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Steven Beckly



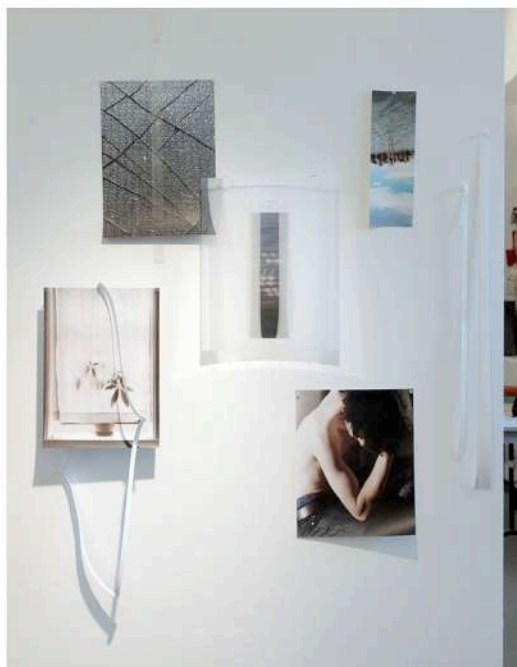
Untitled

Wavepool – Before talking about the physical forms of your work, I want to hear about the images that you start with. What qualities do you hope to find when photographing?

Steven Beckly – I'm eating an Ontario peach right now, so maybe a food analogy is a nice place to start. Peaches are in season and this one is so ripe that it's sensually sweet. I photograph my visible world when it is most ripe. Sometimes I happen upon it, sometimes I just wait. A still life on a window ledge can be beautiful, but only in a way we are familiar with. A ray of light penetrates the window and illuminates the still life, activating it in a way that is beyond our understanding. This moment is at its richest. The peach is at its ripest.

Wavepool – Are those moments rich as a visual or rich in emotional tone? Is it both? Can those be separated?

Steven Beckly – When they are both, it is magic. The visual is easy. I love formal issues and there are often many rich ways to connect images through their formal relationships. But ultimately, a formally strong image that is emotionally empty is useless to me. The inverse is also true. When emotionality isn't backed up with formal and visual strength, then it's just a poor photograph. This is where light can save the day.



Artist's studio, 29 Aug 2015

Wavepool – How would you describe the spectrum of emotions that can be found in your work?

Steven Beckly – They relate to intimacy. And the tragedy and trauma within intimate experience. Our relationships require us to continually destroy our selves to make room for another; Intimate experience peaks when we fall in love, when we get our hearts broken, when we become a parent and start loving in a new way, any time there is a rupture in our relationships. I'm trying to literally capture this emotional range. So you are correct. It is a spectrum. Something that is appearing in many of the new photographs.

Wavepool – There's a lot of great physical play happening in the new works, which certainly reinforces the idea of intimacy and presence. At what point did that enter into the equation of your practice?

Steven Beckly – The print itself is a body that relates and reacts to its environment. It isn't only a surface from which we can gather meaning. Different papers or substrates have different personalities: they bend, buckle, warp, absorb light or reflect it, depending on what they are and what's around them. The physical play comes from treating the paper; as it is, a fluid body whose own thingness is undergoing constant change.



Contact

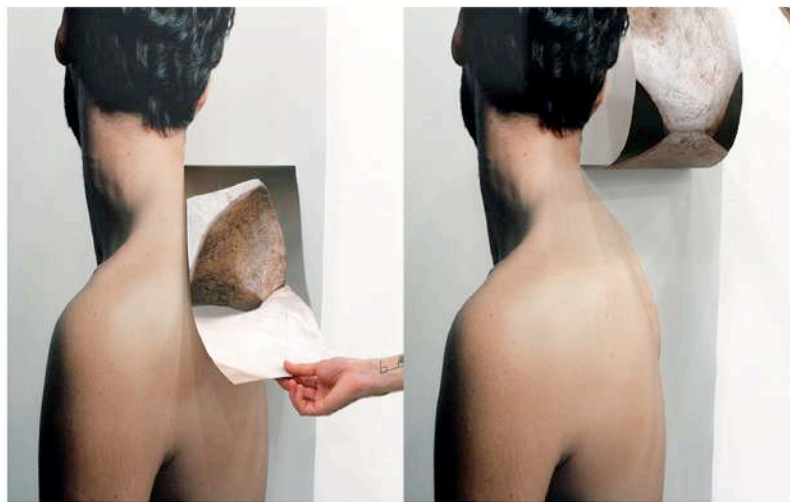
Wavepool – Do the physical gestures relate specifically to the subject matter and tone within each photograph? Can you share an example of that relationship?

Steven Beckly – Almost always the decisions made are motivated by content. What's going on inside the photographic frame infers what's going on outside of it. You can say that another way, for example, the universe within the frame is connected to the universe that frames it. Our inside is somebody else's outside. And the other way around.

This image (*Contact*) is a colour transparency. It's an image of being touched by light. Printing it on a material that requires a light source to activate it fostered a formal relationship between the fluorescent light and what's happening in the photograph. The photograph is essentially saying, "Light touches us, but we can touch back."

Wavepool – Do you think the works that employ sculptural tactics can function as pure images?

Steven Beckly – I think the image and object relationship is a rich territory that many photo-based artists are exploring right now. They are discrete territories, yet linked through photography's peculiar hybridity. I'm interested in pointing out the tenuousness of this relationship between image and object. How close can we bring them together; how intimately can we overlay one on top of the other before they inevitably collapse from their own shaky foundations?



Untitled (detail)

To see more, please visit Steven's website.

Categorized in: **Uncategorized**

Posted on November 9, 2015 by kyleseis

-*Wavepool*, November 9, 2015.