

TOD PAPAGEORGE DR. BLANKMAN'S NEW YORK

STREETWISE Mitch Epstein Lee Friedlander Anthony Hernandez Helen Levitt Dieter Meier Max Regenberg Beat Streuli
8 SEPTEMBER – 23 NOVEMBER 2018

Sat 8 September 4pm Opening with an introduction by Thomas Zander and Tod Papageorge, followed by a book signing

Sat 29 September 2pm Artist's talk with Max Regenberg, followed by a book signing

Sun 30 September 2pm Tour of the exhibition

Opening hours Tue-Fri 11am-6pm, Sat 12-6pm and by appointment

Special opening hours during DC Open and Photoszene Festival Cologne

Galerie Thomas Zander is delighted to present new dye transfer prints of Tod Papageorge's early colour photographs of New York. In vivid images of window displays, political posters and encounters in the city the series *Dr. Blankman's New York* (1966-67) captures the zeitgeist and social climate of a time between Pop Art and the Vietnam War. Fifty years after Papageorge took the photographs, they are now exhibited for the first time. The striking intensity of the colour works is highlighted by the dye transfer prints. This high quality printing process is known from the 1960s and '70, but has become very rare today due to its elaborate production. Papageorge's New York photographs are not affected by the nervous energy of the metropolis, they are observational, perceptive. The artist is sensitive to the lyrical quality inherent in the pictures, alert to the signs of his times and conscious in the use of his medium. Above all, the series celebrates the visual experience itself, which seems to have electrified the then 25-year-old photographer: "eyes examined" announces the sign outside the optometrist Dr. Blankman's office in the eponymous image. We see a photographer with a tripod taking a young woman's picture in Central Park, another woman playfully holding a leprello of photographs in front of her face. A leather jacket bearing the words Chu Lai Viet-Nam, worn by a young man, is a reminder of the reality of war in everyday life, which the series also takes note of. The book *Dr. Blankman's New York* is published by Steidl. In the ensuing decades, Tod Papageorge has made several remarkable bodies of work that have chronicled American life, like his photographs of Central Park, sports stadiums and the legendary Studio 54. He was awarded Guggenheim Fellowships and National Endowment for the Arts fellowship grants and taught at Yale University, where well-known photographers such as Philip-Lorca diCorcia and Katy Grannan were among his students. Papageorge's works are in the collections of major international museums and institutions.

Under the title *Streetwise*, the gallery concurrently presents selected works by Mitch Epstein, Lee Friedlander, Anthony Hernandez, Helen Levitt, Dieter Meier, Max Regenberg and Beat Streuli. The genre of street photography translates the dynamic experience of the urban environment, showing everyday scenes in the public space of the city. In most cases, the encounters do not go beyond the moment the picture is taken, but they develop a poetic depth within the photograph, make certain structures of perception visible and capture social experiences. Both distance and closeness are palpable in the photographs, anonymity and intimacy come together. Lee Friedlander reflects the modern, often alienated everyday life in his black and white photographs and is regarded as a critical observer of the American way of life. His group *Head*, too, seems to represent the absence of a relationship by showing only the back of a head in each photograph. Nevertheless there is something the viewer shares with the people in the photographs, namely their point of view on the city. In his series *The City* (1995-98) Mitch Epstein reveals the layers of private and public interaction. He has developed a signature approach, wherein his pictures appear staged and spontaneous at the same time using colour and composition. In the foreground of a photograph, a mother and three children are all looking in different directions. They seem out of place in their summer clothes on the rain-wet street. In the background across the street looms an underwear billboard in black and white. Max Regenberg reflects on the aesthetic effects of billboards in public space. In an early black and white work from 1981, he experiments with subjective and filmic means to document the increasing proliferation of images: Regenberg takes photographs in Cologne, inserts the same film into his camera again in New York and takes double exposures. Like the photographer's impressions, the images are superimposed one on the other. In sequences of photographs, they present a synchronous way of perception and the omnipresent commercial messages permeating visual culture. The social landscape in an urban environment is the focus of Anthony Hernandez's photography. The exhibition presents unpublished images from his series *Rodeo Drive* (1984), in which Hernandez paints a picture of the '80s in the unmistakable colours of the decade and allows the viewer a look at the rich and the beautiful on Beverly Hills' famed shopping street. Helen Levitt photographed people in the less privileged parts of New Yorks and created images of unsentimental poetry. The remarkable colour work she produced between 1971 and 1990, on view in a slide projection and as dye transfer prints, also reflect that people's private lives have become less openly visible in the streets. Beat Streuli's large format street photographs immerse the viewer in cities like New York, Rome and Tokyo by virtue of their realism coupled with a reduced and precise visual vocabulary. Streuli often focuses on only one or two figures, revealing how private people appear in the seemingly unobserved anonymity of the street. Time and again the Swiss artist Dieter Meier was inspired to works and performances in public squares, characterised by his interaction with unwittingly involved passers-by. This is also the case in his series *Given Names* from 1976. It depicts people in the street who were given names invented by the artist and captioned "I only saw her/him once and later gave her/him a name". In doing so, the series playfully and explicitly addresses key aspects of street photography, where identities are performed and imagined.