

Wolfgang Tillmans

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Univ.-Prof. Dr. Julia Gelshorn

Isabel Diana Emilia Hanstein, Engelstr. 43, CH-8004 Zurich,

Isabel.Hanstein@gmail.com, +41 78 841 1499

I hereby certify that this master/diploma thesis has been composed by myself, and describes my own work, unless otherwise acknowledged in the text. All references and verbatim extracts have been quoted, and all sources of information have been specifically acknowledged. This master/diploma thesis has not been accepted in any previous application for a degree.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Isabel Diana Emilia Hanstein, Zurich, April 29, 2015

In admiration for their patience, endless belief in me and support, I thank
MM de H, HH and LA

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Introduction

The traditional and historic way of an artist to become famous has been in the past that his audience was limited to his surrounding and/or he did commissioned work in order to facilitate his life. True fame, putting the exceptions aside, mostly only came post his death. Today, artists not only have more mediums available to create their works but also to demonstrate and market them. The emergence of art galleries and the professional secondary art market has been the most important aspect supporting that development. Also fame and economic success was limited to the world the artists lived in. With the increase in global travel, trade and efficient communication, the audience that an artist can reach today with his work is significantly larger than in earlier days.

Along with that, also the scope of possible art forms has increased as well. This can be particularly seen with contemporary sculptures as opposed to the Italian masterpieces made of marble stone. Besides this drastic example an important new cluster in the art market has developed, namely the art of photography. It is fair to say that art, in any form whatsoever, is and has always been a snapshot of an artist's view on the world around him or the topic he covers. Therefore the art form of photography allows artists, as well as everyone else in this world to take a picture of something or someone in order to be able to review that moment and talk about it later. In the case of artists, the scope is much larger as the theme of the picture is also influenced by the setting of picture and the pre- and post adaptations to the pictures taken.

Therefore, Wolfgang Tillmans is a prime example to illustrate his professional path, as it has only been due to modern media that Tillmans was identified as an artist, when his long-term gallerist Daniel Bucholz, Cologne & Berlin, scouted him in a fashion magazine when Tillmans was doing fashion shooting. Bucholz immediately recognized his talent of being a photographic artist, which was quickly caught on by Maureen Paley Gallery, London, as well.

In light of that, this paper provides a holistic overview of the contemporary German photography artist Wolfgang Tillmans. For many years, he has positively influenced the art market by not only introducing his works, which are photographic pieces but also due to his sexuality, which has for many years been misconceived by society. Breaking through these two barriers, namely the acceptance of photography as an art form as well as the respect and acceptance of homosexuality, is something that has allowed Tillmans to go beyond his original scope or rather “revolutionary” works. Many people today would consider him an acknowledged artist, who is covering various new topics with his series, thereby entering important exhibitions and public, as well as private collections. Having won the Hasselblad award this year as well as the inclusion in various well known collections like the Fondation Louis Vuitton have provided Tillmans with the opportunity to further expand his view on what his artworks stand for and particularly what parameters he sees in a photo that make up for the true art work in itself.

Therefore, this paper introduces the various series that Tillmans has created over time as well as putting into perspective as to why he created these series and what their relation is towards each other. Furthermore, the economic history of Tillmans’s works provides for a trend that can be devoted to the art form of photography but also to his personal economic impact his works and particularly his individual series have had on the art market so far.

At the end of this paper, the reader will have gained sufficient knowledge of the artist Wolfgang Tillmans, where he comes from as an artist, what he has created over time and how his works are to best be understood. Subsequently, the reader will be able to quantify the value that can be attributed to Tillmans in order to provide for a holistic approach to understanding all of Tillmans works as well as those that are yet to come.

Wolfgang Tillmans

Wolfgang Tillmans is a German photographer who was born in 1968 in Remscheid, in Germany's Ruhr region. He studied at the Bournemouth and Poole College of Art in 1990. He began his career in Hamburg, then moved to New York City and later to London. Today, he lives and works in Berlin and London. In 2000, he won the renowned Turner Prize, awarded by Tate Britain, London. Those artists being awarded the Turner Prize are honored for specific exhibitions held in the past. In Tillmans case those exhibitions were at Interim Art, London; The Städtische Galerie, Remscheid; and an exhibition at his New York gallery Andres Rosen. But in addition to the exhibitions he was also honored for his various publications and of course his work in general dealing with conventions and the challenge it brings in modern times to protest against them. The way he captured contemporary difficulties in society with conventional photography and already in art history established genres like portraiture or still lifes was a significant aspect of his work for the jury of the Turner Prize. The other candidates for the Turner Prize in the year 2000 were Glenn Brown, Michael Raedecker and Tomoko Takahashi. It was the first time a photographer won the prize what also underlines that photography has not been fully accepted as an artistic media in the early nineties, but the acceptance became stronger and a market for photography rose in those years. By winning this prize, he gained full acceptance in the art world as a contemporary photographer. The exhibition he showed following the prize at the Tate, London, can be seen as a retrospective of his oeuvre.¹ In 2015 he won the Hasselblad Award for photography, awarded by the international Hasselblad Foundation, Sweden, and endowed with prize money of 1,000,000 Swedish kronor (approximately 110,000 euros). The Hasselblad Award was founded in 1980 and awards one artist per year. Under the former winners of the award are Richard Avedon (1991), Henri Cartier-Bresson (1982), Cindy Sherman (1999), Jeff Wall (2002), Bernd & Hilla Becher (2004), Nan Goldin (2007) and last year's winner Ishiuchi Miyako, to name just a few. This award is an important

¹ TATE 2015 TATE, web page, <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/exhibition/turner-prize-retrospective/exhibition-guide/turner-prize-98-00>, last access on 25.04.2015

acknowledgement for photographers.

The Foundation's citation regarding the 2015 Award Winner Wolfgang Tillmans:

“Wolfgang Tillmans has established himself among the most original and innovative artists of his generation, constantly pushing the photographic medium in new directions. His practice has covered subjects of pressing political and social importance since the 1990s, reflecting both directly and indirectly on the power of the photographic image to engage critically with the world around us. Furthermore, Tillmans has transformed the understanding of photographic exhibition making through his daring and original installations, playing with scale, formats, framing and presentation to produce immersive experiences that have inspired subsequent generations of artists.”²

Wolfgang Tillmans is an internationally known artist who has had various solo exhibitions all over the world, for example at the Tate Britain, London (2003); Kunsthalle Zurich, Zurich (1995 & 2012); Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2002); the New Museum, New York; P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center / MOMA, New York (1994 & 2001); and the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, K21 Ständehaus, Düsseldorf (2013), to name just a few. He has also participated in various biennials like La biennial di Venezia (2009 & 2014), the Berlin Biennial for Contemporary Art (2014) or Manifesta 10 – European Biennial of Contemporary Art (2014). Galleries representing him worldwide are Daniel Buchholz, Cologne and Berlin; Maureen Paley, London; Andrea Rosen, New York; Juana de Aizpuru, Madrid; and he recently (2014) joined David Zwirner, New York and London.

In his early days, before the reorganization of the art world, he worked for cult magazines like *i-D*. From the beginning he was well known for his portraits, not only classic portraits but also those portraying his generation and lifestyle. His works are highly political and show the fears and different

² HASSELBADFOUNDATION 2015 HASSELBLADFOUNDATION, web page, <http://www.hasselbladfoundation.org/hasselblad-award-2015/>, last access on 25.04.2015

approaches of a younger, freer and detached generation.³ He combines art with reality and represents different interpretations of usual photographic subjects like portraits, still lifes and urban landscapes.⁴ Gijs van Tuyl, back then director of the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, once described this intensity as the following:

“Tillmans reaches under the surface of today’s culture and drives us to do the same.”⁵

In 1986 he started one of his first series done with the help of a photocopier. The use of the media, in this case the photocopier, is important to notice. He said in an interview that a certain photocopier, which he found in a copy shop in Remscheid, his hometown, functioned as his first camera. He was able to enlarge images up to 400 per cent and copy them in various shades of grey. He experimented with enlarging images and the effects it has on the quality of the image after printing it much larger than the original. Similar to what is known as pixelation in digital photography, such an effect is achieved by enlarging through a photocopier. Similar to other series, which I will analyze later in this text, Tillmans uses a ready-made object of everyday life, such as normal paper used in photocopiers, and transforms it to a piece of art through a process of printing or manipulation through light. Back then he used his own photos or found ones to edit with the copier. A side effect of the copier is the reduction of color. The way he uses photocopies reduces colour to black and white. Tillmans has said that for some images it is even better to copy them into black and white. A picture of a forest, like *Wald (Reinshagen)*, 2008, does not need color because the subject itself is so clear to us that we recognize it is a forest without seeing the color green. For him, the “focus lies on light effects, patterns or varying structure.”⁶

³ VERZOTTI 2001, GIORGIO VERZOTTI, *Wolfgang Tillmans – Aufsicht*, Ostfildern-Ruit, Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2001, p. 13

⁴ VAN TUYL 1996, GIJS VAN TUYL, *Wolfgang Tillmans. For when I’m weak I’m strong*, Ostfildern/Ruit, Cantz Verlag, 1996, p. V; exhibition: Wolfsburg. Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, 7.9.1996–17.11.1996

⁵ HORLOCK/MONTAGU/TUFNELL 2000 MARY HORLOCK/JEMIMA MONTAGU/BEN TUFNELL, *Turner Prize 2000*; Edenbridge, Westerham Press, 2000, p.1

⁶ TILLMANS 2002, WOLFGANG TILLMANS, *Artist’s Writings*, London, Phaidon Press Limited, 2002, p. 152

“A photocopy is just a sheet of paper, but something happens and it becomes of value, of aesthetic charge.”⁷



Image 1: Wolfgang Tillmans, *Wald (Reinshagen)*, 2008, photocopy⁸

For his exhibition “if one thing matters, everything matters” at the Tate Britain in 2003 Tillmans created and designed the exhibition catalogue. For him it was more like a personal overview of his oeuvre, than something close to a catalogue raisonné. All images are shown equally in the same format; information on status, edition, and size is absent. The titles have not been translated. This underlines what we will see later, for him the installations or groups of works are variable and valuable, more than each individual work alone. His works should be seen in the context of a steady everyday production.⁹

“When I [Wolfgang Tillmans] see a person, we don’t think ‘portrait’;
when I [Wolfgang Tillmans] look at my window-sill I see fruit in a bowl

⁷ HERBERT 2013, MARTIN HERBERT “Wolfgang Tillmans”; in: *Art Review*, April 2013, p. 63

⁸ PINTEREST 2015 PINTEREST, web page, <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/210754457533063744/>, last access on 25.04.2015

⁹ HORLOCK 2003, MARY HORLOCK, *if one thing matters, everything matters*, Ostfildern, Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2003, pp. 306-308; exhibition; Tate Britain, London, 6.6.–14.9.2003

and light and respond to them, I don't first see 'still life.' That's how I want to convey my subject matter to the viewer, not through the recognition of predetermined art historical image categories but through enabling them to see with the immediacy that I felt in that situation."¹⁰

He provides us with a glimpse into how he categorizes his works. In 1996 he began to arrange and store them by year and by personally structured categories. Though categories are somehow against his wish to show the instantaneous without already categorizing them. Therefore he created his own categories, to help him understand what he reacts to and how frequently.¹¹ I will try to further understand and analyze this system.

