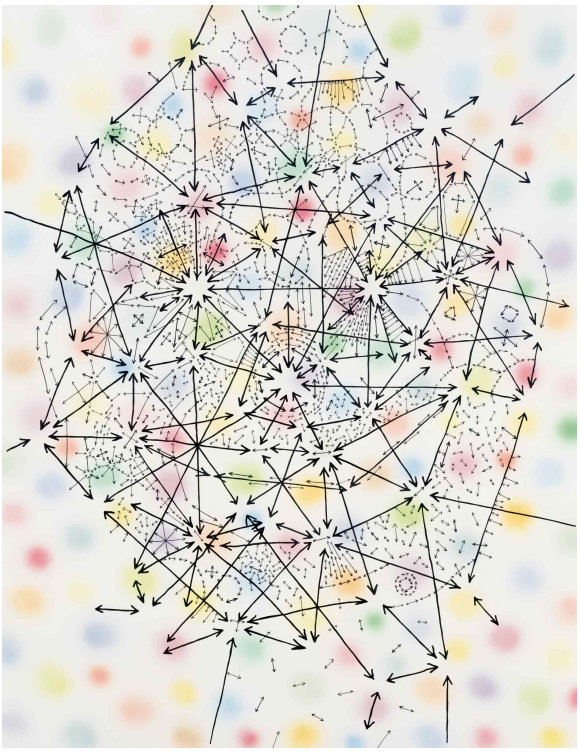
Stephen Friedman Gallery

Tom Friedman

Always the Beginning

2 October—3 November
2018 Preview: 1 October,
6—8pm



Stephen Friedman Gallery is pleased to announce a show of new, large-scale drawings by American artist Tom Friedman. Fluctuating between the comical and the conceptual, Friedman's work celebrates the mundane nature of everyday life by looking afresh at objects and their assigned function. Taking place in Gallery One, the exhibition will be accompanied by a new publication that reproduces nearly a hundred pages from the sketchbooks that this new body of work draws upon.

For this exhibition, Friedman has revisited a series of entries from sketchbooks he has accumulated over the past 40 years. Friedman's sketchbooks bring together his sporadic, creative thoughts where word associations, brainstorms and flow charts sit alongside detailed studies and hurried scribbles. In the exhibition, Friedman has enlarged individual pages and images from his sketchbooks and recreated them in photorealistic detail using coloured pencil and watercolour. As a group, they mirror the wit and material complexity that characterises his sculptural works.

Friedman frequently uses his drawings to formally and conceptually break down objects into their most rudimentary parts before subjecting them to material transformation. 'Self Portrait for Sugar Cubes' (2018) records the minute workings of this metamorphic process by revealing how 'Untitled (Self-Portrait)' (1999), a replica of the artist constructed out of hundreds of sugar cubes, was originally conceived. Featuring a detailed cross-section of Friedman's body, the artist has fastidiously copied the pixelated diagram on a much larger scale, complete with the original numerical workings and doodles. As with the other works in the exhibition, the sketch's original function as a preparatory drawing has been negated in favour of celebrating the image's formal qualities.

Friedman's work is often autobiographical, recreating arbitrary elements from his own life and personal surroundings. In 'Mom Watching Shoa' (2018), the artist's mother is portrayed in her sitting room watching television. Friedman hones in on areas of chromatic intensity by depicting a bowl of rainbow-coloured jelly beans and a brightly patterned cushion. Characteristically tongue-in-cheek, the work's vibrancy is in sharp contrast to the solemnity of the nine-hour Holocaust documentary that Friedman's mother is intensely watching.

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Gallery Hours
Tuesday to Friday, 10am–6pm
and Saturday, 11am–5pm

Social Media
Facebook: /Stephen-Friedman-Gallery
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This element of humour is also shared by 'Not Things' (2018), in which Friedman swaps the names individually assigned to a group of cartoon objects, thereby altering their iconographic meaning; a half-eaten apple becomes an electric guitar, a puzzle piece becomes a gun, and a dead fish becomes a yellow star. This simple gesture manifests the artist's wider desire to skew our perception of ordinary, day-to-day objects and experiences.

