

JOEL-PETER WITKIN



Michel Soskine Inc. is very pleased to present a solo exhibition by renowned American photographic artist **Joel-Peter Witkin** showing recent works and some of his best known photographs from the 80s and 90s.

Joel-Peter Witkin is one of the leading photographers of our time, famous for his provocative and controversial works exploring death, religion, myth and allegory.

His works can now be seen again in Madrid after the exhibition presented in 2003 at the Círculo de Bellas Artes, following the one at the National Art Museum Reina Sofia in 1988.

Witkin's dark imagination - often compared to that of Goya and Bosch - is fueled by art history, which he quotes in his photographic tableaux. Iconography is often the backdrop to his themes and the basis to his ideas.

His influences range from Giotto to nineteenth-century daguerreotypes, with frequent thematic and formal references to Baroque painting's still lifes and strong contrasts of light and shade.

Joel-Peter Witkin considers issues of morality as central to his work. Drawing from a rich body of sources, he creates elaborate photographic tableaux that address the morbid, the perverse, the erotic, and the religious. In nearly all of his works, social outcasts, pariahs, and human oddities act out these moral issues. Witkin also frequently uses dead bodies or body parts in the creation of his work all of which contribute to the spiritual and ephemeral quality of his imagery.

From conception to completion as ornate constructions, Witkin's photographs constantly refer to mankind's vanity and the inevitability of death.

The artist begins each image outlining his ideas on paper and perfecting all the details before picking up the camera. His darkly fantastic vision is shaped by deliberate manipulation of the photographic surface to make it appear aged, an act that further comments on the nature of the photographic image by calling into question its permanency.

Participating in PHotoEspaña Off Festival and as an allusion to the 500th anniversary of the death of Hieronymus Bosch (1450/60-1516), Joel-Peter Witkin, so often compared to the Dutch Renaissance painter, returns to Madrid with his fascinating compositions.

JOEL-PETER WITKIN

1939, Brooklyn, New York, USA.

Lives and works in Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA.

Joel-Peter Witkin was born on September 13, 1939 in Brooklyn, New York, to a Jewish father and a Roman Catholic mother and has a twin brother, Jerome Witkin, who is a well-known painter.

Witkin's parents were unable to transcend their religious differences and divorced while he was still young. Their mother raised Joel-Peter and his twin brother in a deeply religious atmosphere.

He attended grammar school at Saint Cecelia's in Brooklyn and went on to Grover Cleveland High School.

Witkin bought his first camera in the mid-1950s and taught himself the fundamentals of camera use. Even his first photographs were unusual, depicting the many unsettling experiences of his childhood. His very first photograph portrayed a rabbi who claimed to have spoken to God. At the request of his brother, Witkin later took his camera to the Coney Island freak show. Jerome wanted the photographs for his own unique paintings.

Joel-Peter Witkin was drafted into the army in 1961. In order to have some control over his assignment, Witkin enlisted in the army for three years as a combat photographer. His assignments included recording on film the bodies of soldiers who had committed suicide or died in training accidents.

In 1967 Witkin decided to work as a freelance photographer and became City Walls Inc. official photographer. Following his army service, Witkin attended Cooper Union in New York and received his B.F.A. in 1974. During this same period, Columbia University awarded Witkin a fellowship in poetry. Witkin completed his graduate studies in photography and art history at the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, receiving his M.A. in 1976 and his M.F.A. in 1981.

Witkin claims that his vision and sensibility were initiated by an episode he witnessed when he was just a small child, a car accident that occurred in front of his house in which a young girl was decapitated:

"It happened on a Sunday when my mother was escorting my twin brother and me down the steps of the tenement where we lived. We were going to church. While walking down the hallway to the entrance of the building, we heard an incredible crash mixed with screaming and cries for help. The accident involved three cars, all with families in them. Somehow, in the confusion, I was no longer holding my mother's hand. At the place where I stood at the curb, I could see something rolling from one of the overturned cars. It stopped at the curb where I stood. It was the head of a little girl. I bent down to touch the face, to speak to it - but before I could touch it someone carried me away."

C/ General Castaños 9, 28004 Madrid tel (+34) 91 431 06 03

michelsoskineinc@gmail.com

MICHEL SOSKINE INC.

JOEL-PETER WITKIN

Photography.

From June 8 to July 30, 2016.

Opening: Wednesday, June 8 at 8pm, with the artist.

MICHEL SOSKINE INC.

C/ General Castaños 9. 28004 Madrid. Spain.

www.soskine.com

Ph: +34 91 431 06 03

Tuesday to Friday: 10:30am – 7:30pm.

Saturday: 10:30am – 2:30pm.

For further information:

Claudia Carrasqueira - claudia.msoskine@gmail.com
