

For immediate release

## JAMES WELLING

### Overflow

September 7 – October 27, 2012

Opening reception: Friday, September 7, 6–8 PM

Press preview with the artist: Thursday, September 6, 10 AM



*Glass House*, 2010.

Archival inkjet print on rag paper, 28 x 42 inches (71.1 x 106.7 cm).

David Zwirner is pleased to present an exhibition of new works by James Welling, on view at the gallery's 533 West 19<sup>th</sup> Street space. This will be the photographer's fifth solo show at the gallery.

*Overflow* is comprised of three distinct but related bodies of work, all of which explore photography's hybrid relationship to painting. In *Wyeth*, Welling traveled to Maine and Pennsylvania in pursuit of the subjects and places painted by American artist Andrew Wyeth (1917-2009). While the project started in 2010, its origins date back to Welling's early years as an artist, when Wyeth was a major source of inspiration.

Welling was interested equally in the biographical significance of Wyeth's subject matter and in tracing the origins of how he came to photography. As he noted in a recent interview with Patricia Hickson, Emily Hall Tremaine Curator of Contemporary Art at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut, the Wyeth project permitted him to uncover pictorial devices he had unconsciously adopted from the painter. Wyeth's work inspired him "to look very closely at things, to be intense, to be very focused." *Wyeth*, in turn, goes beyond the straightforward question of influence to engage with the complex relationship between the photographic image and its referent, which here constitutes both Wyeth's paintings and the literal subjects and locations in front of Welling's camera.

While several of the photographs are based directly on Wyeth's compositions, determining what was, and what was not, a Wyeth subject became a multi-layered project. Other photographs depart from a visual resemblance to the painter's work and depict his studio, the ruins of a church that was still in use when Wyeth painted it, steel hooks protruding from the ceiling of a farmhouse where he often worked, an aging apple orchard, and in Welling's own words, a "clump of grass that reminded me of Wyeth's dry brush drawing *Grasses* (1941)." Broader issues of temporality, aging, and creative renewal are evoked, while the photographs simultaneously trace Wyeth's oeuvre and open up to a unique understanding of Welling's own practice.

Welling's interest in the subtle relationships formed within his works is further explored in *Fluid Dynamics*, a group of photograms made by exposing wet photographic paper to light from a color enlarger. The colors in these works were created by sampling selected colors in the *Wyeth* photographs and "mapping" them onto digital files of the photograms using gradient maps in Adobe Photoshop. *Fluid Dynamics* resemble watercolors, a medium the photographer explored at the onset of his career. In his interview with Hickson, Welling also pointed out how his "physical relationship with the medium, the literal

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and figurative fluidity of watercolor, carries over into how I work with photography as a malleable medium." Since the late 1990's, Welling has used photograms to underscore his interest in the "photographic" over "photographs," pictures made using a camera and lens.

Also on view are a selection of gelatin silver prints from *Frolic Architecture* (2010), Welling's collaborative project with the poet Susan Howe. These images were produced from original photograms created by painting on thin sheets of mylar that were contact printed on photographic paper. As with *Fluid Dynamics*, light, pigment, transparency, and fluidity take on an almost sculptural presence, while also reinforcing a painterly impulse.

**James Welling** was born in 1951 in Hartford, Connecticut, and lives and works in Los Angeles. He received his B.F.A. and M.F.A. from the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia, California. His work has been represented by David Zwirner, New York, since 2005. Welling is Area Head of Photography at UCLA and in the Fall of 2012 will be a Visiting Professor at Princeton University.

Opening on September 13, 2012 at the MK Gallery in Milton Keynes, England and traveling to Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea, Santiago de Compostela, Spain and the Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver, *The Mind on Fire, Work 1970-1988* will explore the origin and development of Welling's 1980's abstract photographs.

In January 2013, the University Museum of Contemporary Art, UMASS Amherst, MA will present *James Welling: Place*, an exhibition detailing the photographer's work on New England from 1970 to 2010.

A major survey exhibition *James Welling: Monograph* will open at the Cincinnati Art Museum on February 2, 2013, accompanied by a monograph published by Aperture. The exhibition will travel to the Fotomuseum Winterthur, Switzerland, in November 2013.

Solo museum exhibitions include the Wadsworth Atheneum (2012); Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minnesota (2010); Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels; Art Gallery of York University, Toronto (both 2002); Sprengel Museum Hannover (1999); Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; and Kunstmuseum Luzern, Lucerne, Switzerland (both 1998). In 2000, the Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, Ohio organized a major survey of the artist's work, which traveled to the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, and the Baltimore Museum of Art.

In 2009, Welling's work was featured in the critically acclaimed historical survey *The Pictures Generation, 1974-1984* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and in 2008, he participated in the Whitney Biennial.

Work by the artist is held in major museum collections worldwide, including the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Germany; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

**For all press inquiries and RSVP to the press preview on September 6 (10:00 AM), please contact**  
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