

For immediate release

AL TAYLOR

Pet Stains, Puddles, and Full Gospel Neckless

January 9 – February 14, 2015

Opening reception: Friday, January 9, 6 – 8 PM



Full Gospel Neckless (Dog Walk), 1997
Pencil, ink, Conté crayon, and China marker grease pencil on
Somerset paper
30 1/8 x 22 1/4 inches (76.5 x 56.5 cm)
© 2014 The Estate of Al Taylor

David Zwirner is pleased to announce an exhibition of drawings and three-dimensional constructions by Al Taylor, the artist's fifth solo show at the gallery. On view at our 537 West 20th Street space, the exhibition will present a comprehensive examination of Taylor's *Pet Stains* and *Puddles*, which encompass a large grouping of interconnected series that were created between 1989 and 1992; and works from Taylor's later series *Full Gospel Neckless* (*sic*) that the artist made in Denmark for his 1997 solo exhibition at Galleri Tommy Lund.

In the fluid and lyrical drawings and constructions on view from Taylor's *Pet Stains* and *Puddles* series, the artist used his observations of everyday street puddles and pavement stains as a jumping-off point to explore states of liquidity altered by the passage of time. To construct the three-dimensional works he collectively titled *Pet Stain Removal Devices*, Taylor utilized Plexiglas as a painting surface (conjoined in tiers on wood blocks or suspended from wires), which allowed him to play with the space occupied by the constructions and focus on the illusionary fracturing or spreading of opaque paint seen through the transparent planes. By providing multiple vantage points, the trails of paint applied to each plane sometimes appear to be continuous, and at other times, broken.

In *Elapse Time* (1990), the artist theoretically measures how long a liquid spill might "stretch" given a certain force and the diverting effects of gravity, while Taylor's *Endless Puddle* (1990) humorously poses the possibility of an infinity loop in which a puddle might endlessly circulate. The dedication of another work from 1990, *Black Piece (for Etienne-Jules Marey)*, reflects the artist's fascination with the sequential steps involved in a single movement, unseen by the naked eye, but revealed in the time-lapse photography of Marey, the French physiologist who invented a method of producing a series of successive images of a moving body on the same negative in the late nineteenth century. Also reflected in this group of works is Taylor's acknowledged interest in Chinese scroll painting, in which the scenes depicted unfold gradually as the viewer walks along the painting's length, thus demanding a constantly shifting viewpoint.

In 1992, when asked by Ulrich Loock about the relationship of his work to the viewer, Taylor responded, "If somebody... see[s] a bunch of Plexiglas with paint poured on it, what are they going to think? What I want them to see is levitation, literally. I am trying to find a state of suspended belief with this work, something akin to Japanese Noh Theater. If a viewer realizes that they are looking at drawings of levitated urine stains they might laugh, but when they leave the exhibition and they come across a dog piss stain on the street they might approach it differently. Art should give you a new perception, new ways of seeing life. Is how they see it the artist's decision or the viewer's choice or a combination of both? I don't really know, but the pet stain works are just focusing exercises."¹

Taylor traveled to Odense, Denmark in November 1997 with exploratory drawings in hand, ready to create new work "on the spot" for his solo exhibition *Full Gospel Neckless* at Galleri Tommy Lund. Utilizing the Lund gallery as his studio, the artist composed six three-dimensional works using industrial plastic pipes and tubes, which he had scavenged locally from Danish construction sites, and colorful plastic-coated telephone cable that was acquired through the bartering skills of his art dealer. The exhibition at David Zwirner marks the first time that all six works will be seen together since their initial showing in Denmark.

In the *Full Gospel Neckless* series, Taylor configured circles within circles by "stringing" multiple PE and PVC pipes on circulating rings of cable that seem to track time as they travel through and sometimes over the tubes. The perception of linked movement conjured by his use of wire as both support and fluid drawing lines contradicts the static nature of the plastic pipes. In an unpublished statement from 1997, the artist notes, "Most of the

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material that I have been cutting for a while is round tubes, rods, dowels, etc. The reason for this must be that round things don't have a traditional edge: they look pretty much the same from a lot of different angles. With tubes, there is also a definite inside and outside. What can I do about that?"²

