

# WHITE CUBE

Jeff Wall

*Life in Pictures*

22 November 2024 – 12 January 2025

White Cube Bermondsey

Marking 30 years of collaboration between Jeff Wall and White Cube, this major survey celebrates the cultural significance of Wall's work across the disciplines of film, photography and contemporary art. Comprising over 40 works, the exhibition documents Wall's artistic development and pioneering career, tracing the complexity and exactitude of his pictures – from the earlier lightbox transparencies to his more recent black-and-white photographs and colour prints.

Residing between near-documentary realism and compositional artifice, Wall's photographs draw the viewer into a world of incidental detail, rich with specificity and narrative potential. Spanning from the early 1980s to the present, Wall's work offers a honed, singular gaze towards the subtleties of modern life – the brief exchanges, daily rituals, aberrations and chance occurrences that inform the everyday. Wall has established himself as one of the foremost proponents of sustained observation and an innovator in photography's unique capacity for poetic representation.

Often reconstructed from memory or developed from events he has witnessed, Wall's pictures frequently invoke the unscripted quality of photojournalistic snapshots. As Wall explains, 'they are contemplations of the nature of documentary photography. They're not *it*, but they contemplate it'. These 'near documentary' pictures are one of the main directions of his work over the past four decades and are present throughout the exhibition, from *Mimic*, made in 1982, to *Fallen rider*, from 2022.

Wall has engaged with documentary or 'straight' photography since the beginning of his career. Although he has been a leader in the reinvention of the value of photographic artifice and the illusionary domains it has opened up, he accepts no meaningful opposition between the real and the imaginary, and sees them as unique zones along a continuum of possibilities within the medium.

His engagement with straight photography can be discerned in his 'Diagonal Composition' series (1993–2000), a trio of small-scale works capturing intimate close-ups of minutiae found around his Vancouver studio. Through their composition and scale, these works resonate with traditional still lifes, elevating everyday details through pure, formal exercise.

Having worked exclusively in colour transparencies until the mid-1990s, Wall then began producing black-and-white silver gelatin prints. He had never wanted to be limited to a single photographic format, and this broaden-

ing of his repertoire had been planned for some years. He considers the dramatic, striking absence of colour to be the defining characteristic of black-and-white photography and its active presence in his work has been a way for him to bring more attention to the breadth and complexity of the medium – its way of making colour both appear and disappear. A part of this is his attention to the peculiar luminosity of monochrome photographs, an effect apparent in *A woman with a necklace* (2021), where the veiled glow of sunlight through a curtained window imparts an almost preternatural radiance to the beads of the necklace held aloft by the reclining woman. 'Some subjects require the absence of colour', Wall observes. 'That lack, that absence, also creates a disturbance in how you perceive. I think that disturbance does something that the pictures, when they're successful, do – which is to be almost more lifelike than life itself.'

Wall refers to his photographic methodology as 'cinematographic', a term he uses to convey the freedom of approach and artistic license of cinema – its tendency to distil the essence of an experience, while being liberated from the verisimilitude of the original circumstances. *Mimic* (1982) – the earliest lightbox work in this exhibition – reconstructs an incident witnessed by Wall, transposing the originally observed action to a nearby street oriented to capture the full intensity of the late afternoon sun. This recontextualisation enabled Wall to amplify the subtle yet charged gestures central to the picture's subject. The 'cinematographic' is also present in his sometimes complex production processes, from the collaboration and technical orchestration required to make the photographs, to the digital montage often involved in creating the final composition.

The two diptychs and two triptychs on view exemplify Wall's longstanding interest in multi-panel compositions and their narrative suggestiveness. In the triptych *I Giardini / The Gardens* (2017), Wall presents three apparently sequential moments within the gardens of the Villa Silvio Pellico in Turin. Each of the three pictures shows figures engaged in an ongoing encounter. However, two of the three pictures show each character twice, either as doubles of themselves or as simultaneously two separate characters, which complicates the matter. In other works, Wall suspends the temporal relationship between the individual panels or introduces deliberate narrative diversions and ambiguities. In *Pair of interiors* (2018), for instance, Wall presents a diptych showing a couple occupying what seems to be a single room seen from two vantage points. However,

## BIOGRAPHY

the couple is 'played' by different people in each panel, a procedure exactly the reverse of the doubling in *I Giardini / The Gardens*. Wall's multi-panel compositions play with photography's static and spatial qualities to compose scenes that distort or extend temporal certainty and encourage the pleasures of interpretation.

