

Uta Barth

Figure/Ground, Figure/Ground

June 3 – July 16, 2022

Tanya Bonakdar Gallery and 1301PE are pleased to present a joint exhibition of Uta Barth's work, which will span the artist's entire career. Titled **Uta Barth: *Figure/Ground, Figure/Ground***, this exhibition is curated by writer Jan Tumlir, and will be divided between the two galleries in Los Angeles. At Tanya Bonakdar Gallery will be featured photographs in which a figure appears – typically the artist's own, and often only in partial view – whereas at 1301PE, the selection of photographs will be devoid of figures, displaying all ground. Also featured in this two-part exhibition will be a range of contextualizing material, drawn from a cadre of artists who have proved influential on Barth's practice: Michelangelo Antonioni, John Cage, Harry Callahan, Robert Irwin and Agnes Martin. A selection of books from Barth's own library will be included as well. And, finally, David Horovitz (who once was Barth's student) has conceived of a project to link the two galleries by way of an exchange of photographic postcards that will unfold throughout the duration of the exhibition.

Jan Tumlir writes, "As steadfast as this line of division between Figure and Ground might seem on paper, it quickly turns porous in actual practice. In Barth's work, we are always looking for some sort of synthesis between these two poles that nevertheless holds them in tension. A figure appears against its ground when conceived as just a background, but if we add to it the qualities of surface and support, then this also is the place of the figure's medial grounding, and thus fundamentally indistinguishable from it. And, reciprocally, it could be argued that even in those pictures where no figure encroaches upon the field of vision, the ground nevertheless remains suffused with it. Those hands and feet that, here and there, reach into the picture from the edges of the frame serve to remind us that a person is always there, even when wholly invisible. The photograph records the presence of the photographer on the scene; this witness who once stood before it, now lurks behind it – a haunting figure."

This exhibition has been conceived in anticipation of *Uta Barth: Peripheral Vision* opening November 15, 2022, at The Getty Center at the Getty Museum in Los Angeles.

For the past twenty years, Uta Barth (b. 1958) has made visual perception the primary subject of her photographic work. Barth first gained critical acclaim in the 1990s for her Ground and Field series, in which she turned her attention to the information contained in a photograph's often forgotten and peripheral background. Emptying images from what would often be considered a traditional subject matter or narrative, Barth makes the viewer aware of the phenomenological experience of perceiving. The question of how we perceive – versus what we see – differentiates Barth from the dominant trajectory of photography that is tied up with pointing at things in the world and in which subject and content are mostly one and the same thing. Making the "the choice of no choice", Barth has confined her practice to the ambient, incidental, and ephemeral.

A 2012 MacArthur Fellow, Uta Barth was born in Berlin and currently lives and works in Los Angeles. Notable solo exhibitions have been presented at the Art Institute of Chicago; Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle; the SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah; SITE, Santa Fe; Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston; Lannan Foundation, Santa Fe; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; and Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. Her work is well represented in both private and public collections worldwide, including the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York and Bilbao; the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C., Tate Modern, London; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; Dallas Museum of Art, Texas; UCLA Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles; The Getty Museum, Los Angeles; and The Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.