
PRESS RELEASE

Arthur Tress

Exhibition 31.08.2023 – 23.09.2023**Opening** Thursday 31 August 2023

Text :
Elisa Bernard

Arthur Tress was born in Brooklyn in 1940. As a child, he used to frequent the Coney Island peninsula, a realm of entertainment where people came to seek a chimerical pleasure in the aftermath of the war, where distraction revealed itself in its disruptive force, as a state of temporary madness during which people could escape from their lives, their religious communities, and their obligations.

It was in this theatre of the strange - a place where hierarchies and values were temporarily overturned - that the young Arthur Tress forged his photographic eye. We can imagine him contemplating the grey, barely iodised water, and sitting down on the hard sand, compacted by the trampling of visitors, to observe the spectacle unfolding before him. A child who was already different, with a heightened awareness of the flaws in the world around him, and for whom the flickering mechanics of the attractions were the colour of the human soul.

If the places of his American childhood, where adults indulged in childish games as a joyful outlet, acted as a catalyst, the world of children itself occupies a predominant place in Arthur Tress's work.

The photographer does not subscribe to the idea of childhood as a lost paradise, and his images of children are intranquil and filled with a disquieting melancholy. The face of childhood is that of a boy crawling on the ground with roots for hands, a being of indeterminate gender who stares at us while smoking a cigarette while his classmates play, or a schoolboy asphyxiated under his dunce cap in a deserted school classroom.

These photographs capture the subversive power of the imagination of childhood games, at a time in life when people invent a world for themselves that suits their desires. Arthur Tress takes an accurate look at this period, when spontaneity and the joy of discovery coexist within the same person on the one hand, and incommunicability and fear of the unknown on the other.

Arthur Tress speaks from the margins. His photographs reveal the violence of conforming to society's expectations, which is exerted on those who stray from them. The questioning of masculinity and femininity, the injunction to marry, and physical infirmity are all factors that animate the characters who inhabit his images.

The world of Arthur Tress evolves on the edge of dream and reality, in a stubborn quest to grasp this boundary. The artist's photographs are never in full light, but always in half-light. They do not show us a scene but suggest a faded memory.

Arthur Tress unearths images buried in our subconscious to create a corrosive mythology.

These works reveal an inner truth that remains in the memory. Once seen, these images become part of our visual repertoire because they reveal something about us. In order to examine the world, Arthur Tress uses props to stage the vision in his head and capture his image. He disguises reality to give it the appearance of his dream.

Arthur Tress's work takes us into an in-between world where death is omnipresent.

There is an urgency to capturing people who stand on this boundary, as on the occasion when he shot his father in the snow in New York, to capture one last snapshot of him, a few days before his death. The old man appeared with his mouth open, as if caught in a final rattle, confronting us with the tragic immobility of his body.

The works of Arthur Tress are improbable visions with the appearance of mirages. They give the impression of having surprised a truth about these beings that we shouldn't have seen, like the young girl in front of the Château de Breteuil who is rescuing fish before a pond dries up. Kneeling in the mud with an anxious expression on her face, she seems to be saying "What are you looking at?".

This is the first solo exhibition devoted to Arthur Tress by the Esther Woerdehoff gallery since 1998.

Text :**Esther Woerdehoff**

A single work by Arthur Tress was included in the gallery's very first exhibition, *Une exposition pour enfants*, which showed works by icons of photography hung at children's level.

I chose the image of the owl, which was part of my collection. A year later, a monographic exhibition was devoted to the work of Arthur Tress.

I invited him to spend ten days in Paris, as he lives in San Francisco. He lived under our roof, with my family. He got up early in the morning to prowl the streets and find his subjects. When we prepared breakfast for our daughter, he came home with a mischievous smile on his face, happy with his morning walks.

For his first solo exhibition at the gallery, we had twenty-five photographs by Arthur Tress on the walls, and his friend, the writer Michel Tournier, honoured us with several visits.

At the time, I had started the project of having myself photographed by the artists in the gallery. So I asked Arthur to take my portrait during his stay. Days went by without him moving and I had to remind him several times, until I resigned myself. I realised that he didn't want to.

An hour before he left to catch his plane, he came looking for me. My husband told him I was at the hairdresser. What a surprise to see Arthur enter the little salon where I was sitting, bits of aluminium in my hair, under a huge bell like a lamp post, with my apron up to my chin! The hairdresser was amazed because Arthur had moved some furniture around to take his photo. Later he sent me the photo. Needless to say, I didn't like myself at all in that photo. I looked like something between a witch and an alien.

Arthur Tress's dreams have never left me. The book he wrote with Michel Tournier reads like a psychology of humanity.

Making Leaves, Cold Spring, New York, 1978 : you'll find it all. His relationship to sexuality, to men, to the couple. Two forks with long, sharp teeth kiss on a marriage bed covered in dead leaves.

Bride and Groom, 1971 : long before Photoshop, this photograph is a composition of a figure that gives the illusion of a newly-wed couple standing inside a destroyed church.

I share a fascination for the acid humour of Arthur Tress with the great Parisian collector Jérôme Prochiantz.

