

XL - SIZE MATTERS



Opening: Saturday, November 25th 2017 from 2 until 6 pm
Show: November 28th - January 27th 2018

Gallery FIFTY ONE is pleased to announce its new exhibition 'XL - Size Matters', a groupshow that focuses on the investigation of the necessity of large-scale formats in the practice of several artists.

A drawer or painter feels the need or urge to open up her or his gesture as to develop the language required for the idea to come to life. May it be abstract or figurative, the scale of the action is dictated on the spot, merely during the process itself. Some works cry for sweep others demand intimacy or even modesty in scale.

The same can be noticed for sculptures. Their scale is an essential part of their 'meaning', of how they reach the spectator, totally intended so by the sculptor.

Modest scale says nothing about the importance of the work. Even if we've been through phases the last decennia where ever bigger sizes and prints seemed to have become the standard of importance, one wonders if the preliminary crucial questioning of the size really happened ?

All the above mentioned disciplines are manual ones in the first place. The immediate act imposes the scale. But what about photography? What about photographers who capture their images through a pre-built frame? How do they decide on which scale their images should come to life? Left aside the photographic work that arises in the darkroom through rayographs a.o. and which are bound to obvious restrictions, why do certain photographers choose to show their work in several formats and why do others stick to one size per image.?

Both drawers in this exhibition, Dirk Zoete and Arpaïs Du Bois, wield different sizes : small, medium and large and if one looks attentively, one can understand and feel the choices made at once. Each of their drawings calls for a specific scale.

The biggest scales Arpaïs Du Bois handles are limited by her own size, she makes her drawings horizontally, as far as her arms can reach, not vertically like a painting. Dirk Zoete's biggest scales have a real monumental impact or appearance despite the delicate pencil technique.

Small scale is not reserved for sketch or preliminary drawings nor is large scale only for achieved works. While we also know and recognize that medium drawing is a full-blown medium since the big exhibitions on drawing in the seventies.

In the case of photography, the chosen scale often increases the intensity of the image. One can only be humble and impressed when standing in front of the majestic portraits of Seydou Keïta and Malick Sidibé. As does the confrontation with the waterfalls of Simon Chaput, that provoke an almost physical encounter with the beauty and power of the natural elements. Paul Kooiker's images are equally intense, but in the meantime confront the viewer with a sense of bizarre intimacy, a not knowing if we should or shouldn't "be there". The scale emphasizes that entirely.

In other cases, an XL format is rather an extension of the subject matter or the lively personality of the photographer. Michael Wolf investigates the sharpness and the limits of penetration in his dense cityscapes where bigger format works so well. Daido Moriyama and William Klein, both influenced by their experiences as a book-maker, know precisely how their raw images work best, and that is often on an XL format. This accounts also for the work of Harry Gruyaert, who's colours on this size hits the viewer in crescendo.