

Tenderly
Rolf Sachs

16 September – 21 October 2023

Opening hours: Fridays and Saturdays
from 11 - 18 h, and upon appointment.

Grieder Contemporary is pleased to announce 'Tenderly', Rolf Sachs' first exhibition with the gallery and Grieder Contemporary's inaugural satellite project at Borgovico33 which will coincide with Lake Como Design Festival.

This is Sachs' first solo show in Italy, and it is the first time that the multi-disciplinary artist is exhibiting his photographic series *Moving Stills* (2020). This body of work encapsulates much of Sachs' enduring artistic interests in materiality and in recontextualizing domestic objects, all the while announcing a new departure in his photographic work.

The exhibition features 16 works and is conceived in two parts. Five full-scale photographs from the artist's *Tenderly* series are shown inside the frescoed nave of the beautiful 17th Century deconsecrated church of the convent of Santa Caterina. This feels particularly apt as these abstract photographs, ripe with cross-like motifs, can almost be read as secular altarpieces. A selection of more intimately scaled works from his *Triangle* and *Threads* series will be shown in the adjoining vaulted, minimalist space.

Using his distinctive photographic vocabulary, the artist transformed everyday objects (pieces of string, a percussion instrument, and a roll of toilet paper) into lively and ambiguous beings, revealing their mysterious alter ego. The result is at times eerie and uncanny, verging on the surreal. As with his ongoing *Moving Portraits* series and his iconic *Camera in Motion* (2013), where the Engadin landscape was captured from a moving train, Sachs injected movement into his process. In this case 'moving' refers to the gesture that the artist made with his camera, wielding it like a paint brush and freezing the movement with a single flash. The resulting photos blur the frontiers between abstract painting and photography.

As often in the artist's work, the exhibition's title, 'Tenderly' has a double entendre. It expresses Sachs' overarching artistic interest in making *arts emotionnels instead of arts decoratifs* which invite an empathetic and sensual approach to art and to our rapport with one another, while also being the name of a toilet paper brand. The title therefore relates to the artist's desire to experiment with the archetype of the *natura morta* in this series.

The works in this exhibition are a crystallization of much of Rolf Sachs' artistic interests. With *Moving Stills*, Sachs was interested in injecting a soul into objects that are traditionally disregarded or seen as lifeless. Keen on incorporating chance and haphazardness in the way he uses his light sources and moves his camera, resulting in unusual visual effects, Sachs finds a certain freedom in letting things fall under the agency of chance, finding the perfect balance between *'faire et laisser faire'*. Sachs often plays with antithetical notions in his titles. In this series, the friction between movement and stillness harks back to his enduring interest in creating a compelling tension between different concepts or materials. Throughout his oeuvre, the artist has been drawn to the harmony that can be created when two materials or ideas that do not traditionally go together are coupled in a way that creates a sort of alchemy.

"Tenderly is a poetic and personal show. It's a pure expression of the fact that I genuinely believe that our personal perception and attitude completely govern how we end up seeing the world. If you channel your creative soul, you can add spirit to situations, positively influence people's attitudes or even add unexpected poetry and emotions to banal everyday objects. I made these works at a time when connection and proximity were scarce. With Moving Stills, I hope to move people." Rolf Sachs

Coralie Malissard

About the Artist

Rolf Sachs is a multi-disciplinary artist and designer currently based in Rome. He applies a distinctive humane and conceptual approach across a multitude of mediums, ranging from sculpture, photography and design and through to architectural projects and set designs for opera and ballet. His move to Rome has inspired Sachs to finally dedicate himself seriously to painting. Since the 1990s, Sachs has challenged preconceived applications of materials, processes, and everyday objects, imbuing them with novel meaning. Deftly employing humour and wit, his work seeks to elicit emotional, sensory reactions. However, his work has nothing of the dryness that is often associated with conceptual art. Rather, it is full of humanity, sensibility, and respect towards the materials he uses. It is poetic, humorous, tongue and cheek, but never irreverent. Currently his work is particularly focused on exploring the human psyche, people's character, relationships, soul and spirit.

His work has been exhibited internationally in galleries and museums including the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, the Museum for Applied Art, Cologne, the MAK, Vienna, the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice, Hauser and Wirth, Gstaad and Monika Sprüth, Cologne.

Sachs was born in Lausanne, Switzerland in 1955. After studying in the US and the UK in the late 1980s, Sachs moved to London in 1994 to focus on his artistic practice. In 2018 he moved to Rome where he opened a new studio in 2020.