

Waddington Galleries

PRESS RELEASE

LUCAS SAMARAS: PHOTOFICTIONS

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In *Photofictions* Lucas Samaras continues his exploration of an enigmatic world suspended between fantasy and reality. Landscapes, interiors, flower pieces and self-portraits are created with digital images taken by the artist and recomposed through computer manipulation. They follow on from earlier photo-based work such as the *AutoPolaroids* (1969-1971), the *Photo-Transformations* (1973-1976), *Sittings* (1979-1980) and the *Panoramas* of the mid 1980s. These are the first works in which Samaras uses photographs taken outdoors.

Samaras's use of the camera led the American critic Donald Kuspit to comment: 'Not since Surrealism have we seen photography used so brilliantly to articulate the unconscious – a machine of seeing used to make the invisible inner organism visible.' Samaras continues where Surrealism left off, and in his investigations of subjects such as sexuality, terror, mortality, metamorphosis, he has played the part of both the observer and the observed, roles that can be difficult to distinguish. Many of the images in *Photofictions* incorporate a self-portrait, often incongruously placed or miraculously transformed, but invariably poised as though to further challenge and disturb our equilibrium.

The lush textures and seductive colours that have always been integral to Samaras's art, whether in his boxes, sewn fabrics or pastels, are another means of throwing us off balance. They create a hyperactive emotional pitch which can be lyrical as well as aggressive, but which is invariably disorientating. In these latest works Samaras uses every means at his disposal to take photography to a new level of imaginative intensity.

Lucas Samaras was born in Greece in 1936. He moved to New York in 1948, attended university where he studied art history, took up acting, and later became closely involved with Performance Art and Happenings. He made his first pin-covered books and boxes in 1962, and the following year began using wool yarns and self-portrait photographs. In 1973 his first major retrospective opened at the Whitney Museum of American Art, and since then he has exhibited widely in America and Europe. A major exhibition of his self-portraits opened at the Whitney Museum in November 2003.

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