Jeff Wall was born in 1946 in Vancouver, Canada, where he lives and works. He has exhibited widely, including solo exhibitions at La Virreina Centre de la Imatge, Barcelona, Spain (2024); Fondation Beyeler, Basel, Switzerland (2024); Glenstone, Potomac, Maryland (2021); The George Economou Collection, Athens (2019); Kunsthalle Mannheim, Germany, touring to Mudam Luxembourg (2018); Pérez Art Museum Miami, Florida (2015); Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, touring to Kunsthau Bregenz, Austria and Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek, Denmark (2014–15); Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea, Milan, Italy (2013); Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth, touring to National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne and Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, Sydney (2012–13); Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich, Germany (2013); Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea, Santiago de Compostela, Spain (2011); Museo Tamayo, Mexico City (2008); The Museum of Modern Art, New York touring to the Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, California (2007); Tate Modern, London touring to Schaulager, Basel, Switzerland (2005); and Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, Vienna (2003). Wall has participated in numerous group exhibitions including 5th Shang-hai Biennale, China (2004); Documenta, Kassel, Germany (2002 and 1997); 12th Biennale of Sydney, Australia (2000); and 24th Bienal de São Paulo, Brazil (1998).

White Cube Bermondsey is open  
Tuesday – Saturday, 10am – 6pm  
Sunday, 12pm – 6pm.  
Admission is free.

Children must be kept in hand at all times.

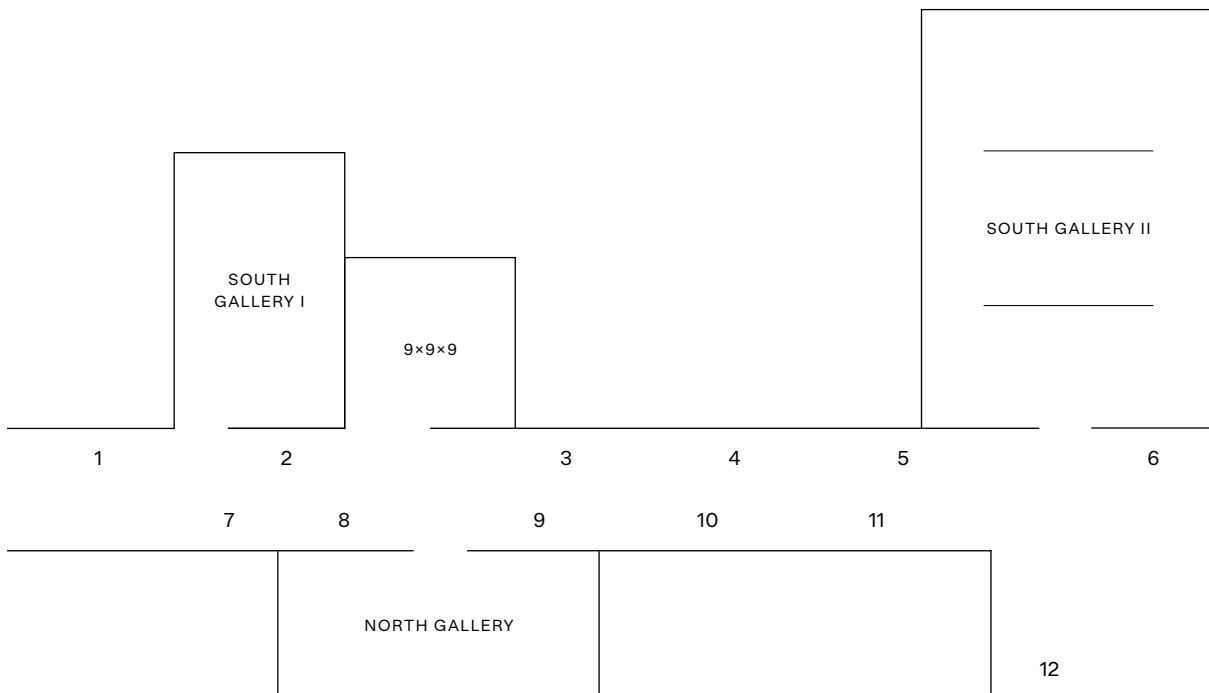
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CORRIDOR