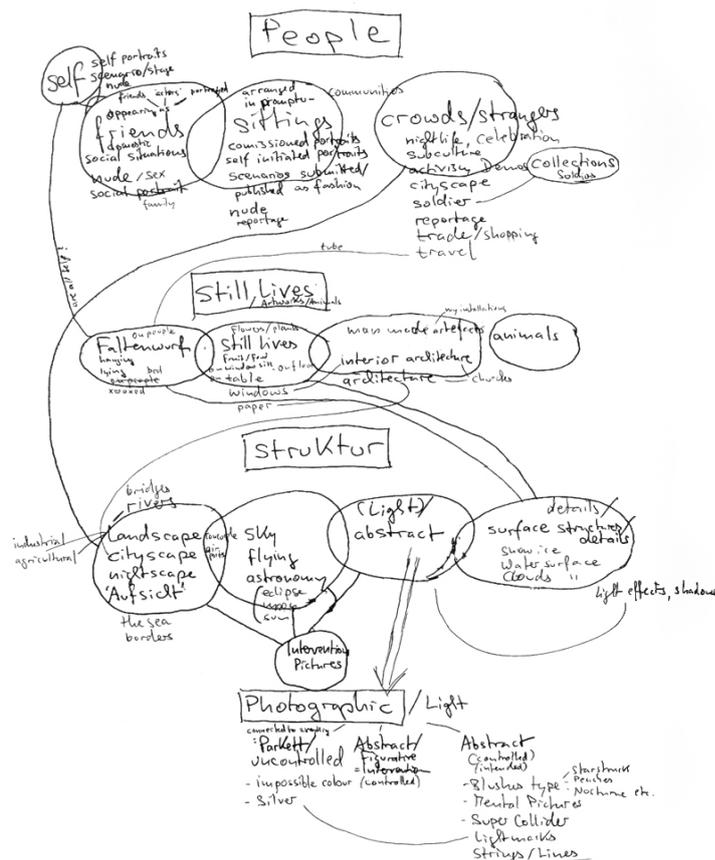


Image 2: Wolfgang Tillmans, sketch for if one thing matters, everything matters¹²

¹⁰ HORLOCK 2003, MARY HORLOCK, (cf. note 9), p. 303

¹¹ HORLOCK 2003, MARY HORLOCK, (cf. note 9), p. 303

¹² HORLOCK 2003, MARY HORLOCK, (cf. note 9), p. 304

People, still lives, Struktur, and photographic/light are his main categories. The sketch is done by hand and in what seems to be pencil or ballpoint pen. At first glance it appears to be a quick sketch but one discovers so many details, that it can hardly be done quickly or imprudently. Besides the main categories various sub groups are drawn and sometimes circled. Some circles overlap each other, others are connected with a line or arrows and others seem to have no connection. Most of the written text is in English but a few are in German, Tillmans's mother tongue. Rapidly we recognize familiar series but the details are showing us which series are connected to each other over another series. This illustrates the diversity not only of motifs but of artistic facets as well. Tillmans is following this in his oeuvre, but also in other forms related to the nature of art as exhibition catalogues. We cannot separate the oeuvre from the books or exhibitions, each interact with each other and bring new knowledge. Michael Bracewell described the diversity in Tillmans oeuvre in his publication *Everywhere, all the time and at once: The art of Wolfgang Tillmans* as the following:

“From astronomy to portraiture, to luxuriant yet minutely poised studies of light on photographic paper, he creates a cosmology of images, tirelessly refining—as artist, editor, installer and curator—the semiotic chemistry of their interrelationship to one another.”¹³

Based on the aforementioned, I will analyze the categories by supporting them with exemplary works and essential meanings for the work of Wolfgang Tillmans.

¹³ BRACEWELL 2010, MICHAEL BRACEWELL, *Everywhere, all the time and at once: the art of Wolfgang Tillmans*, London, Koenig Books London, 2010, p. 10; exhibition; Serpentine Gallery, London, 26.6–19.9.2010

People

Sittings

Wolfgang Tillmans categorized such images under *people* and divided them further into *self*, *friends*, *sittings*, and *crowds/strangers*.

Sittings are portraits of all forms commissioned, self-initiated, scenarios he captured or images he took from fashion magazines or labels. A lot of his iconic portraits of celebrities are to be considered as part of the subgroup *sittings*.

He started his career with portraits of the famous. He has even portrayed celebrities for magazines, but also politicians or other artists, such as Kate Moss, Tony Blair, or Gilbert & George. For him, the way he shows them is crucial. It is more a statement than a snapshot that leaves room open for interpretation.

“For me [Wolfgang Tillmans], my pictures are authentic because they ‘authentically’ reproduce my fiction of the moment, but for the viewer they can be no more than proposals to see the subject in the same way.”¹⁴

Those portraits are highly staged. The fact of staging is not only present in his photographs, but also in the way he shows his works. He curates his own shows and puts individual works together differently every time. He likes to exhibit them in new combinations because he wants the visitor to see all things as a whole and not to see the single image.¹⁵

Some of his works even correspond to each other or, more specifically, they raise questions about each other. Tillmans has used a green chair for various portraits, for example one of Kate Moss. But in another image, he shows a man urinating on that same chair. Was it before Kate sat on it or after? We

¹⁴ POHLMANN 2010 ULRICH POHLMANN, *The Portrait, Photography as stage*, Nürnberg, Verlag für moderne Kunst Nürnberg, p. 15

¹⁵ VERZOTTI 2001, GIORGIO VERZOTTI, (cf. note 3), p. 13

only can assume that it was after due to the date, but only he knows for sure. It raises a question in our heads and it also shows a casualness toward conventions or even social status.

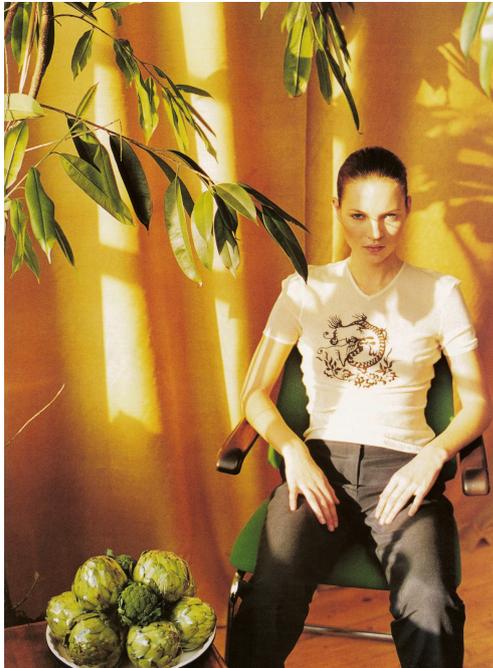


Image 3: Wolfgang Tillmans, Kate with Tree, 1996¹⁶



Image 4: Wolfgang Tillmans, Man Pissing on Chair, 1997¹⁷

Tillmans has strongly illustrated struggles for the acceptance of homosexuality and the ongoing fight against HIV/AIDS. One hopes that fight is not in fact endless, of course.

What Thomas Ruff started in postwar Germany by placing the subjects on equal footing through showing each individual in the same neutral surroundings and therefore protesting against the former conventions of portraiture, Wolfgang Tillmans takes this approach to the next level by moving away from the classical framework of a portrait to a more realistic and largely exaggerated image of reality. He said in an interview with Martin Herbert:

“The way we look, that is how we decide to act in this world, and that

¹⁶ EXILEOREXHIBIT 2015, EXILEOREXHIBIT, web page, <https://exileorexhibit.files.wordpress.com/2012/05/2000-kate-1997-vogue-spirit-wolfgang-tillmans.jpg>, last access on 25.04.2015

¹⁷ FEJUNE.TUCHONG 2015, FEJUNE.TUCHONG, web page, <http://fejune.tuchong.com/t/4661064/>, last access on 25.04.2015

is then also how society as a whole acts, if you see societies always as an addition, an accumulation of individuals.”¹⁸



Image 5: Wolfgang Tillmans, *Kate McQueen*, 1996¹⁹



Image 6: Wolfgang Tillmans, *Gilbert & George*, 1997²⁰

The portrait *Kate McQueen*, 1996, clearly refers to Kate Moss wearing a dress by Alexander McQueen. It references the group of portraits published as fashion corresponding to the category *sittings*, which in my point of view represent his staged portraits. The series of portraits with Kate Moss were made for *Vogue* magazine, but they are also frequently part of his exhibitions. Kate posing in a provocative dress, nicely primed, sitting on the same aforementioned green chair; she is showing the burgeoning charisma of youth. Her lack of makeup and the playful pile of fruit on the table underline the fresh and youthful expression of the picture. The setting is quite simple, and she forms the central focus. The background shows a wall with a shadow of a window on it. In front of her on a light brown table we see a bunch of strawberries, potatoes and tomatoes. She seems to play with them with her left hand.

