

HAMMER

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: May 13, 2015

Contact: Nancy Lee, Manager, Public Relations, 310-443-7016, nlee@hammer.ucla.edu

The Hammer Museum Presents
Perfect Likeness: Photography and Composition
On view June 20 – September 13, 2015



(Los Angeles, CA)—The Hammer Museum announced today *Perfect Likeness: Photography and Composition*, a thought-provoking exhibition examining contemporary photography and a renewed interest in photographic composition since the late 1970s. Organized by Russell Ferguson, adjunct curator at the Hammer Museum and professor in the Department of Art, University of California Los Angeles, *Perfect Likeness* features 53 works by 24 artists that focus on meticulous control of the image. The exhibition will be on view from **June 20 through September 13, 2015**.

Perfect Likeness explores a variety of strategies used by contemporary photographers—involving careful attention to detail and highly choreographed arrangements. Artists featured in the exhibition take full responsibility for every detail of an image, offering a powerful alternative to the tradition of street photography, which values spontaneity and chance.

“*Perfect Likeness* is the kind of thoughtful and timely exhibition that the Hammer is known for, examining a unique assemblage of artists and their approaches to composition within photography across decades and around the globe,” said Ann Philbin, Director, Hammer Museum.

Russell Ferguson remarks, “In *Perfect Likeness*, I was interested in artists who make photographs that can lay claim to a certain pictorial autonomy that goes beyond the specific context of the image. This is a pressing question for artists working in photography now that the medium pervades every corner of daily life.”

Art photography often places a premium on the found situation, beauty discovered within the apparently accidental arrangement. This has been true for most of the history of the medium. Since the decline of the movement known as Pictorialism in the 1920s there has been consistent suspicion among serious photographers that images appearing perfect or too well composed were commercial and therefore could not be considered art. The field of art photography experienced a shift in the late 1970s toward a renewed exploration and acceptance of highly choreographed images. Now, widely accessible technology allows photographs to be easily manipulated and digitally composed, often challenging the traditional expectation that photographs should present an unmediated depiction of the world.

Images (left to right): Jeff Wall, *Boxing*, 2011. Color photograph. 84 11/16 x 116 1/8 in. (215 x 295 cm). Collection of the artist, Vancouver. Barbara Probst, *Exposure #70: Munich studio*, 05.10.09, 3:03 p.m., 2009. Ultrachrome ink on cotton paper. Edition of 5. Courtesy of the artist and Murray Guy, New York. Image courtesy of the artist, Murray Guy, New York. © 2014 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn. Elad Lassry, *Melocco*, 2009. C-print. Collection of Viet-Nu Nguyen, Los Angeles. Photo courtesy of David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles.

Robert Mapplethorpe, one of the most well-known artists featured in the exhibition, evoked painting as the standard to which the photograph should aspire. His ideal was a classical perfection that in many ways linked him more closely to nineteenth- or early-twentieth-century photographers than to the generation that immediately preceded him; like those earlier photographers, he looked to painting as a model of composition.

The works in the exhibition show the breadth of formats available to contemporary photographers and how each artist uses scale to attract viewers. Andreas Gursky's *Alba* (1989), a sweeping river landscape in which we can see the relatively tiny figures of a few men fishing, is nine feet wide, as big as any ambitious nineteenth-century painting. Alternatively, other artists in the exhibition like Christopher Williams, Annette Kelm, and Elad Lassry have chosen to keep their works relatively small, making the case that space left around the work can contribute to a strong presence on the wall.

As the title suggests, the exhibition includes a number of portraits made in a variety of strategies. Thomas Ruff's iconic 1980s portraits of his friends and colleagues seem to draw equally from formal portraiture and from the most generic of identification cards. Portraits by Catherine Opie of the artist Lawrence Weiner evoke Rembrandt and other old masters in their dark backgrounds and in the formal half-length presentation of the sitter. Sharon Lockhart's photographs of a girls basketball team shows the players in poses that suggest the action of a game, although no ball is visible.

