

press release

TOM FRIEDMAN AND STEVE WOLFE

22 April - 29 May 2010

Private View Wednesday 21 April 2010, 6 - 8pm

Stephen Friedman Gallery is pleased to announce a two-person exhibition of American artists Tom Friedman and Steve Wolfe. Tom Friedman returns to the gallery for his fourth presentation in over fourteen years of collaboration. Friedman is currently the subject of a major mid-career survey exhibition entitled 'Up in the Air' at Magasin 3, Stockholm. This is Steve Wolfe's inaugural show in the Gallery. Wolfe is also the subject of a one-person exhibition which originated at the Whitney Museum of American Art and is currently on view at the Menil Collection, Houston.

In the front gallery Steve Wolfe has organised a carefully selected group of works dating from the mid eighties to the early nineties. Using a variety of materials and processes, including aluminium, linen, oil and screen-printing, Wolfe sculpts and paints precise and exacting three-dimensional replicas of books that possess a personal significance. Iconic titles, including Leo Tolstoy's 'Anna Karenina', Oscar Wilde's 'The Picture of Dorian Gray' and Andre Breton's 'Manifestoes of Surrealism' intimate Wolfe's own private reading list and render in precise detail the typographic cover design so typical of late sixties and seventies publishing.

In contrast to these well-known and highly recognisable books, Wolfe includes in this presentation his mute 'sketchbook' works. These are presented spine and cover facing out, with their contents hidden from view. Refusing to offer any insight into the artist's process, the reproduction sketchbooks present an innocuous store-bought object and suggest a more minimalist approach in technique and attention to surface detail.

In certain works the particulars of the original, coveted publication have been faithfully reconstructed down to the most minute of details. A creased corner on the cover, a small tear, a well thumbed page; all have been observed and attended to equally. In the perfection of these recreations, the passage of time that the original object has borne witness to is honoured. Comparatively, other works readily reveal the artist's hand - brush strokes are left visible and structural frameworks exposed. These contrasting formal choices offer us a glimpse into an early and experimental phase in the artist's career, a time that preceded the resolve to focus solely on the perfected facsimile. Beyond this intriguing moment of hindsight, the faithful reconstruction of all of these works have a compelling power to engage the collective memory in us all, invoking our own seminal reading experiences.

In the back gallery Tom Friedman presents five new works. This presentation marks an evolution in form for the artist. Using only two materials - Styrofoam and paint - Friedman has created a body of highly inventive and idiosyncratic sculptures.

This restricted palette of materials is a conceptual challenge for Friedman, and one that will be well known to many followers of his work. His approach to understanding the world and its logic has long been expressed through the laborious, painstakingly precise and often astounding methods he uses to recreate random elements from his own life.

In this exhibition, a paper towel dispenser, a roughly painted white piece of chipboard and a plant pot balancing on a baseball bat leaning against the wall are some of the more innocuous objects on view, each its own still life. In *Untitled (Bouquet)*, the most fantastical of the new work, random objects including a half eaten banana, an auctioneer's gavel, some stuffed olives and a steak knife have somehow been brought together into this extraordinary bouquet. The genius of this sculpture is both its randomly accumulated elements, which suggest the

detritus of a post-apocalyptic art party, and its insane construction. The arrangement balances precariously on top of a plinth, made to look like a typical studio crate made from industrial blue Styrofoam. However, here the crate is made from Styrofoam painted to look like a Styrofoam crate, down to the branding and the masking tape sealing the joints together. Friedman offers the viewer a warped metaphor: the description of a Styrofoam crate in Styrofoam, presented as different and distinct from the material itself.

Perhaps signalling the end of an era of excess in the art market, Friedman demonstrates a new, focussed and reductive approach to his work in these alchemic transformations of the everyday.

The exhibition parallels the work of two of the most highly accomplished artists whose shared skill and attention to detail offer a glimpse into their own personal worlds.

Tom Friedman (b. 1965, Saint Louis) lives and works in Massachusetts. Recent solo exhibitions include: *Up in the Air*, Magasin 3, Stockholm (2010); *REAM*, Saint Louis Art Museum, Saint Louis (2009); *Pure Invention*, Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum, Saint Louis (2006); *Tom Friedman*, South London Gallery, London (2004); *Stitching*, Fondazione Prada, Milan (2002); *Tom Friedman: The Epic in the Everyday*, South-eastern Centre for Contemporary Art, Winston-Salem; travelled to Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco; Aspen Art Museum, Aspen; The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York (2000). Forthcoming and recent group exhibitions include: *Casanova fort et vert (Casanova Forever)*, FRAC Languedoc-Roussillon, Montpellier; *Slash: Paper Under the Knife*, Museum of Arts and Design, New York; *Floor Corner Wall*, Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, Fort Worth (2010); *Chasing Napoleon*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2009); *The Shapes of Space*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2007); *Art in America, Now*, MOCA Shanghai, Shanghai (2007); *Mapping the Self*, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (2007); *Into me / Out of me*, P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, Long Island (2006).

Steve Wolfe (b. 1955, Pisa) lives and works in San Francisco. Recent solo exhibitions include: *Steve Wolfe: on Paper*, The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; traveling to The Menil Collection, Houston and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles (2009-2010); *Steve Wolfe*, Luhring Augustine, New York (2003); *Steve Wolfe*, Mario Diacono, Boston (2003). Recent group exhibitions include *Between Art and Life: The Contemporary Painting and Sculpture Collection*, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco (2009); *Attention To Detail*, Flagg Art Foundation, New York, curated by Chuck Close (2008); *Book/Shelf*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2008); *2d-3d*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2007).

Forthcoming exhibition: **Tasters' Choice** 12 June – 17 July 2010

Stephen Friedman Gallery will be participating in **SP-Arte, São Paulo International Art Fair** 29 April – 2 May 2010

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

For further details please contact Alice Walters on +44 (0)20 7494 1434