

**Press Release
September 2017**

**Sam Falls
September 9 to October 29, 2017
39 Great Jones Street, New York, NY 10012
Opening on Friday, September 8, 6 – 8 pm**

"A jail with no jailer and a garden with no gardener – that is I think the ideal arrangement."

Vladimir Nabokov, The Gift

Eva Presenhuber is pleased to announce the gallery's fourth solo-exhibition with Los Angeles based artist Sam Falls.

Concerned with the intimacy of time and place, Sam Falls' artwork pushes the expanded field of photography by employing its core precepts, namely time and exposure, intertwined with nature and the elements. Working largely outdoors with vernacular substrates and nature as his site-specific subject, Falls abandons mechanical reproduction in favor of a more symbiotic relationship with the subject and object. In doing so the works occupy a unique space between the fidelity of a subject in photography and the intimate interpretation in painting. His works often allude to the formal lexicon of minimalism and abstraction as the indexical forms are abstracted partly in process, bridging the borders between photography, sculpture, and painting. About his recent working process he writes:

"I feel like being an artist parallels the development of transportation. In the beginning there's railroads and the tracks have been laid down by the diligent labor of others (art history), with specific places to travel. With experience and time the infrastructure of roads were at my disposal so I got a car and took the wheel. I traveled all the major highways, the scenic back roads, mapping out my own routes to places unknown, but I had to stay on the roads. Then air-travel shows up, but I don't think that's the way to go - sure it's fast and efficient - but you're miles away from the country you've come from, detached and skipping from city to city. What I'm doing now is getting out of the car and walking, away from where the planes, trains, and cars can go. It's slow and quiet, it's very intimate."

This metaphor of moving within a certain structure shows how Falls goes from one form to another, exploring different materials and areas of art history. In his recent works, Falls literally moves by walking outside, thus stepping off the structuring paths: For his new paintings made in upstate New York, Falls first dyed the canvases in natural pink clay pools made in the road by a heavy storm. Then working through several different rainstorms to create multiple layers on the canvas, Falls began with the plants found at the edge of the woods, moving deeper into the forest for each exposure to gather different plants. While the layering of exposures created a depth of field within the image mimicking that of photography, the physical movement into the forest to access the trees and leaves translates into the work as something more experiential in a landscape image that is true to nature. Working throughout the night, each painting gathers layers of plants and pigment, as well as rain and time, leaving an impression not just of a forest at night, but the feeling of a full night passed awake.

In his ceramic works Falls also uses found plants gathered from specific areas around Los Angeles and pressed into hand-made tiles of clay. As much as the final object relates to the rich history of ceramics in California, each work holds plants from a specific area, such as a hike in Griffith Park. As with the rain paintings, the plants in the ceramics are gathered democratically while moving through a landscape. Upon viewing the works from opposite coasts together

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one notices the distinct aesthetics of place. It's not just in the individual plants, but the environment painted through the inference of their collection.

A body of Terrazzo works and beaded sculpture add stone-based works to the earthy material of clay, plants, and rain. In Falls' Terrazzo works, the artist uses natural gemstones with healing properties to create a surface that is both visually inviting and metaphysically mending. The bench-like forms raise the question if the viewer should sit on them, answered by the healing gemstone curtain installed at the end of a hallway acting as a gesture of care and concern. In an unspoken homage to Felix Gonzales Torres, the curtain extends empathetic contact and reminds us of the shared commitment to the viewer from the artist and artwork.

The black-and-white photos bring together the beginning, and the development of Falls' oeuvre. To Falls, photography is the initial point of his work, to which all of his different working processes are connected. By substituting chemicals and technology with nature and time, he pushes forward an environmental, metaphorical understanding of photography. Large format photography becomes evidence of his time spent in the landscapes he inhabits. In leaving certain canonical and conceptual structures of art history behind, and in substituting mechanic-chemical technology with the landscape itself, lies the political potential of Falls' work. In other terms – "A jail with no jailer".

Sam Falls was born in 1984 in San Diego, CA. He had solo exhibitions at the Public Art Fund in New York, NY (2014), at Pomona College, CA (2014), and at the Ballroom Marfa, TX (2015), The Kitchen, New York (2015) and the Giuliani Foundation, Rome, Italy (2015). His first solo exhibition with Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich, Switzerland was in 2013. In spring 2018 Sam Falls will have a solo exhibition at MART Galleria Civica di Arte Contemporanea di Trento, Italy. Other exhibitions of his work have been held at LAXART, Los Angeles, CA, (2013), Madre Museum, Naples, Italy (2014), Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh, Scotland (2015), Hammer Museum, Los Angeles co-organized by the Menil Collection, Houston, Los Angeles (2015) and Galerie Eva Presenhuber Zurich, Switzerland (2015).

Tillmann Severin

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