Spontaneously, he offered to merge part of our collections for this exhibition. I'm touched by this generous gesture and grateful for it.

Images available
for the press



Arthur Tress, *Spear fishing*, 1976
Gelatin silver print
Edition of 50, 36 x 28 cm



Arthur Tress, *Last Portrait of my Father, New York*, 1978
Theatre of the Mind series, gelatin silver print
Edition of 50, 36 x 28 cm

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Obligatory mention : ©Arthur Tress, courtesy Galerie Esther Woerdehoff

Images available
for the press



Arthur Tress, *Girl collecting Goldfish, Château Breteuil France, 1974, Private Acts series*
Gelatin silver print
Edition of 50, 50 x 60 cm



Arthur Tress, *Bride and Groom, 1971*
Theatre of the Mind series, gelatin silver print
Edition of 50, 36 x 28 cm

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Images available
for the press



Arthur Tress, *Making Leaves, Cold Spring, New York, 1978*
Still Lives series, gelatin silver print
Edition of 50, 36 x 28 cm



Arthur Tress, *Hockey Player, New York City, 1971*
Child's Play series, gelatin silver print
Edition of 50, 36 x 28 cm

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Obligatory mention : ©Arthur Tress, courtesy Galerie Esther Woerdehoff

BIOGRAPHY

Artist

Arthur Tress

Arthur Tress grew up in Brooklyn, explored the Coney Island carnival and took his first photographs in elementary school in 1952. Graduating with a Bachelor of Fine Art from Bard College, where he studied art, art history, world culture and philosophy with Heinrich Blücher. He continued to photograph and began making short films. After graduating from Bard, Arthur Tress moved to Paris and started studying at a film school, which he soon left.

After traveling in Europe, Egypt, Japan, India and Mexico, he settled in Stockholm, Sweden, and worked for the Ethnographic Museum. In 1968, Arthur Tress returned to New York to become a professional photographer.

First solo exhibition that year, *Appalachia-People and Places*, at the Smithsonian Institute, then at the Sierra Gallery (New York City). In 1969, he began working as a photojournalist for V.I.S.T.A.

Arthur Tress lives and works in Cambria, California.

**Monographic
exhibitions****2023**

Sélection, Galerie Esther Woerdehoff, Paris, France

2022

The Tip of an Iceberg, Stephen Bulger Gallery, Toronto, Canada

2021

How Exquisitely Human We Are, Scheinbaum & Russek Ltd, Santa Fe, United States

2013

Arthur Tress / Transréalités, Le Château d'Eau, Toulouse, France

Arthur Tress, Jiro Miura Gallery, Tokyo, Japan

Selections: San Francisco 1964, Dream Collector, & Theater of the Mind, Blue Sky Gallery, Portland, United States

2012

Arthur Tress: San Francisco 1964, The De Young Museum, San Francisco, United States

2010

Aspects of Mount Fuji in Japanese Illustrated Books from the Arthur Tress Collection, Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, San Francisco, United States

2009

Arthur Tress, Galleria Cà di Frà, Milano, United States

2007

Arthur Tress - Behind the image, Galleria PaciArte Contemporanea, Brescia, Italy

Arthur Tress - Constructed Still Lifes 1980 - 1987, Krammig & Pepper Contemporary, Berlin, Germany (finished in 2009)

Arthur Tress: Subliminal Vision, Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, United States

2006

Vintage, ClampArt, New York, United States

2004

Arthur Tress - Fantastic Journey, PHP Pražský dum fotografie / Prague House of Photography, Prague, Czech Republic

Arthur Tress - Dream Collector, Carl Solway Gallery, Cincinnati, United States

Dream Collector - 30th Anniversary, ClampArt, New York, United States

2001

Arthur Tress - Fantastic Voyage, Photographs 1956-2000, The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington DC, United States

1998

Arthur Tress - Male of the species, Galerie Esther Woerdehoff, Paris, France

1997

Fantastic Voyage: The Photographs of Arthur Tress, Auckland Art Gallery, Auckland and at the Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, Christchurch, New Zealand

1995

Arthur Tress: The Wurlitzer Trilogy, Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, United States

1986-1988

Talisman, une rétrospective itinérante

Photo Gallery, Londres, Angleterre ; Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, Angleterre ; Frankfurter Kunstverein, Francfort, Allemagne ; Musée de la Photographie, Charleroi, Belgium

1987

Joy and Terror: Photographs of Childhood and Adolescence by Arthur Tress, MMoCA - The Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, Madison, United States

1980

Arthur Tress : Facing Up, A 12-Year Survey, Robert Samuel Gallery, New York, United States

1968

Appalachia - People and Places (first monographic exhibition), Smithsonian Institute and the Sierra Gallery, New York, United States

**Collective
exhibitions**

2019

Child: A Celebration, Peter Fetterman Gallery, Santa Monica, United States

2018

South of the Border / Images by Latin Artists and their American Colleagues, Stone and Press Gallery, La Nouvelle-Orléans, États-Unis

