

DIRK STEWEN

Even in its blackness, the sky did not rest

June 6-June 30, 2006

Opening reception: Tuesday, June 6, 6-8pm

For immediate release

Tanya Bonakdar Gallery is very pleased to present its first solo exhibition of new work by Dirk Stewen, *Even in its blackness, the sky did not rest*. This literary reference to the modern urban skyline at night from Paul Auster's *New York Trilogy* suggests the random, yet poetic, juxtapositions of images and forms that populate Stewen's works on paper. The works presented explore form and process, seducing the viewer with an uncanny sensitivity to material and imagery while defying the formal classifications of photography, collage, sculpture and drawing.

Stewen uses the exploration of the photographic process as a catalyst within his art making practice. His efforts to disrupt, slow down, or recreate photographic production result in compelling formal compositions and juxtapositions that connect images and forms into constellations of ideas and suggested narratives. A number of works are comprised of sheets of photographic paper painted with dark ink. The ink reacts with the surface of the paper in an entirely organic and fluid manner that the artist sees as referencing the washes and baths required for photographic production. Further mixing medium orthodoxy, Stewen embroiders these near monochrome paintings with delicate colored cotton in linear patterns that trail from the picture. This playful intervention further accentuates notions of the uncontrolled and ephemeral.

Elsewhere black ink collages are set within frames alongside a black and white photographic image. A voyeuristic image of boy on a telephone looks across the divide within his own frame, deep into the patterned black paper. The dotted thread is echoed in the boy's own studded belt, and the relief pattern of the telephone booth, as well as the industrial cable of the telephone cord into which he speaks. In another series of photos, the swaying branches of a palm tree, a photographic cliché culled from a tropical holiday, plays off the whimsical threads hanging from the bottom of another black ink photo paper collage.

Stewen's watercolors also explore, and in some ways parallel, ideas of the photographic. Just as in photography, where liquid chemicals spread out across the paper to reveal images that had been invisible merely seconds before, in Stewen's works, wet pigment spreads out and bleeds from one form into the next. Figures and compositions arise as if the paper was already pregnant with them before the artist's hand met the paper's surface.

Dirk Stewen's recent exhibitions include; *Das Stipendium*, curated by Jens Hoffmann, Kunstverein Hamburg, 2006 (group); *The Glass Bead Game*, curated by Alun Rowlands and Matt Williams, Vilma Gold Project Space, Berlin, 2006 (group); *Alles.In einer Nacht*, curated by Anna-Catharina Gebbers, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York, 2005 (group); and *Formalismus, Moderne Kunst, heute*, Kunstverein in Hamburg (group), 2004. The forthcoming solo exhibition: *Sugar Lump, Sugar*, can be seen at the Kunstlerhaus Stuttgart June 22nd – July 22nd 2006.

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