

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Lewis Stein:
Portraits of Cows

October 4 – 27, 2007



The Charles Cowles Gallery is pleased to announce its first exhibition of photographs by Lewis Stein. Stein's new photographs explore the ambiguities of perception, focusing on the enigmatic dynamics of the relationship between observer and the observed. His portraits of cows, all photographed gazing blankly into his camera lens, provoke an unspoken and highly subjective dialogue between the viewer and the subject.

We don't know how cows think, but their faces have a sympathetic quality which invites us to attribute human qualities to them. It's a natural response. Various studies have shown how we ascribe emotions to other people and make judgments about them as well based upon what we "read" in their physiognomy and expressions. Each of the portraits records a cow's presence and personality. We don't know what thoughts are really going through their heads but we feel free to project truth as we see it onto the cows' faces. What interests me is the interplay between our perceptions and reality.

Stein first began noticing cows in a 1983 walking holiday trip in England where he frequently encountered herds grazing in farmers' fields. "When they're not focused on eating, cows are very curious animals," Stein points out. "Walking through a field, you might see a group of ten cows and as soon as they see you, they start staring at you. And then you look back to see all of them looking at you, their heads turning, all turn as you walk away from them." The cows in the series were photographed in Switzerland, Colorado, Indiana and Ireland with a 35 mm camera. The faces of the individual cows extracted from their original setting, transferred to a "clean" background, then digitally enhanced and enlarged to slightly larger than life size. The resulting work both records the photographer's relationship with the individual cows and prompts viewers to establish relationships with the images as well.

Lewis Stein lives and works in New York. His work is included in many public and private collections, including the New Museum, New York, NY; University Art Museum, Berkeley, CA; and the Yale Art Museum, New Haven, CT.

The exhibition will be on view at the Charles Cowles Gallery at 537 West 24th Street, between 10th and 11th Avenues in Chelsea. Tuesday through Saturday, 10am - 6pm. There will be a reception for the artist on Thursday, October 4, from 6 to 8 p.m.

For further information or photographs, please contact the gallery.

Above image: *Cow 1*, 2007, chromogenic print, 40 x 40"

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