¹⁸ HERBERT 2013, MARTIN HERBERT, (cf note 7) p. 69

¹⁹ SEESTYLE-MAGAZIN 2015, SEESTYLE-MAGAZIN, web page, <http://www.seestyle-magazin.de/wolfgang-tillmans-portrat-vita-werk-ausstellung/>, last access on 25.04.2015

²⁰ MUTUALART 2015 MUTUALART, web page, <http://www.mutualart.com/Artwork/Gilbert---George/C443E68CA649F089>, last access on 25.05.2015

Gilbert & George, 1997, (Image 6) is another example of a staged portrait. The setting is clearly staged and not spontaneous. Gilbert is standing in front looking to the side, but his image is blurry as the camera is focused on the back of the image where we see George clearly in the mirror, also looking to the side, with his arms behind his back. It looks as if they are looking at each other and Tillmans show us the situation through the mirror as an outsider observing the situation. What we can see from the room is very limited, though informative. It seems as if there are several desks, placed facing the walls of the room. In the corner stands the mirror, which provides us with a glimpse of the other side of the room; a fuse box and a molding around the ceiling are also evident here.

By dint of the facts of fame, Tillmans's portraits of celebrities or very important people imply a certain reflectiveness. The scenes are staged but in a modest and intimate way that do not consider their degree of familiarity, but also do not undermine it. Therefore it raises the question of the effect that fame has on us as a viewer today. Do we see them as Tillmans's other portraits where we do not recognize someone or do we see them differently just because we think we know these people from the media? This question becomes even stronger keeping in mind the hugely varying combinations of images he uses in exhibiting his works. The portraits of known persons are also shown in a different context and of course also always combine with other series. Almost never are there several of these "famous" portraits in one exhibition. This is a way to show them removed from their original context and to bring them to the same level as those images of strangers.²¹

Friends

From the beginning of his career until today it seems that his works are somehow a diary of all his journeys through life.²² The characters shown

²¹ DEITCHER 1998, DAVID DEITCHER, *Wolfgang Tillmans Burg*, Köln, Taschen Verlag, 1998, p. 12

²² MOLESWORTH 1996, HELEN MOLESWORTH, *Wolfgang Tillmans. For when I'm weak I'm strong*, Ostfildern/Ruit, Hatje Cantz Verlag, 1996, p. XIII; exhibition: Wolfsburg. Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, 7.9.1996–17.11.1996

become actors of ideas.²³ He takes common perspectives of everyday life and unprivileged views and transforms them into symbolic images. For example, *Für immer Burgen*. In this work we see merely two hands holding each other. The fact that one is the hand of a hospital patient pushes us directly into the scene. It is a situation that all of us know and this detailed image carries a strong meaning. It is crucial on the one hand and sentimental on the other. Since Wolfgang Tillmans, a gay artist, is the creator of this work, AIDS is most likely the first illness that comes to our minds. It seems like an invisible subject in this work and it also reminds you of the difficulties that gay people have not only with recognition in society but also since HIV/AIDS is still not cured.²⁴ Knowing that Tillmans lost his partner due to AIDS this image becomes much more meaningful than it is already. Jochen, who has been portrayed by him several times, so we as the viewer already know him, died a month after his diagnosis. Social situations or portraits with all their various facets are a major part in his early works.



Image 7: Wolfgang Tillmans, *Für immer Burgen*, 1997²⁵

Jochen Klein is portrayed in many of Tillmans's portraits of his friends. He and Alex and Lutz are some of the few that have accompanied Tillmans in his work for quite some time. *Haselmaus*, 1995, shows Jochen standing in

²³ KERNAN 2001, NATHAN KERNAN, *Wolfgang Tillmans – Aufsicht*, Ostfildern-Ruit, Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2001, p. 8

²⁴ TILLMANS 2007 WOLFGANG TILLMANS, *Between Bridges*, Köln, Verlag der Buchhandlung Walter König, 2007

²⁵ MAUREEN PALEY 2014 MAUREEN PALEY, web page, <http://www.maureenpaley.com/system/assets/files/2043/larger/MP-TILLW-01201-B-072.jpg?1384015899>, accessed on 15.3.2014

his bathing suit on a rock in front of a waterfall at a tropical place. With his pale skin color he looks slightly out of place, but very much enjoying himself. He looks upwards and leans backwards while holding his arms behind his head. But Jochen is not always shown as happy and detached as in this image. *Jochen Taking a Bath*, 1997, shows him lying in a bathtub, covered with water up to his neck with a thoughtful expression. It seems as though he is not with us in the moment and his half-closed eyes underscore this impression. The image shows, as is well known for Tillmans, an everyday situation. We see a bathtub, bottles of shampoo, a razor, a plant in between the bathtub and the toilet, of which we only see the back part. Jochen's face is definitely the central point of attention, but considering the whole composition he is placed in the left corner of the image. It is somehow similar to his facial expression—physically present but absent.²⁶ Russell Ferguson wrote in his essay “Faces in the Crowd”:

“*Jochen Taking a Bath*, 1997, is a quintessential Tillmans photograph, combining personal intimacy with a casual elegance of composition.”²⁷

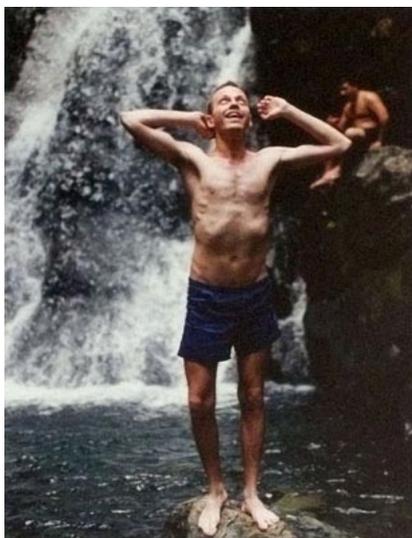


Image 8: Wolfgang Tillmans, *Haselmaus*, 1995²⁸



Image 9: Wolfgang Tillmans, *Jochen taking a bath*, 1997²⁹

²⁶ VERWOERT 2002, JAN VERWOERT, *Wolfgang Tillmans: Picture Possible Lives: The Work of Wolfgang Tillmans*, London, Phaidon Press Limited, 2002, p. 57–58

²⁷ FERGUSON 2006, RUSSELL FERGUSON, *Faces in the Crowd*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2006, p. 66; exhibition: Los Angeles, Hammer Museum, 17.9.2006–7.1.2007 & Chicago, Museum of Contemporary Art, 20.5–13.8.2006

²⁸ ARMANDBARTOS 2015 ARMANDBARTOS, web page, <http://www.armandbartos.com/2010collectwithus/worksF42.html>, last access on 25.04.2015

These two images show intimate situations out of Wolfgang Tillmans's private life. They show ups and downs, as we all know them. What it reflects is a perfect illustration of Wolfgang Tillmans's attitude towards life.

“It [the European club culture of the eighties] definitely seemed to be for a better society, a better understanding, it was a utopian ideal of togetherness. That's how living together could be: being peaceful and enjoying the senses. It seemed a very tangible and inherently political thing to me.”³⁰

Togetherness, boundaries between public and private, and breaking with the conservative human mind illustrate the strong statements in Tillmans's portraits. Association with homosexuality, self-discovery, and political disagreement are crucial motives.³¹ He likes to show the world as he sees it.

Putting the previous work into perspective, in my opinion Wolfgang Tillmans has the immense potential to transform everyday images into carriers of not only political but also highly sensual meanings.

²⁹ MOMA 2015 MOMA, web page, http://www.moma.org/collection//browse_results.php?criteria=O%3AAD%3AE%3A8044&page_number=28&template_id=1&sort_order=1, last access on 25.04.2015

³⁰ HALLEY 2002, PETER HALLEY, *Wolfgang Tillmans: Peter Halley in Conversation with Wolfgang Tillmans*, New York, Phaidon Press Inc., 2002, p. 14

³¹ SHIMIZU 2005 MINORU SHIMIZU, *Wolfgang Tillman truth study center: The Art of Equivalence*, Cologne, Taschen Verlag, 2005, p. 1-3

Still lifes

Faltenwurf

We know still lifes as a genre in art history, but Wolfgang Tillmans absorbs the genre into something new. We think of classic still lifes with fruits or other food that illustrate wealth as various old master painters painted them. In *Faltenwurf* Tillmans creates a still life with an unconventional material such as textiles, or more specifically cloth that have been taken off after wearing and left somewhere.



Image 10: Wolfgang Tillmans, *Grey Jeans over Stair Post*, 1991 ³²

“What I [Wolfgang Tillmans] actually do in a picture like *Grey Jeans over Stair Post* (1991), is to think about a sculpture, think about the three-dimensional situation: These jeans that have been hung on a stair post to dry. And I was not talking about somebody’s specific jeans, but was rather trying to speak about the meaning of clothes—the essential aspects of these membranes that are between our bodies and the world.”³³

³² DB-ARTMAG 2014 DB-ARTMAG, web page, http://db-artmag.de/cms/upload/68/feature/hollein/50_Grey_Jeans.jpg, accessed on 25.04.2015

³³ HOPE DAVY/KOHLER 2014 JENNIFER HOPE DAVY/DIETMAR KOHLER, *Artist’s Writings: Compiled from emails, interviews, lectures and writings between 2000 and 2013* by Jennifer Hope Davy and Dietmar Kohler, London, Phaidon Press Ltd., 2014, p.154

In *Grey Jeans over Stair Post*, we have the same transformation of meaning, what we see is a pair of trousers hanging over a stair post. The jeans are left on the stair post and it seems to be an extremely calm situation, but considering that someone took these pants off and left them there brings to mind the topic of sex. In Tillmans's oeuvre we find a large number of works that lead to sexuality, some very clear ones that show genitals and other more obscure ones with a strong sentimental and even symbolic side. As in *Grey Jeans over Stair Post* it is again an everyday situation that makes such a strong statement. The composition of the image is quite simple. The end of the stairway, on which the trousers are left, form a middle axis and divides the whole image into three sections. The trousers form the main sector and central point; to the left we see the white walls surrounding the stairs and a glimpse at the stair going further down. On the right we see the stairs going upwards covered by a red carpet on which the sun lays down its traces. The jeans are placed centered on the stair post. The head of the stair post not only represents the central axis of the image, but it might even illustrate a phallic symbol.³⁴ The *Faltenwurf* series is considered by Tillmans to be *still life*. In his drawing for "if one thing matters, everything matters" it is not only categorized as a *still life* it also is connected to other series (image 2). The most revealing connection in the drawing for me is the one to his self-portraits. This brings another facet to the series of *Faltenwurf*. Without knowing the drawing he did for *if one thing matters, everything matters* one does not know any detail about the owner of these cloths he photographed, but by connecting the series in the drawing to *self* and writing "are all self!" It becomes clear that these cloths are his and function in a way as a self-portrait. Whereas *Faltenwurf* (or drapery) on people is connected to the series he did in the London Underground, which he placed under *travel* in *crowds/strangers* as part of the first category *people*. This suggests that *Faltenwurf* images with traces of human bodies are not considered self-portraits but portraits of strangers taken on the Tube. Both concentrate on the drapery of cloth. A drapery for him is also part of *surface structure / details* and therefore the series is also connected to the category *Struktur*.

