

The Thing Itself

July 10 – August 22, 2014

Opening Reception Thursday, July 10, 2014, 6-8pm



Yancey Richardson is pleased to present *The Thing Itself*, a summer group show examining the use of the medium of photography as subject matter in the photo-based practice of a number of contemporary artists. From those looking at the tools and materials of photography – cameras, paper, and scanners, for example – to family snapshots or images in the media, the unifying theme of included works is self-reflexivity. As Marshall McLuhan would say: “*The medium is the message.*”

The exhibition will feature a group of artists represented by Yancey Richardson, as well as other contemporary photo-based practitioners, including: **Mary Ellen Bartley, Anne Collier, Sara Cwynar, Roe Ethridge, Bryan Graf, Bill Jacobson, Kenneth Josephson, Laura Letinsky, Matt Lipps, Vik Muniz, Paul Mpagi Sepuya, Alyson Shotz, Laurie Simmons, Wolfgang Tillmans, Bertien van Manen, and Christopher Williams.**

The nature of the photographic medium continues to change through various technological advances and an ever-increasing movement towards digitization and democratization. There remains almost no materiality to the medium as film, darkrooms, and paper recede into obsolescence. In response, many artists have undergone a renewed evaluation of and investigation into what makes something a photograph, taking on as their subject the tools and materials of the medium, positioned as part critique of and part artifact from the rapidly disappearing analog world. These investigations often reveal the artist’s increased awareness of the physicality of photographic prints in an image-soaked digital world.

Photographs by **Wolfgang Tillmans, Bryan Graf, Vik Muniz** and **Alyson Shotz** dwell on the materiality of photographic paper itself while **Christopher Williams** and **Laurie Simmons** consider the hardware of cameras and **Mary Ellen Bartley** creates abstractions from her old 4 x 5 transparency sleeves. **Sara Cwynar** scans illustrations from an out of date darkroom manual, creating a distorted mash-up of analog and digital. In *Special Treatment*, (above), **Matt Lipps** utilizes images from the 1970s multivolume Time Life series *Library of Photography* to create a diorama-like assemblage of images. In the work of both Lipps and **Laura Letinsky**, who cuts out existing images from her own work, from other artists, and from popular media, to create quasi-collage still-life compositions, we see a flattening of hierarchies between fine art, media image, and amateur photography. Like smartphone cameras today, the advent of the Polaroid camera made it possible not only for everyone to be a photographer but to see the image immediately. **Kenneth Josephson’s** 1965 portrait, *Matthew*, (right), celebrates this new technology. In the image, Josephson’s son holds a Polaroid image of himself upside down in front of his face as though holding a camera.



Similarly, other works in the exhibition use formal elements to draw attention to the conditions of their own making. Both **Bertien van Manen** and **Paul Mpagi Sepuya** establish the value of prints as both tangible objects and vessels of image and meaning. In van Manen’s series *Give Me Your Image*, the artist photographed treasured family photos in the homes of European immigrants, highlighting the waning practice of taking, developing and displaying family snapshots. Elsewhere, Sepuya underscores the very objecthood of his photographic prints highlighting the relationship and difference between image and object.

For visuals, please contact Francisco Cordero at fcordero@yanceyrichardson.com