

Tom Fels

Arbor Series 6-16-11 – L2

Cyanotype on prepared paper, 36 x 24 in., 2011

Opening bid: \$2500

Artist's Statement:

Tom Fels' cyanotype series stems from his lengthy engagement with a single subject: a tree in his backyard in North Bennington and its dappled shadows. Previously he had addressed these through pencil drawings and photographs. The discovery of the availability of large-scale cyanotype paper took the experience in a new direction.

The cyanotype is an early process of great simplicity and unique color – a deep blue. Typically, the method has been employed to produce silhouettes – of leaves, for example, as in the botanical illustrations of the classic pioneer British photographer Anna Atkins (1799-1871) – but the same process was also used to make photographic prints from negatives, as well as architectural blueprints.

Fels' cyanotypes are cameraless photographs, also called sun prints or shadow prints. There is no negative; each is unique. The prints are life-sized, 1:1 scale renderings of their natural subject matter obtained directly, outdoors, from bushes and trees. The *Arbor* and other of Fels' series are at once both empirical and romantic. The result of a technical process dependent on light and chemistry alone, these prints can be regarded on one level as simply unmanipulated records of the organic world. On another they are richly suggestive, capturing a deeply evocative sense of motion and form. A review in the *Boston Globe* observed that they “evoke the touch and movement of a friendly breeze.”

Biography

Tom Fels grew up in North Bennington and was influenced early on by the artistic environments of both nearby Bennington College and his high school years at the Putney School. During the 1960s he was active in the civil rights, student rights, and anti-war movements. In the late 1960s and early 1970s he lived on a back-to-the-land farm commune.

Fels has been for many years an independent curator and writer specializing in American culture, photography, and art. He has worked as consultant and guest curator to a number of museums, including the Canadian Centre for Architecture and the J. Paul Getty Museum. In 1986 he was named a Chester Dale Fellow of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and in 1998-9 a Fletcher Jones Foundation Fellow of the Huntington Library. Of the more than fifty exhibitions he has organized, his *Carleton Watkins: Western Landscape and the Classical Vision* was presented at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Malibu in 1990, and *Fire and Ice: Treasures from the Photograph Collection of Frederic Church at Olana* at the van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam, in 2002. He is the author of numerous catalogs, articles, and books, including *Sotheby's Guide to Photographs* (1998).

Tom Fels began showing his recent art in the Northeast in 2013, and in Europe and the UK in 2015. His large cyanotypes are represented in museum and private collections, including the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Fels continues to live and work in North Bennington.

Exhibitions

On the Vineyard Gallery, MA 1982
Bennington Museum, VT 2013
Brattleboro Museum & Art Center, VT 2014, 2016, 2017
Albany Institute of History & Art, NY 2014, 2017
Jane Deering Gallery, MA 2014, 2015, 2016
Eugene Quinn Gallery, MA 2015
The Left Bank, VT 2015
Jackson Gallery, Middlebury, VT 2015
Paris Photo 2015
Atlas Gallery London 2015
Mitchell-Giddings Gallery, VT 2016
Bennington College, VT 2016-17
Christie's, London 2016, 2018
Marlborough Gallery, NY 2016
Graficas Gallery, MA 2016-18
Amherst College, MA 2017
Art on the Hill, Hudson, NY, 2017
AIPAD / NY, 2018

Collections

Institutional:

Albany Institute of History & Art, NY
Bennington Museum, VT
Mead Art Museum, Amherst College, MA

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA
Middlebury College Museum of Art
Cape Ann Museum, MA
ICM Partners, NY

Private: NY, VT, MA, CT, TX, UK

Notices / Reviews

Bennington Banner, 2013	Art New England, 2015
Albany Times-Union, 2014	Gloucester Times, 2016
Boston Globe, 2014	ArtScope, Boston, 2016
Vermont Public Radio, 2015	

Blacklow, Laura, *New Dimensions in Photo Processes*,
Fifth Edition, Routledge, 2017

Descriptive details: Name, title of work, materials

Digital image of work:

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