

PRESS RELEASE

Sam Falls

November 5 – December 22, 2022
Opening on Friday, November 4, 6 – 9 pm
Lichtenfelsgasse 5, A-1010 Vienna

In Conversation: Sam Falls and Attilia Fattori Franchini
Friday, November 4, 7 – 8 pm

Galerie Eva Presenhuber is pleased to announce Sam Falls' seventh solo exhibition at the gallery and is proud to present his work in Vienna for the first time. Concerned with the intimacy of time, the illustration of place, and exploration of mortality, Sam Falls has created his own formal language by intertwining photography's core parameters of time and exposure with nature and her elements. Working largely outdoors with vernacular materials and nature as a site-specific subject, Falls abandons mechanical reproduction in favor of a more symbiotic relationship between subject and object. In doing so, he bridges the gap between photography, sculpture, and painting, as well as the divide between artist, object, and viewer.

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I became an artist in the pursuit of freedom, to be alone and free. For the same reason I left my studio to work outdoors a long time ago - to have new experiences and engage wholly with nature and the environment. Outdoors things are never the same - the flowers blossom and die, the sun comes and goes, the seasons change. Since I was young I've felt haunted by time and mortality, not a fear of my own death, but an anxiety for losing those close to me. Working through nature has helped me abstract the quotidian quality of time into a larger productive metaphor that becomes cyclical rather than finite. Working through the night in the rain into the sunrise, or watching spring return from the winter, I've embraced a sublime melancholy that I believe is both inescapable and productive. Working alone for days at a time in the forest, I've become intimately connected to the landscapes around me and this fear of mortality has translated to environmentalism. Our society has become a psychopomp shuttling great swaths of land to their death, the Charon in my painting is not carrying a person across the Rivers Styx but rather native flowers from New York that are dwindling in number every year due to climate change. The polaroid photos of plants freeze in the height of their brief existence as spring enters summer and then later as autumn begins and the flowers die I trim them and roll them into wet clay that preserves their bodies as fossilized forms turned to stone, framing their youth. The large format polaroid film is dead-stock from an obsolete art-form that mirrors society's irreverent depletion of natural resources: something so perfect and beautiful as nature is used and depleted until it must be replaced by a new technology that lacks the original spirit.

Of course the reciprocal is also true, while the metaphor for environmentalism grows in my work, so does an abounding hope to share our human connection to nature and celebrate the life of both. My work has evolved from a consistent engagement with nature in various landscapes and an intimacy with plants and the atmosphere - there is a certain purity to working outdoors that I can't describe but hope to relate through the artworks. I want to encourage this interaction in the viewer and subtract my own presence: every person has their own connection to nature and the ideal is to have this summoned up and explored independently. One of my favorite texts is *Nature* by Ralph Waldo Emerson in which he points to the inherent capacity for nature to teach us not only about ourselves but the larger existential questions that all people encounter.

As Emerson states, "Every man's condition is a solution in hieroglyphic to those inquiries he would put. He acts it as life, before he apprehends it as truth. In like manner, nature is already, in its forms and tendencies, describing its own design. Let us interrogate the great apparition, that shines so peacefully around us. Let us inquire, to what end is nature?"

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My goal is not to replicate nature with art, but rather create a primary source that is engaged with the landscape as well as time. Because these works are made with humidity and precipitation at the time of their creation, they interact with both the atmosphere and plants of a given season, the same way that we do. Along with this, I've always been very emotionally susceptible to the changing seasons, either in-tune with the joy of spring or victim of the melancholy of autumn. I try to leave my personal life out of the work but it comes through in ways I don't expect, resonating with time rather than interpreting it ideally. My environmentalist qualities spiked upon having children for obvious reasons, but also it enhanced my emotional relationship to nature and time. For the first time I've become concerned for my own mortality, but not for losing my own life but for missing theirs. My relationship to time has reformed once again and taken on a new dimension that presents itself in my work freshly and surprisingly even to myself. The way children's personalities seem to come fully formed and independent from their parents seems to me the same way weather meets us in the morning and recently how some of my artworks come into being. The perennial joy and sadness of a flower in the garden from spring to fall is the daily existential beauty and pain of aging with any loved one. I know I can't stop time, but when I'm out working alone nature slowly reminds me that I'm the only thing in the forest who even knows it exists...

– Sam Falls, October, 2022

Sam Falls (b. 1984) was raised in Vermont and lives and works in New York's Hudson Valley. He received his BA from Reed College in 2007 and his MFA from ICP-Bard in 2010. He will open a solo exhibition at the MOCA Cleveland in January 2023 and recently presented a major commission at the Mori Museum in Tokyo (2022). He previously has had solo exhibitions at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2018); Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Trento and Rovereto, Italy (2018); The Kitchen, New York (2015); Ballroom Marfa, Texas (2015); Pomona College Museum of Art (2014); Public Art Fund, New York (2014); and LAXART, Los Angeles (2013), among others. His work has been included in group exhibitions at the Aspen Art Museum, Colorado (2018); Le Consortium, Dijon (2017); Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio (2017); Mead Gallery, University of Warwick, England (2016); Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh, Scotland (2015); Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2015); Menil Collection, Houston (2015); Museo MADRE, Naples (2014); and the International Center of Photography, New York (2013); among others.

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