³⁴ VERWOERT 2002, JAN VERWOERT (cf. note 26), p. 37

This example not only clearly shows the strong connection between the different series in his oeuvre, but also the parallels. Everything is fixed to something else, one arises from the other or *if one thing matters, everything matters*. In the same diagram *Faltenwurf* and *Still Lives* are two overlapping series both in the category of *Still lifes*.



Image 11 : Wolfgang Tillmans, *Circle Line*, 2000³⁵ Image 12: Wolfgang Tillmans, *Indian Corn and Pomegranate*, 1994³⁶

Tillmans has done a large series of food still lifes. They are mostly situated on a table or windowsill. *Indian Corn and Pomegranate* (1994) is more documentation of a meal than his other fruit still lifes (Image 12). The perspective from above the table opens a wider field of vision. The edge of the table forms a vertical axis through the image, in the upper right corner we see a small part of a chair and at the bottom right corner a knee covered by white jeans is visible. The table with pomegranate and Indian corn is situated between a glass of water and what seem to be different bottles, a knife, and a red pepper. Although the corn and the seeds of the pomegranate have a

³⁵ TATE 2015 TATE, web page, <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/exhibition/street-studio/room-7-passengers>, last access on 25.04.2015

³⁶ AMERICANSUBURBX 2015 AMERICANSUBURBX, web page, <http://www.americansuburbx.com/2010/11/wolfgang-tillman-russell-ferguson-on.html>, last access on 25.04.2015

very similar texture and color, they are very different in their firmness. After a closer look one notices that the corn has been laid over the margin of the plate pointing directly towards the crotch of the person eating, and also that of the person taking the picture; therefore Wolfgang Tillmans's crotch.³⁷ This form of ambiguity is common in Wolfgang Tillmans's works.

Summer Still Life (1995) is another example of his fruit and windowsill motifs, which brings us to the next sub group.

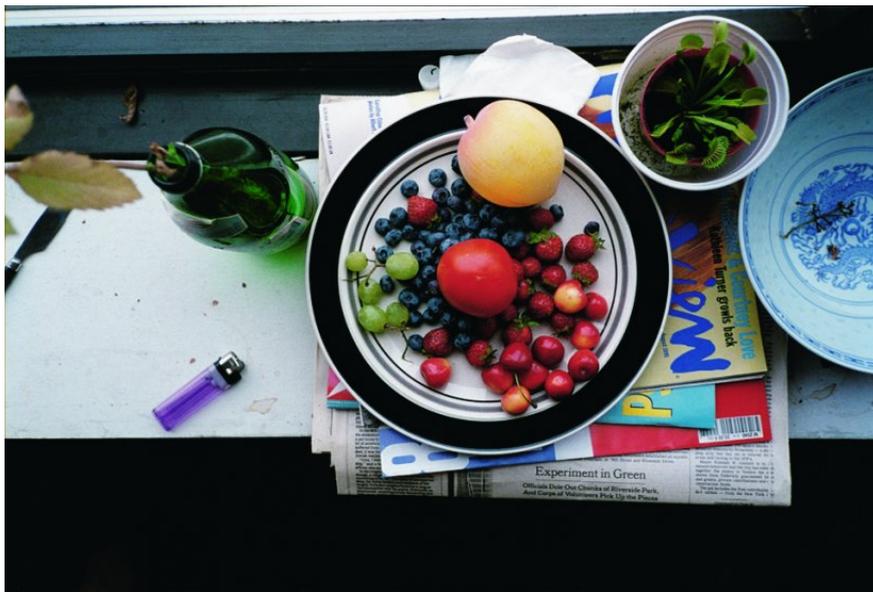


Image 13: Wolfgang Tillmans, *Summer Still Life*, 1995³⁸

Still Lifes / Interior Architecture

“I [Wolfgang Tillmans] want to reflect the way I look at the world. That I am aware of the fact that I am now looking at the sky, but now I am looking at my feet [...] I am interested in various aspects of life, and I want to give them space and representation.”³⁹

Like *Indian Corn and Pomegranate* (Image 12) *Summer Still Life* (Image 13) it is a perspective from above showing a setting with fruit. This time as the

³⁷ VERWOERT 2002, JAN VERWOERT, (cf. note 26), p. 40

³⁸ TASCHEN 2015 TASCHEN, web page, http://www.taschen.com/pages/es/catalogue/photography/all/05758/facts.wolfgang_tillmans.htm, last access on 25.04.2015

³⁹ HALLEY/NICKAS 1997 PETER HALLEY/BOB NICKAS, “Interview Wolfgang Tillmans with Peter Halley and Bob Nickas”, in: *Index Magazine*, 1997, March, p. 42

title already implies we see a plate with different kinds of summer fruit and berries located on a pile of magazines and newspapers. To the right of the plate stands a carnivorous plant and a Chinese bowl with a bunch of grapes. On the left side we see a glass bottle of water reused as a vase and a pink lighter. Traces of everyday objects like, paper, leaves, or a candle next to the fruit plate give us the impression of a frequently and multifunctionally used windowsill. A window or windowsill, in general, is a common scene in Tillmans's works not only as a fruit still life but also with plants or combined with other everyday live objects, as we can see in *Lily* (1997) or *Still life, New York* (2001).



Image 14: Wolfgang Tillmans, *Lily*, 1997⁴⁰



Image 15: Wolfgang Tillmans, *Still life, New York*, 2001⁴¹

This leads us again to the diagram he has drawn with his own categories. The windowsill still lifes are in many ways an architectural detail. The connecting line between these two is quite obvious, just as the overlap between *Faltenwurf* and *still lifes* is not as clear. Looking at it from a genre perspective *Faltenwurf* images are still lifes, but for me the overlap is not as self-evident as with the category of *interior architecture*. In both we have objects that have been left by humans, but one declines with time and the other is a trace of action. However, the connections between *Faltenwurf* and *Surface structures / details* and *still lifes* and *Surface structures / details* is coherent. Structures in details or on surfaces are important in Tillmans works

⁴⁰ GUGGENHEIM 2015 GUGGENHEIM, web page, <http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/collections/collection-online/artwork/11405>, last access on 25.04.2015

⁴¹ LEMPertz 2015 LEMPertz, web page, <https://www.lempertz.com/de/kataloge/lot/989-1/809-wolfgang-tillmans.html>, last access on 25.04.2015

in general. They appear frequently in various types. We will further discuss this when analyzing the category *Surface structures / details*.

Photographic/Light

Abstract

Wolfgang Tillmans had his breakthrough with his provocative images but at some point he turned more towards abstraction, works like *Freischwimmer* and *Blushes*. These works are made without lenses; they are recordings of traces of light that leave their marks on photographic paper. His abstract works are not only abstract they are non-representational.⁴²

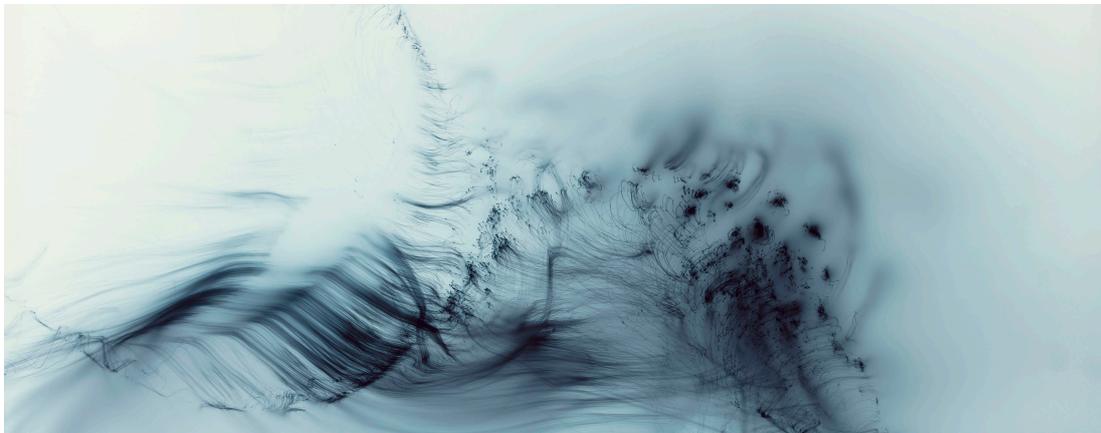


Image 16: Wolfgang Tillmans, *Ostgut Freischwimmer, right*, 2004⁴³

Even though they are records of light or chemical reactions they seem to have human traces as well.⁴⁴ Everyone discovers something else in them; it is as if he paints with light.⁴⁵ As in some of his still lifes these abstract works still have a specific gentleness. The hair-like strings that form various structures and shapes are like recordings of movements in such a gentle way that they also have a kind of softness. Abstraction is a facet in Tillmans's work that has been present from the beginning of his career. He has always experimented with the effects that light has on paper—a different approach to

⁴² FELIX/GIANELLI/SANS/BOURRIAUD/TOJNER 2001, ZDENEK FELIX/IDA GIANELLI/JEROME SANS/NICOLAS BOURRIAUD/POUL ERIK TOJNER, *Wolfgang Tillmans – Aufsicht*, Ostfildern-Ruit, Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2001, p. 6

⁴³ GUARANOK 2014, GUARANOK, web page, <http://www.guaranok.ch/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/2004-Ostgut-Freischwimmer-right-Press-Image1.jpeg>, accessed on 26.04.2015

⁴⁴ BIRNBAUM 2008, DANIEL BIRNBAUM, *Wolfgang Tillmans: Lighter*, Ostfildern, Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2008, p. 8; exhibition: Berlin, Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart – Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 21.3.–24.8.2008

⁴⁵ KERNAN 2001, NATHAN KERNAN, (cf. note 23) p. 7

photography. His early works done with the help of a photocopier can also be seen as abstract in a way that he changes color and size and sometimes the images occur more abstract than the original photograph. Through changing certain conditions he abstracts the image into something new. He always experimented with this sort of changing elements of photographs into something different, sometimes with and sometimes without a lens.