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| <p>1 <i>Pleading</i><br/>1984<br/>Transparency in lightbox<br/>135 × 184 × 22 cm   53 ⅛ × 72 7/16 × 8 1/16 in.</p> <p>2 <i>Portrait in Noto</i><br/>2007<br/>Inkjet print<br/>208.7 × 252.4 × 6.8 cm   82 3/16 × 99 3/8 × 2 1/16 in.</p> <p>3 <i>Diagonal Composition</i><br/>1993<br/>Transparency in lightbox<br/>50 × 56 × 12.5 cm   19 1/16 × 22 1/16 × 4 15/16 in.</p> <p>4 <i>Diagonal Composition no. 2</i><br/>1998<br/>Transparency in lightbox<br/>64 × 75 × 14 cm   25 3/16 × 29 1/2 × 5 1/2 in.</p> <p>5 <i>Diagonal Composition no. 3</i><br/>2000<br/>Transparency in lightbox<br/>88 × 108 × 14 cm   34 3/8 × 42 1/2 × 5 1/2 in.</p> <p>6 <i>Tattoos and Shadows</i><br/>2000<br/>Transparency in lightbox<br/>215 × 274 × 26 cm   84 5/8 × 107 3/8 × 10 1/4 in.</p> | <p>7 <i>Sunseeker</i><br/>2021<br/>Inkjet print<br/>121.8 × 139.6 × 5.8 cm   47 15/16 × 54 15/16 × 2 5/16 in.</p> <p>8 <i>The Giant</i><br/>1992<br/>Transparency in lightbox<br/>49 × 58 × 12 cm   19 5/16 × 22 13/16 × 4 3/4 in.</p> <p>9 <i>Poppies in a garden</i><br/>2005<br/>Transparency in lightbox<br/>112 × 135 × 20 cm   44 1/8 × 53 1/8 × 7 7/8 in.</p> <p>10 <i>Just Washed</i><br/>1997<br/>Transparency in lightbox<br/>47 × 52 × 12 cm   18 1/2 × 20 1/2 × 4 3/4 in.</p> <p>11 <i>Echo Park</i><br/>2023<br/>Inkjet print<br/>198.8 × 235.8 × 7 cm   78 1/4 × 92 13/16 × 2 3/4 in.</p> <p>12 <i>A sapling held by a post</i><br/>2000<br/>Transparency in lightbox<br/>67.7 × 58.5 × 13.8 cm   26 5/8 × 23 × 5 1/16 in.</p> |
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SOUTH GALLERY I

- 13 *Maquette for a monument to the contemplation of the possibility of mending a hole in a sock*  
2023  
Inkjet print  
145 × 144.5 × 5.8 cm | 57 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 56 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 2 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.
- 14 *A woman with a necklace*  
2021  
Silver gelatin print  
163.6 × 227.6 × 6.9 cm | 64 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 89 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 2 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.
- 15 *Informant*  
an occurrence not described in chapter 6, part 3 of *Ultimas Tardes con Teresa* by Juan Marsé  
2023  
Inkjet print  
143 × 147.3 × 5.7 cm | 56 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 58 × 2 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.
- 16 *Pair of interiors*  
2018  
Two inkjet prints  
Diptych, each: 159.4 × 214.2 × 6.4 cm | 62 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 84 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 2 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in.
- 17 *Ivan Sayers, costume historian, lectures at the University Women's Club, Vancouver, 7 December 2009. Virginia Newton-Moss wears a British ensemble c. 1910, from Sayers' collection*  
2009  
Lightjet print  
190.5 × 232.5 × 5.2 cm | 75 × 91 <sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 2 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.
- 18 *Parent child*  
2018  
Inkjet print  
231 × 261.5 × 6.4 cm | 90 <sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 102 <sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 2 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in.
- 19 *Event*  
2021  
Inkjet print  
223.2 × 168.5 × 6.8 cm | 87 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 66 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 2 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.



9×9×9

20 *Listener*

2015

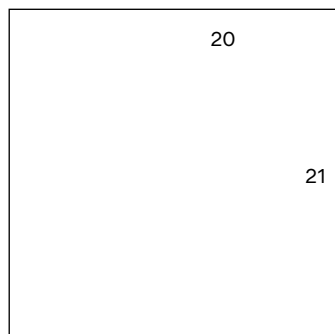
Inkjet print

167.3 × 240.3 × 6.5 cm | 65 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 94 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 2 <sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.

21 *Recovery*

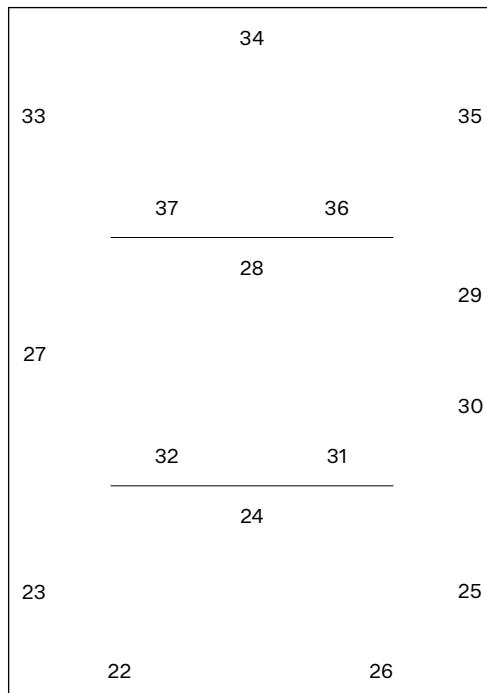
2017–18

Inkjet print 258.6 × 453.9 × 6.7 cm | 101 <sup>13</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 178 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 2 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.



