

LARRY SULTAN SWIMMERS
HENRY WESSEL STILL PHOTOGRAPHS
26 MAY – 25 AUGUST 2018

Opening reception: Saturday, 26 May 2018, 4pm
Introduction: Markus Weckesser, independent journalist, Mannheim
Opening hours: Tue-Fri 11-6, Sat 12-6 and by appointment

Galerie Thomas Zander is delighted to present an exhibition of Larry Sultan's early painterly underwater photographs from the series *Swimmers*, which are shown in Europe for the first time. *Swimmers* represents a stylistic counterpoint to Sultan's conceptual works, created in collaboration with Mike Mandel and appropriating the flood of images of the Pictures Generation. Sultan turns toward a physical, sensual perception in *Swimmers*, photographing people learning to swim between 1978 and 1982. The palette and silhouettes of gesticulating arms and legs, of faces and bodies are slightly distorted by the water. In painterly opulence the series describes a space submerged under the surface of ubiquitous media images and messages. It is undefined, charged, and floating, anticipating the ambiguity in Sultan's later presentations of space. The collaborative projects of Larry Sultan and Mike Mandel, however, appropriate mass communication and deconstruct its various forms with ersatz messages and irony. *How to Read Music in One Evening* (1975) shifts the context and attention span for images from advertisements from a casual everyday perception to the reception of art. In a series of silk screen prints Sultan and Mandel arranged cheaply reproduced photographs from ads for household gadgets into short sequences, which generate curious, sexualized or ominous associations: the hand turning the switch, the knitted nose warmer, the gun pointed at a naked chest. The portfolio *Trouble Spots* (1990), including five dye transfer prints, grew out of the production of billboards, two of which were installed in public space at the time. From an illustrated bible, catchy lettering and random media images Sultan and Mandel mixed ideologies and iconographies to create vaguely disturbing hybrids. Larry Sultan (1946-2009) received a Guggenheim Fellowship for his work and several National Endowment for the Arts Fellowships, two with Mandel. He was an influential teacher in San Francisco for three decades and was distinguished professor at the California College of the Arts. His work is accompanied by a number of seminal artist books and has been the subject of numerous international exhibitions. Sultan's works are in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, Whitney Museum of American Art, Los Angeles County Museum of Art and Tate Modern, among others.

The exhibition *Still Photographs* offers an overview of the imagery of the acclaimed American photographer Henry Wessel, presenting a special selection of works from the 1960s to 1990. Wessel's diverse oeuvre is shaped significantly by his interest in the American living environment, and his visual language allows for the idiosyncrasies and humor found in everyday life. In 1973 the Museum of Modern Art in New York mounted an exhibition of his work, and only two years later his rigorous depictions of urban settings were included in the milestone group show *New Topographics*. Featuring works by Lewis Baltz, Robert Adams, Stephen Shore, Bernd and Hilla Becher among others, the exhibition focused on the built environment, thus challenging and expanding traditional notions of landscape and documentary photography and increasing photography's relevance in contemporary art. Wessel became the first of the participants to receive a Guggenheim grant, for a proposal titled "The Photographic Documentation of the US Highways and the Adjacent Landscape." He has probably become best known for the images he took during his many trips across America, and photographs like the one of the „Ice“-sign in the Arizona desert have become icons of photography. His works portray not only the desert landscapes of California and the American West, but also the beach and leisure culture, the houses and front yards of residential areas. By choosing a perspective from across the street or from the window of his car in many of his pictures, Wessel brings the landscape down to an encounter, an extract from the flux of time, and establishes a relationship between himself and his subject. The artist was born 1942 in New Jersey and since he escaped a gray winter to move to California in the late 1960s, the bright, sharp light has been a physical presence in his work, particularly in his hand-printed black and white photographs. Henry Wessel was awarded two Guggenheim Fellowships and three National Endowment for the Arts Fellowships and grants. His works are collected by major international institutions including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Museum of Modern Art, Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles, and the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Please contact the gallery for further information and press images.