Wolfgang Tillmans had already released a number of abstract images in 1998, which he dated from 1992 to 1998.⁴⁶ But “Freedom from the Known” at MoMA PS1, New York, in 2006 was his first show in an institution in which abstract works played a major role. In the accompanying exhibition catalogue the writer and curator of the show Bob Nickas asked “if it is possible for abstraction to have a political dimension today? For it to be potentially transformative? An agent of change?” With the following Tillmans answered his own question:

“In a media-dominated, advertising-flooded world, the refusal to offer an immediately recognizable picture—a seemingly subject-less picture—is a political gesture. Simply stated: abstraction challenges accepted reality.”⁴⁷

Considering this, the above Tillmans abstract works are closer to his political portraits than first thought. In a context of reconsidering conventions and society, they question our world full of consumption and constant media exposure that provides us with every possible answer via the Internet. Do we need to have an answer to everything? Are his abstract works abstract photographs? In a classical way they are not photographs, as they are not photographed. There are three types of camera-less photographs: photograms, luminograms, and chemigrams. Gottfried Jäger describes them in the glossary of terms *The Art of Abstract Photography* as follows: a

⁴⁶ OBRIST/PEYTON-JONES 2010, HANS ULRICH OBRIST/JULIA PEYTON-JONES, *Interview with Wolfgang Tillmans*, London, Koenig Books Ltd, 2010, p. 22; exhibition; London, Serpentine Gallery, 26.6.–19.9.2010

⁴⁷ NICKAS 2006 BOB NICKAS, *Pictures to Perceive the World, Wolfgang Tillmans: Freedom From The Known*, Göttingen, Steidl Verlag, 2006, p.2, exhibition: P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, New York, 26.02-29.05.2006

photogram “is a negative silhouette of an object static or moving on photosensitive material”; a luminogram “is an expression of the interaction of light and photosensitive material which in contrast to the photogram develops its form without objects and is a kind of self-representation of light”; and lastly a chemigram “is generally produced when substances—also non-photographic ones—influence the texture of the photographic emulsion. Light thereby is a necessary catalyst, but is not pictorially determinative.”⁴⁸

Tillmans has experimented with both luminograms and chemigrams. Both belong to the family of photography, but it is more a question of contemporary definitions of presentation and media. Even though they are done camera-less, in its core it is an abstraction of photography. But is it what we consider abstract these days? Abstract art can vary from every single medium and material that is used today. It is a selection of all kinds of image-making forms.⁴⁹ From my point of view the term “abstract art” is the most accommodative term in contemporary art and art history. But the technical part is not the only one that separates his abstract works from his other series. The abstract series are his only non-figurative series. It is the process that is evoked in his abstract works, not an object representing the central question.

Ostgut Freischwimmer, right, 2004 is a luminogram measuring 231.1 x 607.8 cm. Particles of blackness scour their way through the horizontal image as if they were pulled in a certain direction. One gets the impression that the white part, only really visible in the left upper corner, has been tinted bluish by the black particles. As if mixing colors with water and observing how the color fluidizes. One might also think they are witnessing a complex chemical reaction evoking a diffusion of two substances.⁵⁰ The term “Freischwimmer” refers to the swimming certificate for children in Germany, which certifies the ability to swim freely. But it is also an expression of standing on one's own feet, to be independent. In this case it is the particles swimming freely and

⁴⁸ JÄGER 2002 GOTTFRIED JÄGER, *The Art of Abstract Photography*, Stuttgart, Arnoldsche Art Publishers, 2002, pp.286-289

⁴⁹ EICHLER 2011 DOMINIC EICHLER, *Thinking Pictures*, Ostfildern-Ruit, Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2011, p.8

⁵⁰ BRACEWELL 2010, MICHAEL BRACEWELL, (cf. note 13), p. 13

leaving their mark on the photographic paper. Pictures from the *Freischwimmer* series are primarily unique, or an edition of one with only one artist's proof. There are either C-prints or inkjet prints in color. These images are done without a camera, lens, or negative. Manipulation and absorption of light in a dark room without light, conducted by the artist, generates these images that even have a painted character. For Tillmans, their own reality is central as they are not like photographs displaying something that exists in reality.⁵¹ *Ostgut Freischwimmer, right* and *Ostgut Freischwimmer, left* have been created specially for Berghain, successor of Ostgut, a legendary techno nightclub, which happened to be Berlin's first gay nightclub in the '90s. To this day, Berghain contains various darkrooms. If a darkroom is defined as being a room without any light and separated from the outside, it is not so far away from the circumstances under which Tillmans's abstract works arose.⁵² Taking the previous notion, and the fact that he has always integrated club culture in his works, I wonder why there is no connecting line between his abstract works and the category *People* in his sketch for *if one thing matters, everything matters*.



Image 17: Wolfgang Tillmans, *Ostgut Freischwimmer left and right* at Panorama Bar, Berlin, 2004⁵³

⁵¹ HOPE DAVY/KOHLER 2014, JENNIFER HOPE DAVY/DIETMAR KOHLER, (cf. note 33), p. 154

⁵² EICHLER 2011 DOMINIC EICHLER, (cf. note 49), p. 10

⁵³ AULT/BIRNBAUM/JÄGER 2008 JULIE AULT/DANIEL BIRNBAUM/JOACHIM JÄGER, *Wolfgang Tillmans: Lighter*, Ostfildern-Ruit, Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2008, p. 355; exhibition:

Struktur

Surface Structures / Details

Struktur is a category that is, I would say, the closest to the category of abstract works (*Photographic/Light*). It is difficult to differ between those series and decide which is considered part of which category. I tried to understand the diagram for *if one-thing matters, everything matters* and decided for those series, which were not mentioned in it. Light is a central point in both categories, I see *Surface structure / details* more as a sub group that deals with the effects light has on photographic paper at its surface and details. Therefore I decided to classify *Lighter* rather under *Struktur* than under *Photographic/Light*. “Light effects, shadows” is written beneath the circled sub group *Surface structure/details*, but it is also connected with a line to (*Light*) *abstract* which I think can almost be considered to be part of *Photographic/Light* as they are connected to each other with an double arrow and no series are written beneath the title, which is unique in the whole sketch.

The origin of *Lighter* lays in an everyday situation; everybody knows it, a printer’s paper jam. As we know Tillmans already experimented with printing machines in his early career. The results are wrinkled paper with only traces of prints. In *Lighter* Tillmans shows wrinkled, folded photo prints in Plexiglas showcases. Some of them aren’t even folded or wrinkled; they are just photographic paper as an object. In the process he exposes them to light sources, mostly colored, and folds them afterwards; sometimes he works with the reverse procedure.⁵⁴ Through the process of folding or wrinkling in addition to showing them in boxes made of Plexiglas, he creates a three-dimensional object instead of a two-dimensional photo print. The prints are either monochrome or are divided into different separate fields of color. Works in the *Lighter* series do not represent anything; it is a representation of

Berlin, Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart – Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 21.3.–24.8.2008

⁵⁴ HOPE DAVY/KOHLER 2014, JENNIFER HOPE DAVY/DIETMAR KOHLER, (cf. note 33), p. 157

an object—more specifically photographic paper as a ready-made influenced by color light. Domenic Eichler quoted in his essay “Thinking Pictures”:

“They are photographs made without a camera, purely with light [...] they evoke all sorts of associations, like skin, or astronomy, or chemicals dissolving, and it’s all done by the brain. It’s what your ‘brain-association tool’ creates.”⁵⁵



Image 18: Wolfgang Tillmans, exhibition view *Lighter*, Hamburger Bahnhof Museum für Gegenwart Berlin, March 21 - August 31, 2008⁵⁶

Tillmans has always been seen as a representative of his generation, pop culture, and the gay scene. This may be due to the fact that some of his works are highly political, especially works referencing gay rights or racism.⁵⁷ He observes his surrounding carefully and captures sequences out of it. The demand Tillmans has on the viewer to see his works as a whole and not to only see the single image is also recognizable in the way he combines

⁵⁵ VEKKELI 2006, PIRKKO VERKKELI, “Interview Wolfgang Tillmans, sukupolvensa silmä”, in: *Gloria Syyskuu*, 2006, pp. 64–67

⁵⁶ ANDREAROSENGALLERY 2015 ANDREAROSENGALLERY, web page, http://www.andrearosengallery.com/artists/wolfgang-tillmans/images#andquotlighterandquot-hamburger-bahnhof-museum-fur-gegenwart-berlin_1, last access on 26.04.2015

⁵⁷ OXFORD ART ONLINE 2014, OXFORD ART ONLINE, web page, http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T096992?q=wolfgang+tillmans&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit, accessed on 15.3.2014

them differently in every exhibition.⁵⁸ They should be seen equally and not to be separated by subject, technique, or edition.

