HUXLEY-PARLOUR
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Joel Sternfeld
Colour Photographs: 1977-1988

27 January - 18 February 2017

Beetles+Huxley is pleased to present Colour Photographs: 1977-1988, the first solo exhibition in the UK by the American photographer, Joel Sternfeld for 15 years. Featuring 30 vintage dye transfer and chromogenic prints, the exhibition will include well known images by the artist as well as works that have never been seen before.



McLean, Virginia, December 1978

The exhibition will showcase several examples of vintage dye transfer prints from one of Sternfeld's best-known bodies of work, 'American Prospects'. Sternfeld traversed the United States with his 8 x 10 inch camera, in order to capture the essential character of the country. First exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art, New York and then published in book form in 1987, 'American Prospects' is regarded as one of the most influential bodies of photographic work from this period.

'American Prospects' is seen as a continuation of the American documentary tradition established in the 1930s by Walker Evans and continued by Robert Frank twenty years later. Sternfeld expanded the trajectory of the medium by photographing scenes rich with implied narrative, which were also distinct in their colour and composition. Pictures included in the exhibition demonstrate early experiments with colour and conceptual strategies that the artist would develop later on into complete bodies of work.

Sternfeld's work is characterised by its attention to societal issues, delicately balanced by subtle irony and humour. 'McLean, Virginia, December 1978' is an example of this; here we see a fire fighter shopping for a pumpkin at a farm market whilst a house on fire blazes in the background. Despite appearances, the scene that Sternfeld had captured was a controlled training exercise, and a chief who was able to leave his post when the house was allowed to burn to the ground. The hidden story of this photograph shows Sternfeld to be engaging with the problematic 'truth value' of photography.

Born in 1944 in New York City, Sternfeld earned a BA in Art from Dartmouth College in 1965. His work has been the subject of multiple exhibitions in museums and galleries worldwide, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York, The Art Institute of Chicago, the Museum Folkwang Essen, the Albertina Museum of Vienna and C/O Berlin. He has received numerous awards including two Guggenheim fellowships, a Prix de Rome and the Citibank Photography Award. He holds the Noble Foundation Chair in Art and Cultural History at Sarah Lawrence College.

Giles Huxley-Parlour, director of Beetles+Huxley, has stated: 'Sternfeld's work has become an influential part of art history and has shaped the way that the world looks at American life and culture. His pioneering early colour photographs present a country of immense beauty and opportunity, but one seemingly stuck at a turning point: proud of its past as a noble experiment in democracy, but fraught with various new and disturbing forces. His work resonates strongly today at a time of such upheaval in American politics and society.'

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