As in his sculptures, Friedman continues to confound material expectations in this body of work through his deployment of trompe l'oeil. Whilst 'Big Bang' (2018) reveals the textured grain of the paper in his sketchbook, Friedman's distinctive handwriting in 'Not Dot' (2018) – as well as the 'reverse workings' of the page behind – is mimicked with inconceivable precision. Taking months to reproduce, the array of images that feature in these drawings demonstrates the extensive breadth of ideas that inform Friedman's practice.

A group of video projections from the Ghosts and UFOs: Projections for Well-Lit Spaces series (2017) will also be on view in Gallery Two. Unseen in the UK, these works signify a break in Friedman's artistic investigation by steering away from the use of physical materials. Using complex computer technology, Friedman plays with the immateriality of natural light to question notions of objecthood.

The exhibition coincides with Friedman's participation in the group exhibition 'Knock Knock: Humour in Contemporary Art' at South London Gallery, London, UK, spanning the gallery's main space and three floors of its new annexe in the former Peckham Road Fire Station.

Tom Friedman was born in 1965 in Saint Louis, Missouri, USA. He now lives and works in Massachusetts, USA.

Notable solo exhibitions and installations include; 'Looking Up', St. Louis Science Center And Planetarium, Saint Louis, USA (2017); 'Ghosts and UFOs: Projections for Well-Lit Spaces', Luhring Augustine, New York, USA (2017); 'Looking Up', Park Avenue, New York, USA (2016); 'Looking Up', The Contemporary Austin, Texas, USA (2015); 'Up in the Air', Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Tel Aviv, Israel; 'Gravity', Stephen Friedman Gallery, London, England (2014); 'Paint and Styrofoam', Luhring Augustine, New York, USA (2014); Stephen Friedman Gallery, London, England (2012); 'Up in the Air', Magasin 3, Stockholm; touring to FRAC Montpellier, France (2010); 'REAM', Saint Louis Art Museum, Saint Louis, USA (2009); 'Pure Invention', Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum, Saint Louis, USA (2006); 'Tom Friedman', South London Gallery, London, England (2004), and 'Stitching', Fondazione Prada, Milan, Italy (2002).

Notable group exhibitions include 'Victors for Art: Michigan's Alumni Collectors', University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor, USA (2017); 'Reading as Art', Bury Art Museum & Sculpture Centre, Bury, UK (2016); 'Explode Every Day: An Inquiry Into the Phenomena of Wonder', MASS MoCA, North Adams, USA (2016); 'Arts & Foods. Rituals Since 1851', Triennale di Milano, Italy (2015); 'Visual Deception II: Into the Future', The Bunkamura Museum of Art, Shibuya-ku, Japan; touring to Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Art, Kobe, Japan; Nagoya City Art Museum, Nagoya, Japan (2015); 'Room by Room: Monographic Presentations from the Faulconer and Rachofsky Collections', The Warehouse, Dallas, Texas, USA (2014); 'Study from the Human Body', Stephen Friedman Gallery, London, England (2014); 'Seismic Shifts', The National Academy Museum, New York, USA (2013); 'Lifelike', Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, San Diego, USA (2013); 'Invisible Art: About the Unseen, 1957 - 2012', Hayward Gallery, London, England (2012); 'Paper', Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain, Nice, France (2012); 'All that Glisters', Stephen Friedman Gallery, London, England (2011); 'Floor Corner Wall', Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, Fort Worth, Texas, USA (2010), and 'Chasing Napoleon', Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France (2009).

Friedman's works are included in prominent collections internationally including Fotomusuem Winterthur, Winterthur; Guggenheim Museum, New York; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Aspen Art Museum, Aspen; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco; Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Tel Aviv; The Contemporary Austin, Austin, and Magasin 3, Stockholm.

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