SOUTH GALLERY II

- 22 *The Flooded Grave*  
1998–2000  
Transparency in lightbox  
248 × 301 × 26 cm | 97 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 118 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> × 10 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.
- 23 *The Drain*  
1989  
Transparency in lightbox  
250 × 310 × 23 cm | 98 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 122 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 9 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.
- 24 *The Storyteller*  
1986  
Transparency in lightbox  
248 × 456 × 26 cm | 97 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 179 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> × 10 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.
- 25 *The Thinker*  
1986  
Transparency in lightbox  
230.5 × 248 × 26 cm | 90 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 97 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 10 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.
- 26 *Fieldwork. Excavation of the floor of a dwelling in a former Sto:lo nation village, Greenwood Island, Hope, B.C., August, 2003, Anthony Graesch, Dept. of Anthropology, University of California at Los Angeles, working with Riley Lewis of the Sto:lo band*  
2003  
Transparency in lightbox  
238.5 × 302.5 × 26 cm | 93 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 119 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 10 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.
- 27 *Staircase & two rooms*  
2014  
Three lightjet prints  
Triptych, each: 248.4 × 184.9 × 4.9 cm | 97 <sup>13</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 72 <sup>13</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 1 <sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.
- 28 *Actor in two roles*  
2020  
Two inkjet prints  
Diptych, each: 250 × 349.9 × 6.9 cm | 98 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 137 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 2 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.
- 29 *Mother of pearl*  
2016  
Inkjet print  
63.7 × 74.2 × 3.5 cm | 25 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 29 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 1 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.
- 30 *Boxing*  
2011  
Lightjet print  
215 × 295 cm | 84 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 116 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.
- 31 *Band & crowd*  
2011  
Lightjet print  
234.9 × 428.4 × 5.2 cm | 92 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> × 168 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 2 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.
- 32 *In the Legion*  
2022  
Inkjet print  
167.5 × 207.7 × 6.8 cm | 65 <sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 81 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 2 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.
- 33 *Property line*  
2015  
Lightjet print  
248.8 × 328 × 4.9 cm | 97 <sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 129 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 1 <sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.
- 34 *I giardini / The Gardens Appunto / Complaint, Disappunto / Denial, Diffida / Expulsion order*  
2017  
Three inkjet prints  
Triptych, each: 258.8 × 405.9 × 6.8 cm | 101 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 159 <sup>13</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 2 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.
- 35 *Hillside, Sicily, November 2007*  
2007  
Silver gelatin print  
257.8 × 316.8 × 6.5 cm | 101 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> × 124 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 2 <sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.
- 36 *Fallen rider*  
2022  
Inkjet print  
195 × 257.5 × 7 cm | 76 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 101 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 2 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.
- 37 *Boy falls from tree*  
2010  
Lightjet print  
234 × 313 × 5 cm | 92 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 123 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 1 <sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.



NORTH GALLERY

- 38 *Insomnia*  
1994  
Transparency in lightbox  
193.5 × 233.5 × 22 cm | 76 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 91 <sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 8 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.
- 39 *After 'Invisible Man' by Ralph Ellison, the Prologue*  
1999–2001  
Transparency in lightbox  
193 × 269.5 × 26 cm | 76 × 106 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 10 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.
- 40 *Odradek, Taboristska 8, Prague, 18 July 1994*  
1994  
Transparency in lightbox  
248 × 308 × 26 cm | 97 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 121 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 10 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.
- 41 *In front of a nightclub*  
2006  
Transparency in lightbox  
206 × 307 × 26 cm | 81 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 120 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 10 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.
- 42 *A man with a rifle*  
2000  
Transparency in lightbox  
245 × 308 × 26 cm | 96 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 121 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 10 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.
- 43 *Morning Cleaning, Mies van der Rohe Foundation, Barcelona*  
1999  
Transparency in lightbox  
206 × 370 × 26 cm | 81 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 145 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 10 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.
- 44 *Mimic*  
1982  
Transparency in lightbox  
215.2 × 247 × 26 cm | 84 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 97 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 10 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.