With these works, Taylor characteristically isolated found and ordinarily overlooked objects, transformed them through his playful manipulation in an art context, and reoriented them to be viewed for their form rather than their function. The artist also typically employed linguistic twists and turns with his series title and individual subtitles, for example *Full Gospel Neckless (Dog Act)* and *Full Gospel Neckless (Pipe Bomb)*, that leave the beginnings and endings of their storytelling open to interpretation. As described by Mimi Thompson, "Taylor's joking intellect... [and his] interest in metaphor, anagrams and puns give [his] work a richness and liveliness that recalls the complexities of setting words to music. The visual rhythm of the line and color paired with the words (usually chosen for their multiple meanings) sets up a syncopated thought pattern for the viewer."³ In addition to the three-dimensional works on view from the series, Taylor's facility as a draftsman is revealed in an array of works on paper that run the gamut from still lifes to pure abstraction.

The objects and drawings on view in *Pet Stains, Puddles, and Full Gospel Neckless* demonstrate Taylor's relentless curiosity about the process of seeing—that is, how we see and what we see, which he systematically explored by applying a multitude of constantly shifting points of view. The artist's investigations combined metaphor with seemingly incongruous materials and concepts in order to find new relationships between subject matter, space, and meaning. Simply put by Taylor: "Curiosity is the spark, intentions are the fuel, art is the vehicle and the artist is the driver, you are the road; I hope that these tires hold out."⁴

The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue forthcoming in 2015 published by David Zwirner Books that will feature new scholarship on the artist by Mimi Thompson.

¹Al Taylor, in "Ulrich Looock and Al Taylor: A Conversation," in *Al Taylor*. Exh. cat. (Bern: Bern Kunsthalle, 1992), p. 48.

²Al Taylor, excerpt from unpublished artist's statement, August 1997.

³Mimi Thompson, "First you turn on the power, then you can change the channel," in *Al Taylor: Lures & Cures*. Exh. cat. (Lucerne: Kunstmuseum Luzern, 1999), p. 61.

⁴Al Taylor, unpublished notes, May 1990.

Al Taylor was born in 1948 in Springfield, Missouri, and received a B.F.A. from the Kansas City Art Institute in 1970. He moved to New York later that year, where he would continue to live and work until his death in 1999. His first solo exhibition took place in 1986 at the Alfred Kren Gallery in New York. His work would go on to be shown in numerous exhibitions in America and Europe, including solo exhibitions at the Kunsthalle Bern (1992), the Kunstmuseum Luzern (1999), the Staatliche Graphische Sammlung München at the Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich (2006 and 2010), the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark (2011), the Santa Monica Museum of Art (2011), and the High Museum of Art, Atlanta (2013). In 2014, The Glass House in New Canaan, Connecticut, presented *Six Panels: Al Taylor*, curated by Robert Storr. A retrospective of the artist's work, organized by the High Museum of Art, will open in Atlanta in 2016.

The Estate of Al Taylor has been represented by David Zwirner since 2007. Taylor's work can be found in a number of prominent public collections, including the British Museum, London; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Glenstone, Potomac, Maryland; the High Museum of Art, Atlanta; the Menil Collection, Houston; The Morgan Library & Museum, New York; The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Museum Folkwang, Essen; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Staatliche Graphische Sammlung München, Munich; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

Special Event

A Conversation Between Mimi Thompson and Stanley Whitney on the Work of Al Taylor

Saturday, January 17, 11 AM

Mimi Thompson is a writer based in New York City. She has written about Al Taylor's work for the Kunstmuseum Luzern in 1999 as well as the Haunch of Venison Gallery, Zurich in 2006. A contributing editor at *Bomb Magazine*, she has interviewed Judy Pfaff, Jane Wilson, and Roni Horn among others. Her recent work includes essays on the work of Robert Rauschenberg and Keith Haring.

Stanley Whitney is an artist based in New York City and Parma, Italy. He and Al Taylor met in 1966 as students at the Kansas City Art Institute, and they became life-long friends. Whitney has exhibited and lectured in the United States and Europe and his work is part of museum and private collections worldwide. He currently has an exhibition *Team Colors* at Team Gallery in Los Angeles, on view through February 22, 2015.

Space is limited. To RSVP for the special event, contact

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