

UTA BARTH

October 27 – December 22, 2011
Gallery One

For immediate release

Tanya Bonakdar Gallery is pleased to present a remarkable group of new works by Uta Barth. As the artist's ninth solo exhibition with the gallery, this show will bring together two of Barth's latest series of color photographs within the main floor exhibition spaces.

Furthering her exploration of the atmospheric and incidental, Barth conceived her latest major body of work, *... and to draw a bright white line with light*, on the occasion of her 2011 solo exhibition at the Art Institute of Chicago. This series is installed in the main gallery space as a sequence of diptych and triptych paneled photographs that trace a growing ribbon of light against the curtains of the artist's home. Created over the course of a single afternoon, this project follows a distinct chronology that diverges from the circular nature of her earlier series. Here, Barth captures glimpses of the ephemeral as it exists between two fixed points in time, beginning with the very first sliver of light that snakes across her textured curtains and culminating in large ribbons that fill the final frame. Despite this sequential ordering, however, these photographs do not invite a linear narrative. Rather, they coalesce to transform observations as simple as a ray of afternoon sunlight into a lyrical description of the passage of time, heightening our awareness of such subtleties and, in turn, the process of looking itself.

Throughout the past two decades, Barth has made visual perception the subject of her work. Regarded for her "empty" images that border on painterly abstraction, the artist carefully renders blurred backgrounds, cropped frames and the natural qualities of light to capture incidental and fleeting moments, those which exist almost exclusively within our periphery. With a deliberate disregard for both the conventional photographic subject and point-and-shoot role of the camera, Barth's work delicately deconstructs conventions of visual representation by calling our attention to the limits of the human eye.

In her newest series, however, Barth no longer remains the mere observer. For the first time in her practice, she overtly manipulates her surroundings by drawing the folds of her curtains in order to shape the growing line of sunlight into desired configurations. Similar to her 2010 series, *... to walk without destination and to see only to see.*, Barth registers her presence by including the occasional glimpse of her hand as it works to draw the line of light. Such details lend a process-based, performative element to this series that, ironically, aligns it neatly with the artist's ongoing exploration of image making. With every tug of the curtain and new line of light, Barth creates photographs in their most literal form – as drawings of light.

The exhibition continues in the rear space of Gallery One with Barth's partner project, *Compositions of Light on White*. Set in dialogue with *... and to draw a bright white line with light*, these minimal works feature Mondrian-like grids of light and architecture as they appear within the setting of Barth's bedroom. Through a timely adjustment of her blinds, the artist projects rectilinear patterns of light along a trio of built-in closet doors, producing complex works that reconsider notions of peripheral space in relation to composition. Her sharp sense of geometric formalism is evident in the jarring juxtapositions she presents between flat, painterly abstractions of light and abrupt shifts in volume and depth. An intentional slip in the margin of one photograph reveals the shadow lines of a deep set of drawers; in another, a distant hallway that suddenly flips the image into three-dimensional space. Barth harnesses these peripheral details as both the subject and departure point for this series, a method to create composition and, at the same time, challenge our very perception of it.

The artist continues these notions of space through the installation of these works within the rear gallery. With the exception of her earliest *Ground and Field* series, this is the only time Barth has rendered her photographs as individual, self-contained images. Each is mounted in a deep, floating frame that she positions to create a thin shadow line around her works as a way to "lock down" the image. Barth then extends this plane of composition onto the surrounding walls of the gallery by arranging her photographs in response to the room itself. She balances images of various sizes and formats against one another as well as architectural elements such as a doorway or a remote corner, re-articulating our experience of the space through its quiet idiosyncrasies. As within many of Barth's installations, her photographs become a means, rather than merely an end, to her work. They are, as Barth herself affirms, "a mantra that allows us to tune into the subtlest, most ephemeral information that I am trying to chase down."¹

Uta Barth's work is represented in numerous museum collections including the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York and Bilbao, Spain; The Tate Modern, London; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; The Los Angeles County Museum of Art; The Getty Museum, Los Angeles, and The Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, among others. Recent exhibitions include *Uta Barth: ... and to draw a bright white line with light* at the Art Institute of Chicago,

2011 (solo); *Magical Consciousness* at Arnolfini, Bristol, UK, 2011 (group); *Uta Barth* at the Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle, 2011 (solo) and *The Artist's Museum* at The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 2010-2011 (group). In 2010, Gregory R. Miller & Co. (New York) released the artist's major monograph publication titled *The Long Now*. In 2012, Blind Spot Books (New York) will publish a catalogue featuring Barth's work from this exhibition.

ⁱ Soto, Paul. "Literal Photography: Q+A With Uta Barth." *Art in America*, October 18, 2011.