The exhibition also explores how some artists push against the taboos of fine art photography in pursuit of the persuasive picture. Roe Ethridge's work overtly breaks with the supposed division between commercial and art photography, often deliberately conflating the two. Eschewing the expectation that photographs capture reality, Thomas Demand's desire for complete control over his images has led him to construct in three dimensions, out of paper and cardboard, exactly what he wants in his photograph, omitting any extraneous details. For the artists in the exhibition, complete control and ownership of the finished image is vital.

ARTIST LIST

Lucas Blalock	Florian Maier-Aichen
Clegg & Guttmann	Robert Mapplethorpe
Lynn Davis	McDermott & McGough
Thomas Demand	Catherine Opie
Stan Douglas	Barbara Probst
Roe Ethridge	Thomas Ruff
Rodney Graham	Andres Serrano
Andreas Gursky	Hiroshi Sugimoto
Peter Holzhauer	Wolfgang Tillmans
Annette Kelm	Jeff Wall
Elad Lassry	Gillian Wearing
Sharon Lockhart	Christopher Williams

CATALOGUE

A fully illustrated catalogue to accompany the exhibition. Written by Russell Ferguson, the essay will have full-page color illustrations throughout, which will include all works in the exhibition as well as historical comparative images.

ORGANIZATION

Perfect Likeness: Photography and Composition is organized by Russell Ferguson, professor in the Department of Art, University of California, Los Angeles and adjunct curator at the Hammer Museum. The curatorial associate for the exhibition is Emily Gonzalez-Jarrett.

Perfect Likeness: Photography and Composition is made possible by gifts from Eugenio Lopez, Susan Steinhauser and Daniel Greenberg/The Greenberg Foundation, and The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.

Major support is provided by The Audrey and Sydney Irmas Charitable Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts. Generous funding is provided by Trish and Jan de Bont, Margo Leavin, Pasadena Art Alliance, The Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, Contemporary Collectors - Orange County, Cyndee Howard and Lesley Cunningham, and Suzanne Deal Booth. Media sponsorship is provided by KCRW 89.9FM.

ABOUT THE HAMMER MUSEUM

The Hammer Museum at UCLA offers collections, exhibitions, and programs that span the classic to the contemporary in art, architecture, and design. The Hammer's international exhibition program focuses on wide-ranging thematic and monographic exhibitions, highlighting contemporary art since the 1960s and the work of emerging artists through Hammer Projects and the Hammer's biennial, *Made in L.A.* As a cultural center, the Hammer Museum offers nearly 300 free public programs a year, including lectures, readings, symposia, film screenings, and music performances at the Billy Wilder Theater which also houses the UCLA Film & Television Archive. The Hammer is home of the Armand Hammer Collection of American and European paintings, as well as the Armand Hammer Daumier and Contemporaries Collection and the Hammer Contemporary Collection. The Hammer Contemporary Collection focuses on art of all media since 1960 with an emphasis on works of the last ten years, works on paper, and art made in Los Angeles. The museum also houses the Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts—comprising more than 45,000 prints, drawings, photographs, and artists' books from the Renaissance to the present—and oversees the Franklin D. Murphy Sculpture Garden at UCLA. Free admission to the Hammer Museum is made possible through the generosity of benefactors Erika J. Glazer and Brenda R. Potter.

HAMMER MUSEUM INFORMATION

Admission to all exhibitions and programs at the Hammer Museum is free and open to the public.

Visit www.hammer.ucla.edu for current exhibition and program information and call (310) 443-7041 for tours.

Hours: Tuesday–Friday 11a.m.–8 p.m., Saturday & Sunday 11a.m.–5 p.m. Closed Mondays and national holidays. The Hammer is located at 10899 Wilshire Boulevard in Westwood, Los Angeles. Parking is available onsite for \$3 (maximum 3 hours) or for a \$3 flat rate after 6 p.m.

###