

## Catherine Opie

23 November 2011 – 21 January 2012



Stephen Friedman Gallery is delighted to announce an exhibition of early and recent work by Catherine Opie. Opie is considered to be one of the most important American photographers of her generation. This is her fourth solo exhibition at the gallery and follows her highly acclaimed solo mid-career surveys at the Guggenheim, New York in 2008-2009 and at the ICA, Boston, earlier this year.

Shown here for the very first time is an early group of portraits from the artist's black and white 'Girlfriends' series and a major new body of landscape photographs, taken at sea.

Catherine Opie has been photographing the American social and geographical makeup for nearly three decades. Studying first at the San Francisco Art Institute and then at CalArts, Opie's work has consistently explored notions of community and identity, and the ways in which they shape one another. Formally, her work moves between portraiture and landscape with a fluidity unrivalled elsewhere. It is then apt that this exhibition brings together two such powerful examples of each genre.

The 'Girlfriends' series is a collection of visually arresting black and white portraits of her friends and lovers. Taken from the mid eighties through to 2010, Opie's documentation of these often-marginalized subcultures is honest, striking and provocative. At times highly sexualized, these images simultaneously capture an air of jubilation and celebration. It is this playful intimacy that removes Opie's portraits from the realm of the voyeur and instead positions them as sensitive snapshots of a generation.

These works are an integral part of Opie's early career. The informal compositions and domestic settings seen here recall an atmosphere of spontaneous action, with the artist present as both documenter and participant. This aesthetic pre-empts Opie's later, more formal compositions of friends from the queer leather culture in San Francisco, for which she first became known. As such, the presentation of 'Girlfriends' resituates Opie's early body of work.

## STEPHEN FRIEDMAN GALLERY

In the back gallery space is a major new body of landscape photographs. 'Twelve Miles to the Horizon: Sunrises and Sunsets' documents the artist's journey on a Hanjin cargo vessel as it travelled across the Pacific Ocean, from Korea to California. Opie documented each sunrise and each sunset whilst living on board the ship for the 11 days that it took to make the journey. The body of work presented here consists of several pairs of sunrise and sunset photographs.

These evocative and breathtaking photographs re-claim the genre of landscape photography for the 21st century. The vista, anchored by the same line of horizon in each image, is a powerful testament to the changing physicality of the sea. At the same time, the accompanying narrative of globalisation is ever present in these works.

Whether capturing the spirit of protest in the 1990s or the challenges faced by a shrinking 'glo-cal' world in the new millennium, Opie's work documents the changing face of a nation, on both a macro and micro scale. Her work, whether void of human presence or not, resonates with social implications.

'Twelve Miles to the Horizon: Sunrises and Sunsets' is the direct result of a commission from Hanjin Shipping, based on the recommendations of Kathy Halbreich, Associate Director of the Museum of Modern Art and Kaspar König, Director of Museum Ludwig in Germany.

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Catherine Opie (b.1961, Ohio) lives and works in Los Angeles. Forthcoming exhibitions include *The Air We Breathe*, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, USA. Recent notable solo exhibitions include *Empty and Full*, The Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, USA (2011); *Figure and Landscape*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA (2010); *Catherine Opie: American Photographer*, Guggenheim Museum, New York, USA (2008); *Catherine Opie: 1999 & In and Around Home*, Aldrich Museum, Ridgefield, Connecticut; travelling to the Orange County Museum of Art, California, Cleveland Museum of Contemporary Art, OH, and Weatherspoon Art Museum, Greensboro, NC (2006), *Catherine Opie: Chicago (American Cities)*, MCA Chicago, Chicago, IL (2006); *Skyways and Icehouses*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, USA (2002); *Catherine Opie*, The Photographers' Gallery, London (2000). Recent notable group shows include *Hide/Seek: Difference and Desire in American Portraiture*, Brooklyn Museum, USA (2011); *The Untitled 12<sup>th</sup> Istanbul Biennale*, curated by Jens Hoffman and Adriano Pedrosa, Istanbul, (2011); *America*, Beirut Art Center, Beirut, Lebanon (2009-2010); *In Repose: An exhibition from the collection of Debra and Dennis Scholl, Miami Beach, Florida*, curated by Lorie Mertes, The Galleries at Moore, Goldie Paley Gallery Philadelphia, PA; *Universal Experience: Art, Life, and the Tourist's Eye*, curated by Francesco Bonami, MCA, Chicago, IL and travelling to the Hayward Gallery, London (2005), and *The Whitney Biennial*, The Whitney Museum of American Art, NY (2004).

Stephen Friedman Gallery is participating in Art Basel Miami Beach, stand E4, 1 - 4 December 2011.

Forthcoming exhibition: **David Shrigley: Arms Fayre**, 8 February - 10 March 2012

Gallery hours are: Tuesday to Friday, 10am - 6pm and Saturday, 11am - 5pm

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