

Pressrelease

July 2014

Sam Falls

30 August to 25 October 2014

Opening on Friday, August 29, 6 to 8 pm, Maag Areal, Zahnradstr. 21, 8005 Zurich

Galerie Eva Presenhuber is delighted to announce the second solo exhibition of Los Angeles based artist Sam Falls. The exhibition will feature a new body of work centered around the series of the Fern and Palm Paintings.

„These rain and plant works come out of my continued interest in the duality between representation and abstraction while also employing universal means to bridge the gap between artist and viewer, as well as the gaps between photography, painting, and sculpture. In a time when mechanical reproduction and technology constantly loom over visual art, I want to reinforce the natural elements as constructive tools not in opposition, but more as reciprocation, undermining the alienating means of production that technology continues to offer within art. What I mean is that the camera and darkroom, or computer and printer, when employed as an artistic tool can create a material distance between production and reception that loses both conceptual integrity and a legible reception. Like the sun works I've made, the rain can function as a descriptive artistic tool while also being a universal state of shared experience. As I move around the canvas outside, the viewer walks to work in the rain, drives home to dinner in the rain, and eventually comes in from the rain to the gallery.

I took plants as the common subject matter for this body of work not only for their legacy in art history, but their reference to place. The works here were made from west to east, from the palm fronds in my backyard in Venice, California, to the abounding ferns bordering my mom's hayfield where I grew up in Vermont, to the trees around the grounds of a recent residency in Sarvisalo, Finland. Beyond the native vegetation delineating geography, these "paintings" represent duration and environment, visible in the scattered heavy rains of Southern California, to the light spring mist in Vermont, to the consistent light drizzle of the Scandinavian archipelago. Representation and abstraction are the fundamental elements of western art history and contemporary art, respectively, and the conceptual goal of these works is to address the present relevance of both forms in one work. The works are essentially landscape paintings, where there is a discrete image of the plant, as well as a pure abstraction unique to the precipitation that created it. Like a photogram, the image is a negative of the actual subject, and like an icon, the subject surpasses its image to reference a world outside of the painting. And like the paintings of Pollock or Frankenthaler, they're made flat, but now on the ground outside by the hand of nature rather than the hand of the artist. And that's what I think is relevant today, an image that speaks to an empirical place outside the frame, and pure abstraction that returns the viewer to their own references and understanding of process, not the ghost of the artist in the studio with an idiosyncratic impulse and method. Furthermore, the colors function as a serial descriptive agent, they're chosen at random and used only as an illustrative tool - their mixture and color combinations a virtue of the material and process, not creative or emotional decisions.

As Sol Lewitt said, "When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair" (Sol Lewitt, Paragraphs on Conceptual Art). The palm fronds were harvested from the various palm species in my back yard in Venice and placed on the raw canvas, cut to fit the respective palms, then a dry pigment is scattered over the entire piece and left for the rain. It rains short and hard, the canvas is heavily speckled in a short rain and in a longer storm it really blends and runs. As it dries sometimes water from an overhanging palm tree will drop and leave a large heavy drop, or an alley cat will even walk over the painting, further describing the surroundings.

The ferns were collected at night from a large swath of land and the bare canvas drop cloth large enough to cover the space would be laid down and the ferns scattered again in situ. With dry pigment again blanketing the entire set-up, they would be set by the overnight dew, retrieved and stored in the barn to dry before the heavy afternoon thunderstorms came in. Because of the lightness of the ferns they had to be made like this with mist rather than rain, which I found would flood the canvas and wash away the ferns and their image. The sun would also cause the cut ferns to coil and wilt, so the night time was the right time. The works are quiet and calm compared to the heavy rains of Los Angeles and the city.

Lastly, when I arrived for a residency in Finland at the beginning of June the apple trees were in full bloom and as I watched the flowering trees' petals fall I realized it was a unique time and place to be. I set canvases out underneath the trees and secured them to the ground - they collected the falling petals and after the trees were bare I proceeded with the earlier explained process. So here not only was the composition of color random but the composition of the subject matter was its own doing, completely natural.

The scale of these works is an environmental size, they inhabited the outdoors before the indoors. Influenced both by the traditional scale of the studio and massive works of Land Art, these works reside somewhere in between. Their relational essence of the project also falls between these histories, where the studio could be the equivalent of renting a private apartment and Land Art the assertive erection of a public building, these works are "leave no trace" camping; going out into nature with only what you can carry, spending time alone and interacting with a shared space, then taking away with you everything you came with, along with an enriched connection to the work. The ideal translation of this is that it mimics the viewer's interaction with the work in the gallery. I can faithfully say these works not only serve as a conceptual testament to the tools of nature amidst technology, but the value of our mutual experience of the world in which we live."

Sam Falls

Sam Falls currently has an exhibition at the Public Art Fund in New York, NY, USA. He will also have a solo exhibition at Pomona College, CA, USA, and at the BallRoom Marfa in 2015. Solo and group exhibitions of his work have been held at LAXART, Los Angeles, CA, USA, 2013, Madre Museum, Naples, Italy, 2014.

For further information please contact Maria Florut (m.florut@presenhuber.com) at the gallery.

Opening hours: Tuesday to Friday, 10 am – 6 pm
Saturday, 11 am – 5 pm
Or by appointment

Parallel shows: Steven Shearer
30 August to 25 October 2014
Löwenbräu Areal, Limmatstr. 270, 8005 Zürich
2. Floor

Wyatt Kahn
30 August to 25 October 2014
Löwenbräu Areal, Limmatstr. 270, 8005 Zürich
1. Floor