

ROBERTS & TILTON

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 28, 2017

Daniel Joseph Martinez
I am Ulrike Meinhof
or
(someone once told me time is a flat circle)
October 28 - December 16, 2017
Opening Reception Saturday, October 28, 6-8pm



Ulrike Meinhof, ca 1968

Roberts & Tilton is pleased to present a new photographic installation by Daniel Joseph Martinez. *I am Ulrike Meinhof or (someone once told me time is a flat circle)* represents a mode of historic radicalism interpreted through images where, as a process historicizing the present, the imaginary, symbolic, and real become interwoven through a process of confrontation. Martinez's photographs of the Inner German border of West Berlin, taken during his 2016 American Academy residency in Berlin, re-map the psychogeography of that time, and place, through the usage of iconic images of Ulrike Meinhof. These images, representing her life in various stages, include a classically styled portrait of her as a young girl; a formal photograph in the professional stage of her life; and the coroner photograph of her dead body.

Ulrike Marie Meinhof (1934–1976) was a German left-wing militant who co-founded, with Andreas Baader and Gudrun Ensslin, the Red Army Faction (Rote Armee Fraktion, or RAF) in 1970 after previously working as a journalist for the left-wing magazine *konkret*. In 1972, she was arrested and charged with numerous murders as well as the formation of a criminal association. Before the trial concluded in 1976, Meinhof was found hanged in her prison cell. It is worth noting that in the year leading up to her arrest, Germany was in chaos; starting with the 1972 Munich Olympics, Berlin was the first properly televised world crisis. *I am Ulrike Meinhof or (someone once told me time is a flat circle)* marks the 40th anniversary of the RAF's 1977 armed struggle operations, known as "German Autumn", which began with the abduction of industrialist and ex-Nazi party member Hanns-Martin Schleyer.

Constructed by the German Democratic Republic (GDR, East Germany), starting on August 13, 1961, the Berlin Wall completely cut off (by land) West Berlin from surrounding East Germany and from East Berlin until 1989. It had a total length of 103 miles (166 km), and there was a deeply staggered system of barriers. That the main barrier included guard towers placed along large concrete walls, which circumscribed a wide area (later known as the "death strip") with anti-vehicle trenches, "fakir beds", wire fencing and other defenses, is well documented; this version of the Wall is the one most commonly seen in photographs. The entire portion of West Germany was divided by fences and various other obstacles – stand-alone walls, floodlights, trip-wire machine guns and trenches – rather than a formal concrete wall, which meant that at times guard towers and soldiers presided over what was effectively fields and other empty spaces.

During the two coldest months of his Berlin-based residency, Martinez cycled the wall perimeter, which remains present through both official and unofficial markers. At various locations he photographed himself in the geographically specific yet seemingly ambiguous locations bearing medieval standards outfitted with images of Meinhof. The resulting photographs represent varied political, economic, and social spheres condensed in one very small space: the totality of the 80 locations photographed; Martinez's performative act of traveling East to West; the specificities of the German landscape in relation to and by German light; the schisms between physical and psychological borders; personal and collective accountability to a shared past.

Undertaken as a means to memorialize and complicate Meinhof and her legacy, this exhibition looks to a number of intertwining ideas - the role of the individual vs. the role of social, the need of civil disobedience, and how and when violence is necessary - while painting a portrait of her female self and feminism in this landscape. Women occupied prominent roles in the RAF and West Germany's other far left radical groups, which was and remains atypical. Meinhof's direct, generous action repeatedly challenged the feminist theoretical framework linking violence to maleness and masculinity. Her writings, beginning with her column at konkret, were interjected with calls to build autonomous spaces outside of capitalism. Reactionary media accounts typically dispatched RAF women's rejection of motherhood, for example, or reported on the imprisoned RAF member's hunger strikes as a form of body, therefore feminized, politics. Meinhof's decision to abandon protest and social activism for armed action confronts difficult questions about our own positions regarding how women turn violent and when they claim that violence as political agency.

