

Thomas Erben Gallery

Press Release



(Old Man on Bench, Graffiti Tiles), 1985, and Not Miss New Brighton, 1978/79.

Tom Wood

Men and Women

May 16 – June 22, 2013

Opening reception: Thursday, May 16, 6-8:30 pm

Thomas Erben is excited to present a third solo exhibition with celebrated photographer **Tom Wood** (b. 1951, Ireland). Since his last show with the gallery in 2003, Wood has been recognized as a defining presence in early British color photography, along with Martin Parr and Paul Graham. Most recently, the Photographers' Gallery (London) featured Wood in a highly acclaimed exhibition. His work is currently on view in the major retrospective *Tom Wood: Britain 1973-2012*, at the Ekaterina Foundation (Moscow), and in a two person show with Martin Parr at the Liverpool International Photo Festival. The works at Thomas Erben are selected from Wood's forthcoming pair of books, *Men and Women* (Steidl), on which he collaborated with artist Padraig Timoney.

After studying at the conceptually oriented Leicester Polytechnic until 1976, Wood moved to Merseyside, an English county which includes Liverpool, where he lived and photographed until 2003. By working within this limited area he gradually became very much a part of the environment, accepted among his subjects as "Photieman," which later became the title of his 2005 book.

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Wood does not consider himself a documentary photographer; his aim is to explore the richness and complexity of the photograph as a picture. Photography initially entered his practice through the collecting of postcards, which he would purchase in bulk from thrift stores and then examine and organize in broad categories – a methodology that still characterizes his process. Wood takes his photographs in an open manner, shooting quickly yet precisely, to admit chance into both content and form. From thousands of prints, a second process of discovery consists of choosing and editing, determining over time which of the pictures fit his criteria for an image that, as he says: “works.”

The resulting photographs are spectacularly considered in terms of composition as well as the use of color and shape. While it is easy to emphasize subject matter in Wood’s work, the formal aspects are at least as important: a singular way of tilting the horizon just so, of slightly cropping a man’s hand right at the fingertips, or relating one lady on the far left side of an image to another on the right. These photographs manage to look equally off-kilter and perfectly balanced. And Wood tempers his direct and unapologetic gaze with a subtle form of empathy, vividly showing his subjects as they are, neither mocking nor romanticizing them. His unique combination of form and content makes for substantial, exceedingly complex photography, decisively confirming Wood’s position as one of the major photographers of his generation.

Tom Wood: Photographs 1973-2013, the artist’s first full UK retrospective, is currently on display at the **National Media Museum Bradford**, which also acquired 80 of his prints for the National Photography Collection. Forthcoming is a three volume book of Wood’s landscapes, the two volume *The DPA Work*, and *Inside Looking for Love*, which – along with the seminal *Looking for Love* (1989) and *All Zones Off Peak* (1998) – will bring the total number of monographs to ten. Wood has had numerous solo exhibitions, at galleries such as **The Approach**, London; **Galerie Albrecht**, Berlin; and **Galerie du Jour Agnes B.**, Paris, and institutions including the **ICP**, New York; **C/O**, Berlin; **Museum of Modern Art**, Oxford; **Suermondt-Ludwig Museum**, Aachen; and **The National Museum of Photography**, Copenhagen, to name a few. His work is held in major collections such as **MoMA** and the **ICP**, New York; the **Art Institute of Chicago**; and the **Victoria & Albert Museum**, London. He was shortlisted for the *Beck’s Futures Award* in 2001 and received the *Prix Dialogue de l’Humanité at Les Recontres d’Arles* in 2002. The artist now lives and works in North Wales.

Gallery hours: Tue - Sat, 10-6.

For further information and visuals, please visit www.thomaserben.com or contact the gallery at 212-645.8701.

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