



Uta Barth Interview

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by TD



Berlin-born photographer Uta Barth lives and works in Los Angeles. Her photographs are unlike anything we've ever seen, and we recently checked in with the artist to talk about influences, light, and the complications of L.A. Barth will be having shows in New York at Tanya Bonakdar Gallery (starting May 6th) and in Los Angeles at 1301PE (starting May 1st).

What artists or visual experiences do you cherish?

The color of light. The color of light in Helsinki. The color of light in Stockholm. The color of light in Zurich and the reflections of Switzerland's countless lakes: flat, blue, green.... colors I cannot even describe. The color of the water in Venice, it is like a deep green jewel, shimmering with countless shades of melting green. I love that the color of light and water are different in different parts of the world.

There's a cinematic quality to your photographs. What kinds of films do you like to watch?

Michelangelo Antonioni; a friend showed me his films after I was making the Ground and Field series and I was amazed; amazed at finding a sensibility so closely related to mine. I love the way the camera in his films pans without destination. And also the later films of Araki Kurosawa, though they are so heartbreakingly sad. Sad but also so heartbreaking true. Long, brave looks at what we try not to know.

Ambiguity plays a large role, compositionally, in your work. Is this something that is meant to challenge viewers, or to interrupt the way in which a viewer might be accustomed to seeing a photograph?

The work does set out to challenge the viewer by presenting images that look different than most of those in the history of photography. My influences don't really come from there; I am interested in the Light and Space movement, in Brian Eno and John Cage, in Minimalism. I am interested in visual perception. I am interested in getting you to engage in looking rather than losing your attention to thoughts about what you are looking at. Seeing *Is Forgetting the Name of the Thing One Sees* is the title of Robert Irwin's (who is a big influence) biography. Long before that, it was a line in a Zen text. No words could better describe the aim of my practice.

What do you like about Los Angeles?

Hmm. I don't like Los Angeles all that much these days. It is isolating. There are amazing people here, amazing artists and it is a great place to make art, but we never see each other; the city is gridlocked between east and west and even within. I dream of moving, but don't know where.