

The Museum of Modern Art

MEDIA PREVIEW: October 23, 5:00–6:00
Second floor, Photography Collection Galleries

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WORK BY SIX CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHERS EXPLORED AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

***New Photography 12: Richard Billingham, Thomas Demand, Osamu Kanemura,
Sophie Ristelhueber, Georgina Starr, Wolfgang Tillmans***
October 24, 1996–February 4, 1997

On October 24, 1996, The Museum of Modern Art opens the twelfth exhibition in its annual *New Photography* series, devoted to important contemporary photographic work. Richard Billingham (British, b. 1970), Thomas Demand (German, b. 1964), Osamu Kanemura (Japanese, b. 1964), Sophie Ristelhueber (French, b. 1949), Georgina Starr (British b. 1968), and Wolfgang Tillmans (German, b. 1968) are the six artists represented in the exhibition, which is the first in the series to be comprised entirely of work from outside the United States. Organized by Thomas W. Collins, Jr., Beaumont and Nancy Newhall Curatorial Fellow, Department of Photography, *New Photography 12* remains on view through February 4, 1997.

The exhibition is made possible by a generous grant from Springs Industries, Inc., and is part of The Springs of Achievement Series on the Art of Photography. Under the sponsorship of Springs Industries over the past twelve years, the series has presented recent work by forty-eight artists from nine countries.

As an undergraduate art student, **Richard Billingham** made a series of candid color photographs of his family and their life in a housing project outside Birmingham, England. Originally created as studies for paintings, these large color pictures stand alone as a testament to the dramatic impact Billingham's father's alcoholism and unemployment have had on his family. The series has been recently published in book form as *Ray's a Laugh* (Scalo).

Thomas Demand culls photographs from history books and periodicals that illustrate significant and often notorious events. Using the photographs as guides, Demand meticulously constructs scale models of the settings of these scenes out of paper and cardboard, then makes large-scale color photographs of the models. Included are depictions of the Harvard dormitory room in which Bill Gates founded Microsoft Corp. (*Corner*, 1996); Leni Riefenstahl's photo archive (*Archive*, 1995); and the hotel room in which L. Ron Hubbard wrote *Dianetics* (*Room*, 1996). Cool and spare, the pictures are nonetheless moody and evocative, haunted by tensions arising from their subtly unsettling artifice.

Osamu Kanemura earns his living delivering newspapers throughout Tokyo. Traveling his extensive route each day for the last three years, he has made numerous black-and-white photographs of crowded neighborhood shopping streets, signs, seasonal decorations, tangled wires, and commercial traffic. His dark, graphically dense pictures capture the pace and material essence of a city that is more a product of unchecked growth than design. Some twenty gelatin-silver prints from the series will be displayed unframed and tacked side-by-side to the gallery wall.

Sophie Ristelhueber, a Parisian, traveled to Kuwait at the end of the Gulf War to make a series of aerial and ground-level, color and black-and-white photographs recording the physical traces of the conflict. Entitled *Fait* ("Fact"), the series includes stark photographs of trenches, tank tracks, bomb craters, and military detritus scattered in the desert sand. Ristelhueber installs these twenty-two large prints in an expansive grid which at first appears abstract but then gradually reveals itself as a reconstruction of a battlefield. "By shifting from the air to the ground, I sought to destroy any notion of scale . . . the constant shift between the infinitely big and the infinitely small

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may disorientate the spectator. But it's a good illustration of our relationship with the world: We have at our disposal modern techniques for seeing everything, apprehending everything, yet in fact we see nothing," writes Ristelhueber.

In 1994 **Georgina Starr** was invited to create a public artwork for The Hague in a series called "The Seventh Museum." Arriving with no particular project in mind, she obsessively collected documents of her loneliness and her anxiety (the toys she made, the games she played, the restaurants in which she ate alone every evening, projects begun and abandoned). Eventually, she decided to organize and install this intimate artistic autobiography in the gallery as her contribution to the series. Starr has elaborated on the original project by creating from it an intriguing archive of photographs of the individual components, grouped into nine thematic sub-collections. One of these, "The Seven Sorrows Collection," is presented in *New Photography 12*.

Wolfgang Tillmans first made a name for himself in London, photographing his friends in the demimonde of underground music and fashion for progressive British magazines. Mixing commercial work with pictures from his artistic oeuvre, Tillmans creates installations in the form of large arrays of prints, which narrate stories or evoke aspects of his milieu. "I have tried to embrace photography as applied art as well as exhibited art, and have been searching for applications and places that question the institutionalization of the image within both the gallery and the magazine," says Tillmans.

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