

SFMOMA Announces Expansive Wolfgang Tillmans Survey this November

**Major Exhibition Explores the Artist's Diverse Work in Photography, Video
and Multimedia Installation**



Wolfgang Tillmans: To look without fear

November 11, 2023–March 3, 2024

Press Preview and Walkthrough: November 8, 2023, 10 a.m.–noon

Artist Talk: November 2, 2023, 6 p.m.

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (August 17, 2023; updated November 22, 2023)— This November, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) opens [***Wolfgang Tillmans: To look without fear***](#), the most comprehensive exhibition of the artist's work to date. Organized by The Museum of Modern Art, New York, the survey includes iconic works by Tillmans in photography, video and multimedia installation, a diverse practice united by the artist's profoundly inventive philosophical approach, sensitivity and

desire for human connection. *To look without fear* opens at SFMOMA on November 11, 2023, marking the artist's first solo exhibition in San Francisco.

"Wolfgang Tillmans has for decades explored what it means to engage with our contemporary world through photography," said Helen and Charles Schwab Director Christopher Bedford. "This exhibition offers visitors a full accounting of Tillmans's boundary-defying artmaking practice, which we anticipate will find relevance in a broad range of audiences. His work challenges the hierarchies that govern where we should look, and reminds us of what we might see if we choose not to look away."

To look without fear offers viewers an in-depth look at the work of Wolfgang Tillmans, charting the development of his practice according to a loose chronology beginning in the 1980s through the present day. Tillmans considers the role of the artist to be, among other things, that of "an amplifier." He works across every imaginable genre of photography, continually exploring how to make pictures meaningful. From early experiments with a photocopier to his acclaimed portraits, ecstatic images of nightlife, documents of social movements and his cameraless abstractions, the broad range of the artist's subject matter reveals a steadfast commitment to engage unflinchingly with the world.

"Tillmans first visited San Francisco in 1995, and has a deep affection for the Bay Area," said Erin O'Toole, SFMOMA Curator and Head of Photography. "SFMOMA is thrilled to be hosting his solo debut here, which is so long overdue."

The exhibition reflects Tillmans's distinct approach to presenting his work. "I see my installations as a reflection of the way I see, the way I perceive or want to perceive my environment," Tillmans has said. "They're also always a world that I want to live in." The artist plays an integral role in designing and installing his exhibitions, which feature photographs both framed and unframed, arranged in constellations that extend from floor to ceiling, magazine pages taped to the wall, photocopies, video projections, and tabletop displays. The artist's attention to the physical manifestation of his work extends from a longstanding investigation of the poetic and material possibilities of the photographic medium.

Visitors to the exhibition will have the opportunity to experience Tillmans's rarely seen work *Book for Architects* (2014), a two-channel video installation made from a compilation of 450 images from 37 countries taken by the artist over the course of a decade. On two screens presented at an angle reminiscent of an open book, the work collects Tillmans's observations of architecture and its relationship to everyday life.

Also presented in this exhibition will be the installation *Truth Study Center*, an ongoing project which was first presented by Tillmans in 2005, and brings together his own photographs, clippings, ephemera, and printouts of newspaper and magazine articles arranged on tabletops. In this body of work, Tillmans continually interrogates notions of absolutism while also acknowledging the universal human desire to search for truth. Half of the tables presented in *To look without fear* contain material from 2005–07, while the other half has been composed using recent material.



MOON IN EARTHLIGHT

Presented as an extension of the exhibition *Wolfgang Tillmans: To look without fear* on Floor 7, [Moon in Earthlight](#) will screen in Wattis Theater on First Thursdays from December through February.

Moon in Earthlight (2021) is the first full-length album and film by artist Wolfgang Tillmans. Composed of recordings made over four years, it incorporates spoken word, ambient sound, and pulsating electronic beats, while the accompanying film features a range of imagery from hermit crabs on a beach to reflections cast by a disco ball. This interplay of sound and image – what the artist calls “audio photography” – underscores the performative nature of music and its role in bringing people together.

ABOUT WOLFGANG TILLMANS

Since the early 1990s, Wolfgang Tillmans (b. 1968, Remscheid, Germany) has lived and worked in London, New York, Berlin, Cologne and Fire Island. In a career spanning almost four decades, he has consistently redefined the medium of photography through a seamless integration of genres, subjects, techniques, and exhibition strategies. In addition to his expansive photographic work, his practice extends to include musical recording and songwriting, as well as significant engagements with architecture and design. His foundation, Between Bridges, supports the advancement of democracy, international understanding, the arts and LGBTQ+ rights; previously Between Bridges was a nonprofit exhibition space in London (2007–11) and Berlin (2014–19) directed by Tillmans.

CATALOGUE

The exhibition is accompanied by an extensive scholarly publication, edited by Roxana Marcoci, that offers new perspectives on Tillmans's work. Published by The Museum of Modern Art, the hardcover catalog includes essays by Marcoci, Clément Chéroux, Keller Easterling and Sophie Hackett that survey major throughlines of the artist's career, while contributions by Quentin Bajac, Yve-Alain Bois, Julia Bryan-Wilson, Durga Chew-Bose, Stuart Comer, Paul Flynn, Michelle Kuo, Oluremi C. Onabanjo and Phil Taylor engage with specific, focused topics. A prose chronology by Taylor and Andrew Vielkind provides an intellectual biography that contextualizes the artist's life, and a new text by Tillmans illuminates his philosophy and methodology with regards to printing, paper and the display of photographs. With 400 color illustrations, this visually rich and timely publication tracks Tillmans's contributions to art in tandem with the social and cultural shifts of the past 30 years.

ORGANIZATIONAL CREDIT

The exhibition is organized by Roxana Marcoci, The David Dechman Senior Curator and Acting Chief Curator of Photography, with Caitlin Ryan, Curatorial Assistant, and Phil Taylor, former Curatorial Assistant, Department of Photography, The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

SUPPORT

Wolfgang Tillmans: To look without fear is organized by The Museum of Modern Art.

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HOURS

Museum hours are 10 a.m.–5 p.m. on Fridays through Tuesdays and 1–8 p.m. on Thursdays (closed Wednesdays).

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art

151 Third Street

San Francisco, CA 94103

Current visitor information can be found at sfmoma.org/visit and tickets may be reserved at tickets.sfmoma.org. SFMOMA members enjoy free admission. Visit sfmoma.org/membership for more details.

The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art is one of the largest museums of modern and contemporary art in the United States and a thriving cultural center for the Bay Area. Our remarkable collection of painting, sculpture, photography, architecture, design and media arts is housed in a LEED Gold-certified building designed by the global architects Snøhetta and Mario Botta. In addition to our seven gallery floors, SFMOMA currently offers more than 62,000 square feet of free, art-filled public space open to all.

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Media Contacts:

Clara Hatcher Baruth, chatcher@sfmoma.org, 415-357-4177

Rebecca Herman, rherman@sfmoma.org, 415-357-4174

Alex Gill, agill@sfmoma.org, 415-357-4170

Image credits:

Wolfgang Tillmans, *The Cock (kiss)*, 2002; courtesy the artist, David Zwirner, New York / Hong Kong, Galerie Buchholz, Berlin / Cologne, Maureen Paley, London

Wolfgang Tillmans, *San Francisco*, 1995; courtesy the artist, David Zwirner, New York / Hong Kong, Galerie Buchholz, Berlin / Cologne, Maureen Paley, London