made, rather than discovered and captured by the camera. In the course of her artistic development, she eliminated the documentary elements of her newly understood medium all the more radically: her gaze was always consistently focused on investigating the relationship between the elements of an image – the aesthetic effect of form and structure.

Alongside the well-known 'Kitchen Still Lives' of the late 1970s and their subsequent evolution into small-format black and white prints, Groover's conceptual considerations and compositional excellence are perhaps most impressively exemplified in the pictorial inventions now assembled in the exhibition. These are also the largest 'pictures' in her oeuvre - chromogenic colour prints in 30 x 40 inch format, in which colour gradients, the play with sharpness and perspective, as well as spatial ambiguity and the enigma of the items and object fragments gathered in the pictures are 'performed' in the truest sense of the word. Light as a photographic medium becomes an object itself.

Jan Groover's works are always the result of precise planning and meticulous formulation - on location, in the concrete and personal realisation of her pictorial compositions, always in the moment of the shot, not in post-production.

Moreover, one other characteristic of her approach plays a central role in these images: Groover's photographic subjects are not the main protagonists in the sense of their being objects; rather, it is the fact that everything photographed is an independent element that communicates with the other elements, that testifies to body and space and thus becomes entirely a form.

The framework in which the 30x40 still lifes are arranged is reminiscent of mystical theater scenes, dramatic moments and, above all, painted nature morte. Enriched and at the same time counter-checked with mostly banal household objects, Groover lets their classical symbolism and iconography come to nothing; topics such as vanity, mortality or fertility, crucial to the painted equivalents, do not apply here and are insignificant for Groover's pictorial universe.

The objects, plastic bottles, vessels, kitschy decorative objects, fruit and de Chirico-like architectural pieces such as columns testify to their era, whilst not being interpreted as such, but purely seen as forms among others.

The all-over of these at times exuberant photographs seems deliberate and at the same time a masterful balance – Groover very subtly reflects the basic tenor of a decade in which visual and commodity-related overload took hold for the first time, but simultaneously glamour and optimism were flaunted. These enigmatic, extremely precisely crafted tableaux breathe the stuffy air of opulence in parts, while at the same time stating their mysterious elegance.

Jan Groover's images don't just resonate as a subtle record of feminism and the acceptance of photography as art, but also as extraordinary aesthetic investigations of a 'fiction' that is inseparably bound with the 'factual' conventions of the medium. Her work is still influencing subsequent generations of artists and, especially in light of current digital conventions and procedural image creation, appear both fascinatingly contemporary and inherently timeless.