

CHRISTOPHER WOOL

CROSSTOWN CROSSTOWN

Gallery Talks

All talks free, tickets from reception.

Saturday 3 May, 2pm

Ian Davenport

One of the first artists to exhibit at DCA, in 1999, and currently showing in 'Days Like These' at Tate Britain, Ian Davenport offers his view of Wool's approach to painting.

Thursday 29 May, 6.30pm

Toby Paterson

Last year's winner of the Becks' Futures with a solo show now at CCA, Glasgow, Toby Paterson talks about Wool and his particularly urban context.

Thursday 10 April, 6.30 and

Saturday 17 May, 2pm

Drop-in, informal discussion about the exhibition with gallery staff.

Saturday 26 April, 2pm

A short introduction to the work of Christopher Wool with DCA Curator, Katrina Brown.

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Exhibition Information

Christopher Wool is one of the most significant and influential American artists of his generation, a generation that includes, among others, Cindy Sherman, Robert Rauschenberg and Jeff Koons. His paintings fuse something of the legacies of both the scale and vitality of Abstract Expressionism and Pop's mass-produced and detached cool. They combine and confuse the rigid regularity of mechanical process with the casual accident of the hand-made. A gritty, urban feel is coupled with a striking elegance in these large-scale paintings that are rooted in the downtown New York in which Wool has worked for over two decades.

Though his work has been exhibited the world over since the late 1980s this is his first solo show in the UK, offering a long-overdue opportunity to appreciate the work of a fascinating artist. Including works from 1995 to 2002, it offers a substantial view of his approach to painting and highlights the role of photography in his on-going exploration of image-making.

**6 April –
8 June 2003**

At once chaotic and controlled, Wool's big, bold and remarkable paintings are full of the energy that goes into their making. The earliest works in this exhibition, from 1995, are indicative of the way in which he began to layer different types of marks, painted and printed, over the regular and pre-formed patterns with which he had previously worked. Existent and readily-available devices such as patterned paint rollers for low-cost domestic decoration, floral motifs and letter stencils all featured in his paintings before 1995, and continue to appear today. They are, however, increasingly combined with other effects, including more painterly brushwork.

What at first appears as free-flowing abstract gesture in Wool's paintings often reveals itself to be, in fact, printed. He uses photography to take part of one painting and reproduce it in another. Elements appear enlarged, rendered in a different colour or otherwise altered in subsequent works. The process can be seen by exploring the paintings themselves, all of which bear the traces of their making. The spills, slips and stains that occur become part of the works, as do the registration marks

and mesh dots of the silk-screens used for printing.

During the period from 1995 to 2001, Wool took Polaroid photographs of his paintings, mostly while they were in progress in his studio. These **Studio Polaroids** further reveal the process of layering and super-imposition that goes into the paintings. They also track the gradual introduction of colour into what had been a predominantly black and white practice. Polaroids are unlike other types of photography in that they are one-off images. These are interim pictures, full of the accidents of colour, focus and flash so typical of the format.

Several of the paintings made during this period that appear in the Polaroids are also included in the exhibition, creating a kind of double-take. Others, notably the large red **Untitled** painting of 2001 and the aptly titled **Double Party Booty** (1999) employ a doubling that creates an out-of-focus effect.

The most recent works in the exhibition are full of contradictions and inversions. The exuberant splash of orange that is **Minor Mishap II** is in fact printed. Perhaps the most immediately painterly works rely as much on the removal as the application of paint.

The undeniable urban feel of Wool's paintings is enhanced when seen alongside **East Broadway Breakdown**, the second group of photographs in the exhibition. Devoid of people, but with the occasional dog, the scenes are full of the traces of life left behind: stains, spills, signs, trash, discarded furniture. Taken at night using a 35mm camera with flash, they are high-contrast images of the downtown streets between Wool's Lower East Side studio and his home. The extreme black-and-white, light-and-dark contrast of the images means that the scenes can be read as monochrome compositions of tone, texture and line, though they never lose their grounding in the mundane reality of the city. Wool's snap-shot images of these over-looked spaces and discarded objects offer a street-level view of one of the most iconic cities in the world.

Prompting us to think about the very way we look at and try to understand images, and with an explicit glimpse of the humour that permeates much of his work, is the single word painting included in the exhibition. **Untitled**, 2001 (THE HARDER YOU LOOK THE HARDER YOU LOOK), is one of the most recent paintings to use letters as an all-over pattern, a technique first used by Wool in the late 1980s. Typically, the original text remains

legible, despite the absence of proper spacing and punctuation. Like the patterns of the paint rollers, the letters are given, familiar forms that Wool uses and abuses to make new images.

Christopher Wool was born in Boston in 1955, grew up in Chicago and moved to New York in the early 1970s. He continues to live and work in the city. His first major museum show in Europe was held in 1991 at the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam and then travelled to the Kunsthalle Bern and Kölnischer Kunstverein. In 1998 he had a major solo show at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh and Kunsthalle Basel. His work was first seen in Scotland in the exhibition 'TRAUMA' at Dundee Contemporary Arts in 2001.

The exhibition is accompanied by a new publication, available for the special price of £19.95 during the exhibition.

The exhibition was initiated by Anne Pontégnie and organised in collaboration with Le Consortium, Dijon.