



**Franz Gertsch: *Polyfocal Allover***  
**September 19 – December 2, 2018**

*Polyfocal Allover* is the first institutional painting survey of Swiss artist Franz Gertsch (b. 1930, Möriegen) in the United States. The exhibition explores Gertsch's decades-long commitment to capturing life in portraiture, primarily through photorealist paintings and woodcut prints.

For the first time in decades, several major works from the artist's monumental series of "situation portraits" from the 1970s will be reunited, including *At Luciano's House* (1973), *Luciano I* (1976), *Luciano II* (1976), and *Portrait of Urs Lüthi* (1970). Based on photographs Gertsch took of a group of young friends who had begun living in a commune in Lucerne after 1968, including celebrated artists Luciano Castelli and Urs Lüthi, the paintings capture the subjects' lively presence as social beings in formation, surrounded by a clutter of clothes, makeup and unwashed dinner plates. The extraordinarily rendered details illuminated by the stark light of a camera flash capture an interest in American counterculture, as well as a playfulness with codes of sexuality and gender.

The exhibition will also feature a suite of Gertsch's large woodcut prints, a medium which the artist devoted himself to exclusively between 1986 and 1995. Several prints from the series *Natascha IV* (1988) are based on the same image of a young woman, with a glacial, yet luminous expression. These are accompanied by *Schwarzwasser* (1991), a study of subtle movement on the surface of a body of water. For the first time, the limewood printing blocks used to print *Natascha IV* will also be exhibited, revealing the tiny raster-like gouges that Gertsch makes to register points of light.

Gertsch's longstanding artistic interest in the mirror as a surface on which a myriad of such identities might be perceived is captured in a small collection of early works. In a number of early paintings, drawings and woodcut prints, including *Spiegel* (1961) and *Mädchen vor dem Spiegel* (1960), individuals are seen reflected in looking glasses and contemplating their reflections, pointing to a lifelong interest in capturing the nuances of the self.

## About Franz Gertsch

Franz Gertsch was born in 1930 in Mörigen, Bern, and lives and works in Rüschegg-Heubach, Switzerland. Gertsch has participated in several important international exhibitions over his career, perhaps most significantly in *Documenta 5* (1972) in a section organized by Harald Szeemann, Jean-Christophe Ammann and others, that looked to artists they saw to be “interrogating reality.” Other group exhibitions include the Venice Biennale in 1978 and 1999. Solo exhibitions include: Kunthalle Basel (1975); Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, Germany (1975); Sprengelmuseum Hannover, Germany (1980); Kunsthau Zürich, Switzerland (1980); Museum of Modern Art, New York (1990); Hirschhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington (1991); Kunstmuseum Bern, Switzerland (1994); Albertina Museum, Vienna (2006); Mumok, Vienna (2006); Saarländmuseum, Saarbrücken, Germany; and Musée Jenisch, Vevey, Switzerland (2017). Gertsch has been the recipient of multiple grants and prizes, including the DAAD Grant, Berlin (1974-75) and the Prinze of the Bürgi-Willert-Stiftung. There is a museum devoted to the work of Gertsch, Museum Franz Gertsch, in Burgdorf, Switzerland.

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Press Contacts:

Nadine Johnson, [Nadine@NadineJohnson.com](mailto:Nadine@NadineJohnson.com)

Evan Lenox, [Evan@NadineJohnson.com](mailto:Evan@NadineJohnson.com)

212-228-5555