

PRESS RELEASE

## **TOM WOOD**

### **THE BUS PROJECT, 1979 - 1996**

*September 9 - November 4, 2000*

Opening: Saturday, September 9, 6-9pm

Thomas Erben is very pleased to open his 2000/1 season with TOM WOOD's *The Bus Project*. This body of work, built up during Wood's near 20 year odyssey photographing from local buses in Liverpool, was praised by Lee Friedlander: "...as good a set of pictures that one sees every five or ten years, if you're lucky."

Born in 1951, Wood together with Paul Graham and Martin Parr represent the first generation of British fine art color photography. Their work informed and influenced what has become The New Wave of Photography in Britain of the past 10 years (Richard Billingham, Paul Seawright, Hannah Starkey, Wolfgang Tillmans ...). Although Wood has been exclusively photographing in Liverpool, his primary interest is not documentary. Trained as a painter at the conceptually oriented Leicester Polytechnic from 1973-76, his first exploration of lens based media was through extensive viewing of experimental films. Photography entered his practice through the collecting of postcards, which he would purchase in bulk from thrift stores and then examine and organize in albums.

Wood takes his photographs in an open manner, effacing himself "blank canvas" style, shooting quickly yet precisely, to admit chance into both content and form. From thousands of images, and in a shift of interests, a second process of discovery consists of choosing and editing, determining which of the pictures fits his criteria for an image that, as he says: 'works'.

The bus photographs are extraordinary on various levels. The streets, people and unspectacular situations they depict, while documenting a specific environment, become of general interest. The inherent narrative generated by a bus in motion seems suspended, with time unfolding in the pictorial space itself. Photographed into or through bus windows, the images are composed of masses of reflections and divisions, becoming a multidimensional visual space with various independently occurring scenarios embedded in an overriding wholeness.

Importantly, the scale of the exhibition prints involves the viewer as part of these images. Looking through the plexiglass covering the print, the viewer's own reflection becomes incorporated into the image, almost as if he too were looking through the bus window at the scene.

Wood's work has become highly visible within the past two years through book publications, numerous reviews (Camera Austria, Dazed & Confused, Flash Art, Frieze, Ikon...) and through exhibitions (Galerie Thomas Zander, Cologne, and Galerie Albrecht, Munich, both Germany; Galerie du Jour - Agnes b., Paris; Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, and Victoria & Albert Museum, London, both UK...). In New York, his work was shown in 1996 at The International Center of Photography and is included in the collection of MoMA. The exhibited body of work is reproduced in *All*

*Zones Off Peak*, published by Dewi Lewis, UK, in 1998. A retrospective of his *People* series was published by Wienand, Germany, in 1999.