

Associated Talks and Events

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Exhibition curated by Sarah Glennie, Director, National College of Art and Design and Rachel Thomas, Senior Curator: Head of Exhibitions, IMMA.

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Catalogue and Poster

This exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue and exhibition poster, available from the IMMA Shop.

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Front cover:

Wolfgang Tillmans

Elephant Man, 2002

© Wolfgang Tillmans, courtesy Maureen Paley, London

ÁRAS NUA-EALAÍNE
NA hÉIREANN
IRISH MUSEUM OF
MODERN ART

Ospidéal Rioga
Cill Mhaighneán
Baile Átha Cliath 8
D08 FW31, Éire

Royal Hospital
Kilmainham
Dublin 8
D08 FW31, Ireland

+353 1 612 9900
imma.ie / info@imma.ie



IMMA
EAST WING GALLERIES
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Wolfgang Tillmans Rebuilding the Future



IMMA is pleased to present *Rebuilding the Future*, the first solo exhibition in Ireland by Wolfgang Tillmans (b. 1968, Remscheid, West Germany). Comprising over 100 works, this exhibition captures Tillmans' unique way of working. This new exhibition at IMMA includes a range of works on paper made with and without a camera, sound work, and installation, installed in IMMA's galleries in direct relation to the physical spaces, light, and atmosphere of the museum.

Tillmans is one of the most accomplished and widely celebrated artists working today, recognised for major contributions to the development of contemporary photography in terms of subject matter, production, scale, presentation and methodology. Tillmans' relationship with IMMA began over 20 years ago, when he first exhibited work at the museum as part of a group exhibition of young emerging artists, *Projects* (1997). More recently his work was included in the thematic group exhibition *What We Call Love: From Surrealism to Now* (2015).

While primarily a lens-based artist, Tillmans also works in a variety of other media. Central to Tillmans' practice is the prolific production of books as well as magazine contributions, and more recently, live and recorded music. Included in this exhibition is an immersive new sound work, *I Want to Make a Film* (2018), which engages with concerns over the speed and development of personal technology and its effects.

Tillmans does not focus on one genre of photography such as portraiture or still life. Instead his holistic, site-specific presentations of a wide range of subject matter, and its non-hierarchical display method, reflects the immersive experience of living in an increasingly connected world.

This new exhibition at IMMA includes work that is concerned with the process of time, whether it be measured through people or places. The exhibition functions as an open question for the audience to interpret. In this, as in all exhibitions produced by Tillmans, the work is selected and installed

to reflect both the nature of the physical space and Tillmans' immediate concerns at the time of the exhibition.

This physical layout, a sense of interconnectedness and immersive-ness that is provoked by being surrounded by images suggests that so many seemingly disconnected subjects, movements and people are in fact connected by larger forces at work in the world: political and economic structures, pop-culture, consumerism, cheap and available travel, technological advancements and more.

Taken collectively, these works capture an unquantifiable range of experience, place and people. From the surgery ward to the nightclub, to moments of sublime beauty in nature, we are presented with a fragmentary, subjective, but emotionally resonant depiction of the world and what it is to be in it. The variety of subject, experience, and viewpoints that Tillmans succeeds in capturing makes for exhibitions and individual works that may be approached in multiple ways. They can be understood as records of a very particular experience or phenomenon - dancing, bathing, talking on the phone. As well as this, these disparate subjects suggest a unity of elements that serve to make up human experience. In a recent interview in *The New Yorker* magazine, Tillmans is quoted as saying, 'The coexistence of spirituality, an interest in Krishnamurti, in Quakers, and in twenty hours spent at [Berlin nightclub] Berghain - you know, that's not mutually exclusive.'

Tillmans' acceptance and celebration of the complexity of the world suggest his work can be described as utopian. He has emphasised the importance of an 'open, anxiety-free gaze'. This gaze turned towards a wide range of people and situations seems to insist on striving towards a utopia. This is despite the presence of works that record troubling issues, such as images that capture the border fence between the US and Mexico, or protesters at a Black Lives Matter rally in New York City in 2014.

This utopianism, or what might be more simply called optimism, is a thread running through Tillmans' work since the early club photography of the 90s. These works considered hedonism as a means of expressing something primal, but also contemporary, about human experience. Today, Tillmans makes frequent reference in lectures and interviews to the concept of freedom. He is concerned with both personal freedom and freedom as a political ideology safeguarded by such organisations as the European Union. In the run up to the vote on the UK remaining within the EU in 2016, Tillmans conceived and produced an anti-Brexit campaign. This included poster designs that were free to download and distribute, as well as other posters and t-shirts that were distributed throughout London and the UK and found high-profile supporters.

This freedom, in ideology and in subject matter, finds its parallel in Tillmans' embrace of working with numerous disciplines and mediums. His photographic works on paper vary in size, format and means of production. Works range in scale from postcard sized to over four metres in length, completely immersing the viewer. This variety combines with the singular, site-specific method of installing work with no 'hierarchy' suggested by placement of works in relation to the viewer. Rather the installation allows the works to be placed in relation and correlation to each other, and to the gallery itself, utilising the entire space as a potential space for display. This display method, coupled with the eye for detail and texture that Tillmans brings to his work, means the viewer is surrounded by a singular immersive vision.

Artist Biography

Wolfgang Tillmans (b. Remscheid, Germany, 1968) lives and works in Berlin, and London and graduated from Bournemouth and Poole College of Art and Design in 1992. He has won numerous awards including the Turner Prize, UK (2000), the Cultural award of the German Society for

Photography (2009), the Hasselblad Foundation International Award in Photography, Sweden (2015) and the Goslar Kaiserring Prize, Germany (2018). From 2003 to 2009 he was Professor for Interdisciplinary Art at the Städelschule in Frankfurt am Main. In 2006 he opened Between Bridges, a not-for-profit exhibition space in London that now operates in Berlin and from 2009-2014 he was an Artists Trustee on the Board of Tate, London.

Recent major solo exhibitions have been held at Musée d'Art Contemporain et Multimédias, Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo (2018); Kunstverein in Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany, Fondation Beyeler, Riehen, Switzerland, Tate Modern, London (2017); Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Serralves, Porto, Portugal (2016); The National Museum of Modern Art, Osaka, Japan and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2015); Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, K21 Ständehaus, Düsseldorf, Germany and Les Rencontres d'Arles, France and Museo de Arte de Lima (2013); Kunsthalle Zürich, Switzerland, Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo, Brazil and Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden (2012); Zachęta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw, Poland (2011) and Serpentine Gallery, London (2010).

His work has been included in significant survey exhibitions including *Manifesta 10*, The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia (2014), *Fundamentals, the 14th International Architecture Biennale directed by Rem Koolhaas*, La Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy (2014), *Berlin Biennale*, Germany (2014, 1998), the *British Art Show 5 and 7*, UK (2000, 2010); the *3rd Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art*, Russia (2009) and the *51st and 53rd Venice Biennale*, Italy (2005, 2009).