

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

*Bing Wright: BLOW-UP*

May 25 - July 16, 2022

Lora Reynolds is pleased to announce *BLOW-UP*, an exhibition of new photographs by Bing Wright—the artist’s second presentation at the gallery. The exhibition will mark the unveiling of Wright’s new book by the same name.

Wright’s new pictures are enlargements of uncommonly tight crops from images of children at play on a seashore—an outstretched hand splashing water or carrying a beach bucket, liberal smears of sunscreen, fluorescent plastic hair clips, a foot dragging through burbling waves. These images revel in nostalgia—warm memories of being a kid at the beach and, later as a teenager, beginning to fall in love with photography—while keeping a wary eye trained on the slipperiness of truth.

One group of works in the show comprises double images—each large print has a second, smaller print (a slightly different crop from the same source photo) affixed to its surface. For each pair of blow-ups, one might be full color and the other black-and-white; one might be a warm-toned monochrome and the other cool. The double compositions imply a fractured, multivalent reality, in which a given object, situation, or person might be seen in more than one way. And because Wright alternated shooting with digital and film cameras, enlarging these images to their extreme limits means the grain of a 35mm negative and the pixels of a digital file serve as markedly different filters through which we might apprehend the world. One thing can be many, depending on who is looking and how (thanks again, Mr. Barthes).

The second group of smaller images are Goldtones (an antiquated printing process whereby a photographic transparency is overlaid on gold leaf) that glow as if by some inner radiance. Edward Curtis, who spent more than 30 years documenting the lives of Native Americans in the early 20th century, is the only other photographer Wright knows produced Goldtones. (Seattle was Curtis’s home for much of his life; Wright remembers seeing these images everywhere as he was growing up in that city, even before he discovered his own interest in photography.) Wright’s Goldtones, like Curtis’s, present us with contradictory associations that can pull hearts in several directions. They seem like physical manifestations of memory, almost supernatural in how their metallic leaf holds and reflects light—but because they are cropped so tightly and contain so little context, they feel truncated, inscrutable, incomplete, just out of reach. We are left to fill in the blanks around a boy’s ear or a girl’s elbow, water droplets on another kid’s shoulders. Do these snippets conjure a blissful day of sand castles and floaties—or something more sinister?

The question of what might lurk in the depths of a photograph is key to Antonioni’s 1966 film *Blow-Up*, which Wright first saw as a camera-toting teenager already enrapt by the magic of

the darkroom. The central drama in the movie revolves around the protagonist photographer, Thomas, happening upon and shooting a couple canoodling in a park. Upon enlarging his negatives and scouring the shadows among the trees, he comes to question whether he was an unwitting witness to a murder. Is that a man with a gun lurking in the forest? Is that lump in the distance the prostrate, lifeless body of a paramour? The fidelity of his grainy prints is enough to force (Doubting Apostle) Thomas to question what he thought he saw in the park, but falls far short of confirming what actually happened. As the film incrementally dismantles the boundaries between the real and imagined, it seems to suggest this porousness is not solely a property of the silver screen—perception is subjective everywhere in our lives; the edges we construct between fact and fiction are arbitrary, negotiable, and never as anchored as we assume them to be.

Although it is easy to connect Antonioni's rejection of an objective reality with today's polarized political and media environment—where Fox News and CNN and social media feeds personalized by algorithm are the grown-up equivalents of the Choose Your Own Adventure book series from the 1980s and 90s—perhaps the subjectivity inherent to each of our own little worlds is more a feature of our collective experience rather than a liability. (Many truths are better than one.) Reflected in Wright's pictures is one of the most beautiful facets of childhood—the mutability of the threshold between this realm and the infinite possibilities that might be found in others. Maybe instead of giggling at a kid's gullibility, we should envy their openness and strive to match the flexibility of their imaginations. Less rock, more water.

Bing Wright, born in 1958 in Seattle, lives and works in New York. Wright has shown his work at the Boise Art Museum, Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery (Saratoga Springs), New Museum (New York), Queens Museum, Western Bridge (Seattle), and White Columns (New York). His work is included in the Museum of Modern Art (New York), Portland Art Museum, and Seattle Art Museum.