“The artist wants that all of his works are seen comparable to each other.”⁵⁹

Landscape / Sky Flying

In addition to his numerous series of photographs and activity as a curator of his own shows, Wolfgang Tillmans has successfully edited various artists' books. One is *Concorde*, published by German publishing house Walther König in Cologne. As the title implies the focus of the artist's book is the supersonic plane Concorde, which used to fly from Paris or London to New York in only 3½ hours. Due to the rise of fuel prices and environmental pressure Concorde stopped flying in 2003. It was always attractive due to its high standard of technology and impressive speed, although it was very expensive to fly with it. Wolfgang Tillmans wrote in the book, which has been published on the occasion of the exhibition at the Chisenhale Gallery, London in 1997:

“Concorde is perhaps the last example of a techno-utopian invention from the '60s still operating and fully functioning today. Its futuristic shape, speed and ear-numbing thunder grabs people's imagination today as much as it did when it first took off in 1969. It's an environmental nightmare conceived in 1962 when technology and progress was the answer to everything and the sky was no longer a limit.”⁶⁰

Tillmans started this series after he photographed the scene he was a part of or created what we know as the youth portraits of his generation. The images he took of the Concorde seem to have the same spontaneity as his early

⁵⁸ VERZOTTI 2001, GIORGIO VERZOTTI, (cf. note 3), p. 13

⁵⁹ Interview DANIEL BUCHHOLZ, 5 February 2014, Cologne

⁶⁰ TILLMANS 1997, WOLFGANG TILLMANS, *Concorde*, Cologne, Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 1997, p. 1; exhibition; London, Chisenhale Gallery, 1997

works taken at parties, raves, or demonstrations. The object of the airplane is present in all images but not always clear and not always whole. Like an arrow, it crosses the photographed landscape and brings something unusual into our focus. In some images the engines and condensation trails are very distinct. The Concorde remains in our heads as something astonishing, but also fragile after the terrible accident in 2000. This power on the one hand and the fragility on the other that Tillmans often shows in his images attract people's attention and admiration, but also fear.⁶¹

“For me [Wolfgang Tillmans] to take a picture of the northern sky, an astro-photograph, from a flying aircraft, with no movement, that's such a crazy idea.”⁶²

Coming back to the categories Tillmans created for the publication and exhibition *if one thing matters, everything matters* four interesting points arise. First, *Struktur* is the only category connected to all the other categories, such as with *surface structures / details*, *Still Lives*, and *Faltenwurf*; *light/abstract* shows a strong connection to *photographic/light* which is symbolized by an untypical double arrow rather than just a line; and *landscape* is connected to *architecture* and *crowds/strangers*. Second, it is the only category named in German, Wolfgang Tillmans's native language, and not in English. Third, all sub-categories overlap one another. Indeed all of the series are topically quite close to each other, especially in comparison to other categories. Fourth, *Concorde* is the only series that is clearly written between *landscapes* and *sky* at the overlapping part of both circles. I agree with the position he places the series in the overall diagram, but in my point of view the *Concorde* series is a perfect transition from his early works to the more abstract works. It has facets of both figurative and non-figurative works. To me a connection to *crowds/strangers* including the series of *Travel* and *Reportage* would be generally understandable. Not only because the airplane is obviously connected to *Travel* or the fact that *Concorde* as an artist's book has a documentary character close to *Reportage*, but also

⁶¹ MATSUI 2014, MIDORI MATSUI, *An Aesthetic of Indeterminacy: Concorde*, London, Phaidon Press Limited, 2014, pp. 90–98

⁶² HERBERT 2013, MARTIN HERBERT, (cf note 7), p. 71

because of the spontaneous character these images have that remind me of this series while analyzing the subgroup of *crowds/strangers*.

Exhibitions

Exhibition Character

One of Wolfgang Tillmans's first shows in a gallery was at Daniel Buchholz, Cologne, in 1993. He showed a couple of photocopies and C-prints as well as four large-sized prints on textiles and a display case with four magazines from different parts of the world, showing the same image of two men kissing. In the same year he also started working with Maureen Paley in London. Already back in 1993 he showed his diverse handling of photographs and their connection to production or edition.⁶³ For him his contributions in magazines were unlimited multiples and his photocopies were unique prints.⁶⁴

Tillmans is not only a photographer, he curates his own shows and at the same time generates varying installations by combining his singular works differently each time and also putting them in different contexts. He demonstrates his works in the process of curating exhibitions. The usual procedure for exhibitions in institutions is the curator decides the topic, parameters, and the how and where the works by an artist will be shown. On the contrary, Tillmans decides the details, he seeks a conversation and exchange with the curator, but he leaves the major decisions in his hands and with it the autonomy of curator's decisions. This is a new and different way of displaying and working with institutions in comparison to how it works in general. He does so because he sees curating as an important part of his work. His works vary in size, as do the presentations of his works. Of course the architectural circumstances play a major part but also the selection of pieces he chooses to display. As his oeuvre can be seen as a diary of his travels and life, he is constantly dealing with history while curating a show.⁶⁵

⁶³ AULT 2008, JULIE AULT, (cf note 53), p. 25

⁶⁴ TILLMANS/AULT 2008, WOLFGANG TILLMANS/JULIE AULT, Email from Wolfgang Tillmans to Julie Ault on December 30, 2007, quoted in: *Wolfgang Tillmans: Lighter, The Subject Is Exhibition (2008) – Installations as Possibility in the Practice of Wolfgang Tillmans*, Ostfildern-Ruit, Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2008, p. 25; exhibition: Berlin, Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart – Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 21.3.–24.8.2008

⁶⁵ AULT 2008, JULIE AULT, (cf. note 53), p. 26

Tillmans declares that even though every work has to have a certain strength on its own, in the end when it is displayed it is a part of an installation. He said in an interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist:

“My point of departure has always been the single image. Even though I continually challenge and test that ‘singularity,’ I do want each picture to be understood as its own. If it’s good enough to do that it can be shown as a part of a more complex installation.”⁶⁶

Hence if he decides to place a single work alone on one wall in an exhibition he is convinced that it is strong enough or iconic enough to fill the space. But if he lines up several images in a row, the decision has been made because he believes in the collective. He likes to create connections between the images. With such a connection under a specific context he generates new focal points and interpretations of his works. The installations presented across different rooms invite us to experience the exhibitions as a whole.⁶⁷ In addition to the diversity he has in selecting the images shown in an exhibition he also has the choice of how to produce and present them. Some works are framed, others are displayed in glass cases, and some are printed matte and hung with paper clips or tape. All these examples have a way of presenting themselves, some more like a classic photographic presentation, framed behind glass and printed glossy, and others more like an object. The matte prints appear more like an object in their whole appearance; his glass cabinets with pieces of paper from various sources give more of a sculptural impression.

⁶⁶ TILLMANS/OBRIST 2007 WOLFGANG TILLMANS/HANS ULRICH OBRIST, *The Conversation Series*, vol. 6, Cologne, Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2007, p. 26

⁶⁷ AULT 2008, JULIE AULT, (cf. note 53), p. 27



Image 19: Wolfgang Tillmans, exhibition view Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 2002⁶⁸

In my opinion an exhibition of his works should be thought of as an installation rather than seeing them as discrete wall arrangements. His intense work with layout at magazines have helped him to create relationships between illustrations in his artist's books but also relationships between his works in exhibitions. Julie Ault writes in her text, "The Subject Is Exhibition (2008) – Installations as Possibility in the Practice of Wolfgang Tillmans", that she imagines a teenager's bedroom when considering the way Tillmans shows his works. Although she declares that she does not think this because Tillmans used to be or is sometimes still seen as an example of his generation. This is by comparison a much younger set and related to adolescence. Looking at it from that perspective what comes to mind even more than a teenager's room plastered with posters and pictures is a bulletin board. A board on which you pin things like paper, articles, but also photographs which you don't want to forget in a non-hierarchical way.

"I'd [Wolfgang Tillmans] never pin a photograph, because when you pin it you pierce the corner. So I found this tape with which I can tape a picture to the wall without it even touching the surface of the emulsion, and I can remove the tape afterwards and the print is totally untouched. I pin the magazine pages with steel needles, because if

⁶⁸BETWEENBRIDGES 2015 BETWEENBRIDGES, web page, <http://www.betweenbridges.net/Tillmans.html>, last access on 26.04.2015

you tape a magazine page, you can never safely remove the tape it always tears [...] Somehow, however minuscule these technical decisions probably are in the larger picture, they're crucial to the meaning of my project and what's important to me—to really understanding the nature of the object that I put up. Each thing needs a different treatment.”⁶⁹

What seems to be very important for him in preparation for a show is the selection of works. Present in most exhibitions are works from all of the categories that have been investigated at the beginning of this paper. It seems as if Wolfgang Tillmans wants to have a large variety of categories present in his exhibitions but shown in new combinations and of course mixed with recent works. This adds another parameter to the decision he has to take as a curator of his own exhibitions. In addition to the format, motif, and form of presentation he has to look at the categories in which he placed the pictures previously. The play of figurative and non-figurative images inside an exhibition has an interesting point, one is showing reality as it happened in images of moments from a party for example, and the other also shows reality but as light that acted upon photographic paper. Both show reality but one seems to us much more real than the other. The combination of both influences our way of thinking about reality. But what guides his decision-making as he selects works? In an interview with Peter Halley he answered:

“It comes largely from a very personal approach—things that are meaningful to me at this point, in that room or in that month. I usually spend about a week on an installation, which includes day and night shifts. I'll work on it, then leave, then come back fresh, have a new angle on it, change the whole thing, and so on, until the installation settles into a shape that gives me the sense that I can't add to it or change it; only then I feel it's finished. Underlying decisions regarding

⁶⁹ HALLEY 2014, PETER HALLEY, (cf note 30), pp. 31–32

content there are, of course, formal decisions about colors, shapes, sizes and textures.”⁷⁰



Image 20: Wolfgang Tillmans, exhibition view K21 Ständehaus, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2013⁷¹

After he has selected the pictures for an exhibition he forms groups. Those groups are separated on the wall from each other through a space without any works. Therefore the groups of works, which for him belong together, become visible. With this technique he himself forms the groups that, as a viewer, seem to correspond to each other. He leaves spaces in his exhibition where, as Jan Verwoert describes, “our eyes can rest looking at just one image until we go on to the next group of works.”⁷² In almost all of his exhibitions works of the four categories *People*, *Still Lives*, *Struktur*, and *Photographic/light* are present. The following diagram shows a selection of exhibitions in institutions, the year and the categories included. I collected every exhibition view available and searched for works out of the categories bespoken before. On that basis I created this diagram with the purpose to show how consistent Wolfgang Tillmans is in showing almost every time

⁷⁰ HALLEY 2014 PETER HALLEY, (cf. note 30), pp. 32–33

⁷¹ ARTINFO24 2015 ARTINFO24, web page, <http://www.artinfo24.com/kunst/news-1172.html>, last access on 26.04.2015

⁷² VERWOERT 2002, JAN VERWOERT, (cf. note 26), p. 66

works out of all categories. From 2011 until today all categories were present in the institutional exhibition he had.