The Gothic: Twisted Beauty and Sesual Strangeness, Stone and Press Gallery, New Orleans, United States

2015

Warhol Unlimited, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris, France

2014

Galerie Esther Woerdehoff, Paris, France

2013

Treasures: the art of collecting, Queensland Centre for Photography, Bulimba, Australia

2012

Picture This: Photographic Portraits Of Place, Palm Springs Art Museum, Palm Springs, United States
Collection Freddy Denaës - Ex nugis seria, Le Château d'Eau, Toulouse, France
one must know the animals, MMoCA - The Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, Madison, United States

2011

Magie des Objekts - Photographie aus drei Jahrhunderten, Leopold Museum, Vienne, Austria
Il Dubbio della Bellezza - Collezione Gibelli, Centro Internazionale d'Arte e di Cultura di Palazzo Te, Mantova, Italy
Ralph Gibson & Arthur Tress, see+ Art Space/gallery, Beijing, China

2010

tra pittura e fotografia - sezione contemporanea dal 1960 al 2000, Museo Ken Damy, Brescia, Italy
Revealed, Leslie Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art, New York, United States

2009

EX NUGIS SERIA d'Afrique et d'ailleurs..., Maison d'Art Bernard Anthonioz, Nogent-sur-Marne, France
Sexy and the City - New York Photographs, Yossi Milo Gallery, New York, United States
Arcadia, ClampArt, New York, United States
Reality Revisited, Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden
Treasures of Gay Art, Leslie Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art, New York, United States
Terriblement beau - Terriblement faux, Galerie Esther Woerdehoff, Paris, France
Something Wicked This Way Comes, MMoCA - The Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, Madison, United States

2008

Ces Étranges Enfants, SICA - The Shore Institute Of The Contemporary Arts, Long Branch, United States
Love, Palazzo Ducale, Genova, Italy

2007

June Bride, Yossi Milo Gallery, New York, United States
Bestiarium, Galerie Esther Woerdehoff, Paris, France
Pet Project, Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney, Australia
Dreams, Fears & Desires, Holden Luntz Gallery, Palm Beach, United States
Expressive Bodies: Contemporary Art Photography from The Kinsey Institute, The Kinsey Institute Gallery, Bloomington, United States

2006

Pet Project, Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney, Australia
Multiple Exposures: Highlights From Csulb Special Collections, UAM - University Art Museum, Long Beach, United States
THE CULTURE OF QUEER, Leslie Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art, New York, United States
My Collection, Museo Ken Damy, Brescia, Italy
Face à Face, Le Pavillon Populaire, Montpellier, France

2005

Beyond Real - Part 2 Making a Scene, Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney, Australia
Faces cachées, Galerie Esther Woerdehoff, Paris, France

2003

By the Sea, Yossi Milo Gallery, New York, United States
California/Color, Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara, United States
True Fictions - Inszenierte Fotokunst der 1990er Jahre, Kunstpalais Erlangen, Erlangen, Germany

2002

Two of us, L.A. Galerie – Lothar Albrecht, Frankfurt, Germany
True Fictions, Inszenierte Fotokunst der neunziger Jahre, Kunsthaus Dresden, Germany
True Fictions, Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst, Aachen, Germany

2001

The Nature of Still Life, Galleria d'Arte Moderna di Bologna - GAM, Bologna, Italy (finished in 2007)
The Muses, Leslie Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art, New York, United States
Selections From The Permanent Collection, Leslie Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art, New York, United States

2000

x-mas Ausstellung, Galerie Lichtblick, Cologne, Germany
9th Lesbian And Gay Photo Annual, Leslie Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art, New York, United States

1998

Ficciones íntimas, Fundación Joan Miró, Barcelona, Spain

1997

6th Lesbian And Gay Photo Annual, Leslie Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art, New York, United States

1996

5th Lesbian And Gay Photo Annual, Leslie Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art, New York, United States
The Gun: Icon of Twentieth Century Art, Ubu Gallery, New York, United States

1995

A Child's World, Candace Dwan Gallery, Katonah, États-Unis (terminée en 2008)
Vulvavision, Leslie Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art, New York, United States

1994

Mexico through foreign eyes, Galleria Carla Sozzani, Milano, Italy
Borderlines, NBK - Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, Berlin, Germany
Diamonds, Gold And Myrrh: 25 Years, Leslie Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art, New York, United States

1993

Acquisitions Gallery, Leslie Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art, New York, United States

1992

Paisajes del deseo: Thomas Brenner, Sala Parpallo, Valencia, Spain

Collections

Stanford Libraries Collection, Stanford University, Palo Alto, United States
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, United States
Whitney Museum of Art, New York, United States
Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington DC, United States
The Getty Museum, Los Angeles, United States
Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, San Francisco, United States
LACMA, Los Angeles, United States
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, United States
Museum of Modern Art, New York, United States
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, United States
Centre Pompidou, Paris, France
Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago, United States
George Eastman House Museum, Rochester, United States
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, France
Honolulu Museum of Art, Hawaii, United States
Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago, United States
Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, United States

Awards**2012**

Honoree: Achievement in Fine Art, Lucie Awards