As a woman in a profession dominated by men, Meinhof was one of the first to focus attention on the subordination of women in the workplace and mothers in society. Man's inhumanity to women runs deep; Meinhof never lacked for a subject during her editorial tenure at konkret. Increasingly, most, if not all, of her proto-feminist assertions regarding authoritarianism, resistance and the repression of women were firmly set in the context of political violence. Yet as Meinhof's imperfect legacy demonstrates, feminism and far-left politics are mutually reinforcing discourses. The varying images of Meinhof's life stages selected by Martinez demonstrate how the dichotomy between her personal life and her political claim remains far more complex than traditional narratives would indicate.

Martinez's portraits of and with Ulrike Meinhof introduce the concept of potentiality as a way of rethinking and remaking landscape-as-site as a space for speculation. Rather than ascribe meaning solely to an image or idea, Martinez utilizes the physical body as its own sociological testing ground. Taking into account the geopolitical structure of landscape - most notably how the body functions in these spaces - Martinez forms an intervention as a total work, bringing together art, technology, film, science, and photography to create a photographic series focused on the female body as a form of resistance in spaces historically and psychologically tied to social movements.

The importance of the post '68 student-led radical era were the links made between theory and action, marking a major transition away from existing party structures towards mass anti-authoritarianism, not unlike current dissent movements emerging in the United States as a reaction to the current Trump administration. To be an American today is to witness of abuse and total delegitimization by a populist authoritarian, in the American mold, of the world's most powerful and influential democracy. Acquiescence to this regime is suicide; at any level, at any volume. Seen in this context, Martinez's photographs of Ulrike Meinhof stand in as a signifier of both the hope and demise of social democracy, as well as aim to call into question our own anti-authoritarian practices in relation to the direction of how the United States is currently moving.

For more than 35 years, Los Angeles-born artist Daniel Joseph Martinez (b. 1957) has been honing his politically-inflected practice, which critic Jeffrey Kastner has characterized as "unapologetically prob[ing] uncomfortable issues of personal and collective identity, seeking out threadbare spots in the fabric of conventional wisdom." Martinez's practice takes the form of photography, painting, site-specific installation, printed works, performance and public interventions to challenge issues of personal and collective identity, vision and visuality, and the fissures formed between the appearance and the perception of difference.

Additionally on View:

Daniel Joseph Martinez

Divine Violence

September 9 - December 16, 2017

Roberts & Tilton Project Room

In Daniel Joseph Martinez's words, *Divine Violence* functions as "a typology of every organization in the world that uses violence or aggression to fulfill its political ideology." The installation features panels on which political organizations are handwritten in black lettering against gold paint. Each represents diverse political and ideological modes of thinking and activity, i.e. Islamist groups, Ugandan insurgent constituencies, right-wing Israeli factions. Martinez's constructed sculptural database operates as a system of symbolic exchange, linking the luxury of gold to the mechanisms of power and resistance within global capitalism under the guise of wealth, power, and religion.

Home - So Different, So Appealing: Art from the Americas since 1957

June 11 - October 15, 2017

Los Angeles County Museum of Art

Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

November 17, 2017 - January 21, 2018

Home - So Different, So Appealing features U.S. Latino and Latin American artists from the late 1950s to the present who have used the deceptively simple idea of "home" as a powerful lens through which to view the profound socioeconomic and political transformations in the hemisphere.

Daniel Joseph Martinez Divine Violence and *Home - So Different, So Appealing: Art from the Americas since 1957* are part of Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA, a far-reaching and ambitious exploration of Latin American and Latino art in dialogue with Los Angeles. Led by the Getty, Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA is the latest collaborative effort from arts institutions across Southern California.



For additional information, please contact Mary Skarbek, 323-549-0223, mary@robertsandtilton.com

Gallery hours are Tuesday - Saturday, 11:00am - 6:00pm.

Roberts & Tilton is located between Fairfax Avenue and La Cienega Boulevard.

Parking is available on the street and at Dunn Edwards located 1/2 block east of the gallery.