Year	Gallery/Institution	People	Still Lives	Struktur	Photographic /Light
1995	Frankfurter Kunstverein, Frankfurt am Main	X		X	
1995	Berlin Biennale		X		
1995	Kunsthalle Zürich, Zurich	X			
1996	The Museum of Modern Art, New York	X	X		
1998	Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam			X	
1999	Städtische Galerie, Remscheid	X	X		
1999	Neuer Aachener Kunstverein, Aachen	X			
2000	Royal Academy of Art, London	X	X		X
2001	Deichtorhallen, Hamburg		X	X	X
2002	Tate Britain, London	X	X	X	X
2002	Castello di Rivoli – Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Turin	X		X	X
2002	Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York	X	X	X	
2002	Palais de Tokyo, Paris	X	X	X	X
2003	Louisiana Museum for Moderne Kunst, Humlebaek	X	X	X	X

2004	Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery, Tokyo	X	X	X	X
2006	Sprengel Museum, Hannover	X		X	X
2006	PS1 Contemporary Art Center / MOMA, New York			X	X
2006	Taidehalli, Helsinki	X	X	X	
2006	Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago	X	X	X	X
2006	UCLA Hammer Museum, Los Angeles	X	X	X	X
2007	Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington DC	X	X	X	X
2007	Kunstverein München, Munich	X	X		X
2008	Museo Tamayo Arte Contemporaneo, Mexico City				X
2008	Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin	X	X	X	X
2009	La Biennale di Venezia, Venice	X	X	X	X
2009	3rd Moscow Biennial of Contemporary Art, Moscow	X	X		X
2011	Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, Stuttgart	X		X	X
2011	MMK – Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main	X	X	X	X
2011	Zacheta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw	X	X	X	X
2012	Museu de Arte Moderna de São	X	X	X	X

	Paulo				
2012	The Common Guild – Glasgow International Festival of Visual Art, Glasgow	X	X	X	X
2012	Kunsthalle Zürich, Zurich	X	X	X	X
2012	Museo del Banco de la Republica, Bogota	X	X	X	X
2012	Moderna Museet, Stockholm	X	X	X	X
2013	Kunstsammlung Nordrhein- Westfalen, Düsseldorf	X	X	X	X
2014	Wako Works of Art, Tokyo	X	X	X	X
2014	Manifesta 10, The European Biennial of Contemporary Art, St. Petersburg	X	X	X	X
2014	Fondation Beyeler, Basel	X		X	X



Image 21: Wolfgang Tillmans, exhibition view Hirshorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington DC, 2000⁷³

Wolfgang Tillmans produces his images in three formats, small (30 x 40 cm), medium (51 x 61 cm) and large (137 x 205 cm). Additionally he produces works in postcard format (10 x 15 cm) but he also produces large-sized inkjet prints, which vary in dimensions. These large inkjet prints are mostly presented without any kind of framing, just the pure print. This is in a way interesting, as these works are technically not long lasting, but in their format quite expensive in comparison to his other works. So why is it that he produces his largest works in a way that is not archival ensuring that the color will fade after a period of time? Is it a kind of resistance to the market or just arbitrary? What is certainly not arbitrary is the system of how he arranges his works on a wall. Although he uses from exhibition to exhibition other parameters, one could say every exhibition has a system but not all of them have the same system. He used different methods like symmetry, dissymmetry, linear orders or patterns, which he has experimented with before. Contrasts are important to him as well as context. Contrast does not necessarily mean diversity, there are examples where he combined the same image but in a different scale in one exhibition. This also underlines the fact that size does not mean significance in this case. He wholly adjusts to

⁷³ HIRSHORN 2015 HIRSHORN, web page, <http://hirshhorn.si.edu/collection/hirshhorn-past-exhibitions/#detail=/bio/wolfgang-tillmans/&collection=hirshhorn-past-exhibitions>, last access on 26.04.2015

the architecture but does not always address the space. In some exhibitions the images were placed as if the group continues around the corner of the wall. As mentioned before he sees an exhibition as something coherent and not divided in rooms or walls. The conception of an exhibition is important, as it must have some sort of red line or topic that connects to the works. Wolfgang Tillmans works with models in a scale of 1:10 of the exact exhibition space and prepares the exhibition using the model. He creates the exact architectural situation of the exhibition space in a smaller size before, so he can experiment with the effect his works and combination of works have.

After he curates an exhibition space he documents it. These documentations become a work itself and are also dealt on the market. They are mostly installations from one wall, not the whole exhibition space. With x/y coordinates one is able to reconstruct the installation at another place and time. After an installation has been produced and shown once, it cannot be edited again, but only reconstructed in the exact way it was.

Hyperimage

A hyperimage according to Felix Thürlemann is “the interaction of a number of images being hung in the same room next to each other.”⁷⁴ They correlate with each other, and the constant reassigning in different exhibitions supports the reinterpretation of a single work. Comparison or placing single images in a new context leaves space for new perspectives. Wolfgang Tillmans forms new groups of images for his exhibition. He curates them and selects a mixture of old and new works. Therefore he creates new perspectives and contexts in every exhibition. His installations can be seen as works themselves formed by single images corresponding to each other. It is important to not only call him a photographer, but also to underline his intense work in curating his own shows at his galleries but also in institutions.

⁷⁴ THÜHRLEMANN 2013, FELIX THÜHRLEMANN, *Mehr als ein Bild – Für eine Kunstgeschichte des Hyperimage*, München, Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2013, p. 8

Directing the perception of the viewer is not only a central action in his exhibition, but also in his artist's books, in which he selects the images printed next to each other. Images on double pages tell us how to look at them both and make us realize new details which we had not realized before. In the *Wako Book* from 1999 Tillmans placed *Skin*, 1997, (Image 23) and *Special*, 1999, (Image 22) next to each other. Although they are from different years and show totally different motifs, their parallels are clearly evident. The seat of the toilet makes one look closer at the porcelain rim of the cup. Similarly the crack in the skin on the surface of the cup of tea makes us realize a parallel to the jet. Both images support each other in the context.⁷⁵



Image 22: Wolfgang Tillmans, *Special*, 1999⁷⁶ Image 23: Wolfgang Tillmans, *Skin*, 1997⁷⁷

Felix Thürlemann also describes the monograph *if one thing matters, everything matters* published on the occasion of the exhibition at the Tate Britain. He also analyzed the diagram of the categories as done above. His conclusion contains a very interesting understanding of the unequal handling of the images. The exhibition catalogue shows all images chronologically and in the same format, 4.4 x 6 cm. The layout Tillmans chose is very clear and structured, showing all works equally. He used the inventory catalogue of the

⁷⁵ THÜHRLEMANN 2013, FELIX THÜHRLEMANN, (cf note 74) p. 161–162

⁷⁶ TILLMANS 2003 WOLFGANG TILLMANS, *if one thing matters, everything matters*, Ostfildern, Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2003, p.182, exhibition: Tate Britain, London, 06.06–14.09.2003

⁷⁷ ARTDISCOVER 2015 ARTDISCOVER, web page, <http://www.artdiscover.com/en/artists/wolfgang-tillmans-id29>, last access on 26.04.2015

Gemäldegalerie Dresden – Neue Meister from the former German Democratic Republic as a prototype. There is absolutely no hierarchy present between the images. In contrast the diagram drawn by Tillmans is very personal and shows categories as well as coherence between them. Some are added later, others are connected to each other. Thürlemann suggests seeing the catalogue as a dictionary and the diagram as grammar. As an example he analyzes an installation view from the Turner Prize exhibition in 2000 at the Tate Britain, London.

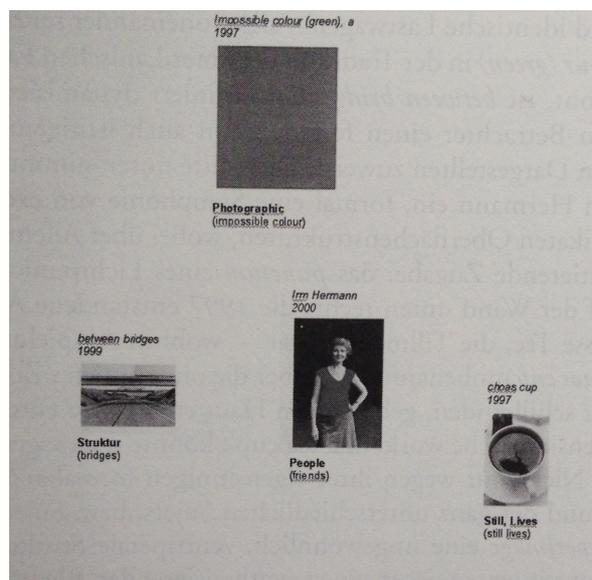


Image 24: Wolfgang Tillmans, installation view Turner Prize with analysis by Felix Thürlemann, 2000⁷⁸

By analyzing the exhibition view, he selects the information to every picture shown, title, date, category and sub group and in addition he analyzed the exact position on the wall, if the pictures are parallel or in any way hung on an axis. Thürlemann found that horizontal or vertical lines are unlikely to appear in the installation, although in other exhibitions Tillmans has used clear lines in the hanging of the works. This installation view is more characteristic of his “free” way of hanging. But more importantly he also found that the four major categories are represented in the four works: *Impossible Colour (Green)*, 1997 is an example of the category *photographic/light* (subgroup *impossible colour*); *Between Bridges*, 1999, is *Struktur* (subgroup *bridges*); *Irm Hermann*, 2000, represents the category *people* (subgroup *friends*); and lastly, *Skin*, later named *Chaos Cup*, 1997,

⁷⁸ THÜHRLEMANN 2013, FELIX THÜHRLEMANN, (cf note 73) p. 169

substitutes for the category *still lifes* (subgroup *still life*). These single works represent all the categories Tillmans has created on one wall. Therefore the single works function as a group in the installation.

Putting the previous notion into perspective, every exhibition creates new works as hyperimages. This highlights the fact that the artist wants his works to be seen equally and without preferences.

Truth Study Center

Truth Study Center is an exhibition first shown at Maureen Paley's gallery in London in 2005. Wolfgang Tillmans has always collected images, his own but also found images, articles, drawings and other printed matter that interested him. For *Truth Study Center* he designed showcases in which he displayed all of this material, often arranged as a collage.

