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For immediate release

The Fifth Genre: Considering the Contemporary Still Life

June 25 – July 30, 2010

opening reception: Friday, June 25, 5–7 pm

Works by: Talia Chetrit, Martí Cormand, Petah Coyne, Angelo Filomeno, John Gerrard, Jane Hammond, Ellen Harvey, Alfredo Jaar, Jannis Kounellis, Louise Lawler, Miranda Lichtenstein, Robert Mapplethorpe, Yasumasa Morimura, Jaume Plensa, Charles Ritchie, Sally Ross, Kate Shepherd, Erin Shirreff, Kiki Smith, Lynn Talbot, Antoni Tàpies, Wolfgang Tillmans, Jeff Wall, and Jonas Wood

The Fifth Genre: Considering the Contemporary Still Life highlights the enduring relevance and resonance of the still life, the often undervalued genre of academic painting. Artists today are using still life to investigate contemporary issues such as consumerism and sustainability, while continuing in the genre's traditional themes of perception, reality, and mortality. In the exhibition, the artists convey the persisting power of the still life to portray the changing using the unchanging, the intangible using the tangible. *The Fifth Genre* opens to the public on Friday, June 25, from 5 to 7 pm.

The Fifth Genre takes its name from the five genres of academic painting: history, portraiture, genre painting, landscape, and still life. During a time of continued upheaval and uncertainty, artists of all media have been instinctually drawn to still life and the modest, everyday objects that are its subject: flowers, vessels, food, household items, and even trash. Through their commonness, the pieces that surround us every day display deeply intimate associations. Today, through its inherent "emptiness," the still life presents an affecting contradiction to the saturation of images and information we experience.

The universality of still life lends itself to being successfully translated across media and approaches, as shown by the diverse set of works in the exhibition. Photographers employ traditional compositions in a contemporary medium and challenge our sense of perspective. Through sculpture, ordinary objects are physically isolated and exalted. Meanwhile, artists working in animation or video subvert the genre by activating the subjects of still life into moving images. The exhibition also features artists using age-old symbols of *vanitas* to emphasize our fragile, fleeting existence with new materials and technology.

A central objective in still life painting was to precisely render an object and its distinct interplay of shadow, light, color, and texture. As seen in *The Fifth Genre*, a fascinating aspect of contemporary still life is how these formal concerns are merged with current interests and developments. What was once a scientific approach with accurate representation as the goal, still life is now less fixated on realism, more diverse, and used more liberally as a means of expression and reflection of issues today.

Summer Hours: June 25 – July 2: Tuesday–Saturday, 10 am–6 pm
July 3–5: closed
July 6–30: Monday–Friday, 10 am–5 pm
August: open by appointment

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