

Thomas Barrow*Stylistic Drift*

June 4 - July 10, 2015

Opening Reception: Thursday, June 4, 6-8 pm

Derek Eller Gallery is pleased to present *Stylistic Drift*, a historical exhibition of Thomas Barrow's spray painted photograms from the period 1977-1989. Comprised of photographic information derived without a camera, automotive spray paint, and SX-70 Polaroids, the photograms investigate concepts of cataloguing, experimentation, and language.



Barrow's interest in transcending the documentary function of photography has been a constant throughout his nearly fifty-year career. As in his earlier series of *Cancellations*, the spray-painted photograms abandon the sanctity of the immaculate print by transforming photographic information into unique, textured compositions. To create the photogram, Barrow gathered an array of material (i.e., waste from consumer products, drinking glasses, rulers, found photographs, printed media and advertisements, 35 mm film, contact sheets) and placed it on the surface of light-sensitive photographic paper which he then exposed to the light. Next, he applied spray paint in bold, day-glo colors as well as stapled polaroids to the resulting photogram, creating curious collages of cultural detritus which juxtapose the handmade with the manufactured.

Barrow titled the pieces from this body of work after scientific or technical books about engineering, mathematics, physics or computer science. *Stylistic Drift* is the name of one of the works; the title is derived from a text on archaeology but has references to the artist and the trajectory of his own practice. Using a generic stencil form, Barrow sprays the titles on to the photograms, invoking the early twentieth-century posters and typography of Constructivist and Bauhaus artists such as El Lissitzky and Moholy-Nagy. Like these earlier precedents, Barrow addresses the machine aesthetic in his work via his use of automotive paint and the incorporation of mass-produced materials. At the same time, the Polaroids (taken by Barrow) are one-of-a-kind and personal in nature.

Thomas Barrow aspired to "move from the transparent, window-on-the-world form that has been photography's primary reason for being since its invention, to making it a physical object, an object to be looked at for its own presence and not for a surrogate experience". An iconoclast and intellectual, Barrow is a forerunner for the generation of contemporary artists concerned with pushing the limits of photography.

Thomas Barrow (b. 1938) lives and works in Albuquerque, NM. His work has been featured in recent group exhibitions *A Machinery for Living* (curated by Walead Beshty) at Petzel Gallery, NYC and *Language as Inspiration* at DeCordova Museum, Lincoln, MA, as well as a solo show at Galerie Anne de Villepoix, Paris. It is included in numerous public collections such as The Art Institute of Chicago, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, National Gallery of Art, and The Museum of Modern Art. Barrow had a mid-career retrospective at LACMA and SFMoMA in 1986. *Stylistic Drift* will be his second solo exhibition at the gallery.

Derek Eller Gallery is located at 615 West 27th Street, between 11th and 12th Avenues. Hours are Tuesday - Saturday, 11am - 6pm. For further information or visuals, please contact the gallery at 212.206.6411 or visit www.derekeller.com