

For immediate release

JAMES WELLING Seascape

July 10 – August 4, 2017



Seascape, 2017 (video still)
Colorized 16 mm film transferred to digital video,
5:18 min, stereo sound

David Zwirner is pleased to present *Seascape* (2017), a new film by James Welling at its 519 West 19th Street location. This will be the United States premiere of the work and the artist's seventh solo presentation at the gallery.

In *Seascape*, Welling combines his family's past with the histories of cinema, photography, and painting. The film is an homage to the artist's grandfather, William C. Welling, who studied with the American Impressionist painter Wilson Irvine and corresponded with the seascape painter Frederick Waugh (1861-1940). Using the recently introduced Cine-Kodak Model B 16mm camera, Welling's grandfather shot the black-and-white reversal footage in the early 1930's in Ogunquit, Maine, at the suggestion of Waugh. Over the course of two days, he filmed the Atlantic Ocean at Perkins Cove—which was a celebrated site for seascape painters—capturing images of the rocky coast, which he subsequently used as a basis for a 22 x 27 inch oil painting. For *Seascape*, Welling took digital color samples of his grandfather's painting and, working with three animators, colorized the original footage using After Effects and Photoshop. The audio component is a

contribution from the artist's brother, William B. Welling, a musician. The sound, which encompasses a slow, continuous progression of three chords with Foley effects, uses a 1940 "Gloria" accordion, as well as two drums—a 1826 Eli Brown replica snare drum made in 1990 with 32 beach pebbles placed on the drum head and a Remo "Ocean Drum." As a collaborative work between the artist, his grandfather, and his brother, the film, like Welling's photographic series "Diary/Landscape" (1977-1986) and "Wyeth" (2010-2015), extends the artist's interest in incorporating autobiographical elements into his work.

Heike Eipeldauer, who co-curated Welling's 2017 survey exhibition, *Metamorphosis*, notes on the film, "*Seascape's* traces of use... generate an effect of abstraction, exposing the temporal material conditions of the formation of the doubly translated seascape. This brings to mind that the genesis of abstraction, from Caspar David Friedrich through the Impressionists to Piet Mondrian, developed via the genre of the landscape. In *Seascape*, Welling arrives at a subjective photographic practice, in the form of film, which once again becomes manifest in a specific nexus of landscape, abstraction, and emotion."¹

James Welling was born in 1951 in Hartford, Connecticut. He studied at Carnegie Mellon University and the University of Pittsburgh and received his B.F.A. and M.F.A. from the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia, California. Since 2005, his work has been represented by David Zwirner.

Currently on view at the Kunstforum Wien in Vienna is *James Welling: Metamorphosis*, a solo show encompassing the artist's work from the past 45 years (through July 16, 2017). The exhibition, which debuted the artist's film *Seascape*, is co-organized by the Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (S.M.A.K.) in Ghent, where it was on view earlier this year.

Things Beyond Resemblance: James Welling Photographs, a solo exhibition hosted in 2015 by the Brandywine River Museum of Art in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, presented fifty works from the artist's "Wyeth" project. The museum also commissioned the artist to create eight site-specific installations, "Gradients," which explore the intersection of photography and sculpture. In 2013, a major survey, *James Welling: Monograph*, was organized by the Cincinnati Art Museum in Ohio and accompanied by a catalogue published by Aperture. The exhibition traveled to the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles. In 2012, *James Welling: The Mind on Fire* at the MK Gallery in Milton Keynes, England, explored the origin and development of Welling's abstract photographs from the 1980s. The show traveled to the Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea in Santiago de Compostela, Spain and the Contemporary Art Gallery in Vancouver.

Welling's work has been exhibited widely in the United States and internationally, including solo exhibitions at the Art Institute of Chicago (2014); Fotomuseum Winterthur, Switzerland; University Museum of Contemporary Art, UMASS Amherst, Amherst, Massachusetts (both 2013); Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, Connecticut (both 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 the Kunstmuseum Luzern, Lucerne, Switzerland (both 1998). In 2000, the Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, Ohio organized a major survey of his work, which traveled to the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, and the Baltimore Museum of Art. In 1990, the artist's first museum exhibition was presented by Kunsthalle Bern.

In 2014, Welling was a recipient of the Infinity Award given by the International Center of Photography, New York and in 2016 he received the Julius Shulman Institute Excellence in Photography Award from Woodbury University, California. From 1995 to 2016, he was Area Head of Photography at UCLA and since 2012 he has been a Lecturer with the Rank of Professor at Princeton University.

The artist's work is held in major museum collections, including the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Germany; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; 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; Vancouver Art Gallery; Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, Connecticut; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. He lives and works in New York.

¹ Heike Eipeldauer, *James Welling: Metamorphosis*. Exh. cat. (Ghent, Vienna, and Munich: Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, Ghent, Kunstforum Wien, and Prestel Verlag), p. 51.