"I [Wolfgang Tillmans] am always interested in the question of when something becomes something, or not, and how do we know? I observe it all the time. One person becomes a dear friend, the other not; this pair of old jeans your mother thinks is rubbish and wants to throw away, and to you it's your favorite piece. There's different attributions of value at different times and stages in one's life, different people have different vantage points—and this is what *Truth Study Center* was concerned with."⁷⁹

The primary form of display in *Truth Study Center* is that of the showcases manufactured out of wood with a glass plate on top. This already breaks with his usual way of showing his works, as discussed before. Like he hangs his images in rhythmic patterns, he places the vitrines in clusters throughout the gallery space. The vitrines were made out of standard British doors leaving a gap between the surface on which the pictures lay and the glass top. This way it allows the pictures to curl somewhat without being held in place by anything. Thus the images take on the characteristics of an object, more so than if they are hung on the wall. The whole arrangement of the vitrines with

⁷⁹ HERBERT 2013, MARTIN HERBERT, (cf note 7), p. 63

works in them has a strong sculptural appearance. The combination of material raises many questions. When does something become something? How do combinations raise new perspectives or suspicions? Due to the integration of articles the political and social statement becomes even stronger in *Truth Study Center* than in his other exhibitions. The articles he specifically selects of every image support the “truth” from his point of view. They bring additional criticism into perspective while observing the whole arrangement in one showcase. In the exhibition at Maureen Paley he combined images of a protest against the politics concerning the Iraq War of George W. Bush with other images of the interiors of a mosque. In another exhibition of *Truth Study Center* at the Venice Biennale in 2009 he arranged all sorts of material corresponding to the NASA Kepler mission, for example, the edition of *The New York Times* from March 2, 2009, with the headline “In a Lonely Cosmos, A Hunt for a World Like Ours” together with other critical material on the topic.⁸⁰ AIDS is the most present topic in *Truth Study Center*. As in so many of Tillmans’s works the acceptance and social handling of HIV/AIDS is an often-criticized subject. Also in this case the connection of images and text makes it even stronger in its statement.

“The question of knowledge and non-knowledge, of everything non-scientific applied to the scientific and the reverse, naturally leads to an ironic way of dealing with knowledge and/or non-knowledge. This is the topic of my [Wolfgang Tillmans] work *Truth Study Center*. It opposes those people who accept nothing outside of their own truths and religions; it opposes an ideological understanding of knowledge and truth.”⁸¹

⁸⁰ BURTON 2014, JOHANNA BURTON, *Pictures in the Present Tense*, London, Phaidon Press Limited, 2014, pp. 186–198

⁸¹ RUF 2012, BEATRIX RUF, *New World / Life Is Astronomical – Wolfgang Tillmans in Conversation with Beatrix Ruf*, Cologne, TASCHEN GmbH, 2012, p. 9



Image 25: Wolfgang Tillmans, *truth study center* (Chicago), installation view, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, 2006⁸²

Neue Welt

After concentrating for a couple of years on abstract works, Wolfgang Tillmans came back to camera works. In his exhibition *Neue Welt* at Kunsthalle Zürich, Zurich in 2012 he showed several new works from his recent travels, but also familiar faces appeared in the exhibition. While working on abstract works he remained in the studio for long periods of time, so suddenly a strong interest for the outside world and also a return to camera-made photographs occurred.

“This is why at the end of the last decade, I [Wolfgang Tillmans] arrived at the question of how the world actually appears when seen at a distance from my usual beaten path. In this sense, I was gripped by a restlessness and curiosity. I asked myself why I shouldn’t travel to places where I was nothing but a traveler. I wanted to know: How does the world appear twenty years after I’ve begun to form a picture of it? Can there be a ‘new’ view of it? And ‘new’ also in the sense of greatly expanded technical possibilities. The tremendous political and economic shifts of recent years, and technical advancements, have considerably altered the world’s appearance.”⁸³

⁸² BETWEENBRIDGES 2015 BETWEENBRIDGES, web page, <http://www.betweenbridges.net/Tillmans.html>, last access on 26.04.2015

⁸³ RUF 2012, BEATRIX RUF, (cf. note 81), p. 3

He traveled the world and documented his views in *Neue Welt*. New for him was the digital camera. Until this point he still only worked with analog cameras. In an interview with Beatrix Ruf he said that it took him a lot of time to adjust to the digital camera with all its functions, both positive and negative.⁸⁴ Because of the camera and the advancement of today's technology the sharpness of the images is so high, that it is no problem to print them large sized, in sizes that he has only previously used for his abstract works. Those technical requirements are in a constant process of development, but they are already so far that no analog camera or inkjet printer is able to produce such sharpness, contrasts, and lighting conditions. Even darkness or moving objects can be captured in a photograph today.⁸⁵ Considering that everything we have around us is, when digital, already high definition and that high definition is much sharper than a human eye can see, it is interesting that Tillmans does use a common camera, one of those you see tourists frequently using. Instead of working with the maximum possible resolution he chose a camera that is a classic model for tourists, while traveling the world and, in fact, being a tourist.

While traveling Tillmans searched for the transformation of the world, how it has developed and how it has changed. Especially how the handling of knowledge changed in comparison to former times when the use of the Internet and globalization was still unknown or still at its beginning. How cities in China arose, astrological investigations of galaxies improved, or simple changes of standard light bulbs being replaced by LED lights. *Neue Welt* represents, as the name implies, the new world, the world we live in today. What I think is interesting, is that new technology made it possible for him to show us the new world in such astonishing detail, as he does it, but still it has the same flair of Tillmans early work taken with analog cameras.

Neue Welt was first shown at the Kunsthalle Zürich in 2012. On this occasion the catalogue of the same name with an interview of Wolfgang Tillmans by the curator and former director of the Kunsthalle Zürich, Beatrix Ruf, was published. Later the exhibition was also shown at Rencontres d'Arles, Arles,

⁸⁴ RUF 2012, BEATRIX RUF, (cf. note 81), p. 4

⁸⁵ BURTON 2014, JOHANNA BURTON, (cf. note 80), p. 202

and Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York.

One can recognize familiar topics or motifs in *Neue Welt*, such as still lifes, landscapes, abstract works and portraits, but we also see new series, like the images of car lights, trash, and architecture. The typical criticism of Tillmans is still noticeable in pictures of shopping malls, restrictions at airports, or portraits taken in the Middle East showing a strong influence by the West. For example, *Young Man, Jeddah (B)*, 2012, shows a young man in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, standing in a little shop, surrounded by multiple beverage brands, like Pepsi, 7 Up, or Lipton. One can find very few brands that seem to be local. Of course globalization has changed the landscape all over the world and has made the consumer world nearly identical. He has photographed shopping malls on different continents and they look very much alike.⁸⁶



Image 26: Wolfgang Tillmans, *Young Man, Jeddah*, 2012⁸⁷

Neue Welt – Wolfgang Tillmans published by TASCHEN, Cologne, shows a more or less new perspective of arranging his images. As for so many

⁸⁶ BURTON 2014, JOHANNA BURTON, (cf. note 80), p. 211

⁸⁷ CONTEMPORARYARTDAILY 2015 CONTEMPORARYARTDAILY, web page, http://www.contemporaryartdaily.com/2012/11/wolfgang-tillmans-at-kunsthalle-zurich/32_wolfgang-tillmans-young-man-jeddah-a/, last access on 26.04.2015

previous publications, he designed the whole catalogue including the layout and the selection of images. On some pages he creates collage-like arrangements of several images. We seem to know this procedure from *Truth Study Center* but still this is the first time it appears in a catalogue. It is an overlapping of images that from the first view do not really belong or fit together but yet they correspond with each other. Considering the ways of exhibiting his images and the analysis of the showcases from *Truth Study Center* this seems to be a new way to illustrate what he has been doing long before, but differently.



Image 27: Wolfgang Tillmans, *out of Neue Welt*, 2012⁸⁸

“These layered images, the impure, the contaminated, and that which isn’t compatible but which functions just the same, were present in my [Wolfgang Tillmans] work from the start. This not only happens in the pictures, but has always been a central aspect of my installations. Books, too, if you turn the pages rapidly, have this simultaneity. As a result, a new formation of something that was there all along is currently in my work. Now my perception of the world has found this form.”⁸⁹

⁸⁸ FOCUS-NUMERIQUE 2015 FOCUS-NUMERIQUE, web page, <http://www.focus-numerique.com/test-1565/beau-livre-le-monde-selon-wolfgang-tillmans-1.html>, last access on 26.04.2015

⁸⁹ RUF 2012, BEATRIX RUF, (cf. note 81), p. 19

Evaluation of Wolfgang Tillmans's Market

Primary Market

When looking at a contemporary artist's market valuation it is necessary to divide the analysis between the primary and secondary market. Galleries dominate the primary market. Careers of young artists are created and supported by galleries, their collectors and institutions. Whereas pricing in the secondary market, which is dominated by auction houses, emerges through demand and supply pricing, the primary market is dependent on the judgment of the gallerist. Information on prices and their development over time in the primary market is rare, hence I will try to explain how pricing in the primary market works in general. How do gallerists set prices for an artist's works? The most complicated cases are that of young artists who have not had exhibitions or works on sale before. With more experienced artists gallerists can communicate with other or previous gallerists or collectors and discuss together or analyze the possible prices based on already sold works, thereby calculating a range of possible prices. With young artists, where the initial price has to be set, it is more difficult. With no existing prices one can only compare a work by one artist with a work by another artist who has a similar style, medium, age, reputation, and curriculum. The pricing is created by the judgment of the gallerist and has an immense effect on the artist's market development. If the starting price of an artist is too high, for example, it can have long-term consequences for an artist. When a price is set it cannot be reduced later, otherwise a collector who bought works for the higher price would feel cheated and may not buy again, possibly also damaging the reputation of the gallerist. If the price is too high only a few or no works will be sold because the price will be seen as unreasonable for an unknown artist. If the price is too low there is a risk that production costs are not covered. Pricing is a tightrope walk between priced too low and overpriced.⁹⁰ Olav Velthuis wrote in his publication "Talking Prices – Symbolic Meanings of Prices on the Market for Contemporary Art":

⁹⁰ VELTHUIS 2007, OLAV VELTHUIS, Talking Prices – Symbolic Meanings of Prices on the Market for Contemporary Art, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 2007, p. 124

“Since monopolistic competition approximates the structure of the art market most closely, art dealers are price setters in principal.”⁹¹

A decisive fact in pricing within the primary market is the size of the work within the oeuvre of an artist. It is not about the quality of a work; simply the size decides the price, price differences between works or series of the same size do not occur.⁹² This statement is supported by the pricing of Tillmans’s gallery for his works across the various series that he has done. So did a small sized work from the *architecture* (sub-group of the category *still lives*) and *surface structure/details* (sub-group of *Struktur*) series go for 8,000 USD each (without VAT), where as a medium sized work from the series *Faltenwurf* (sub-group of *still lives*) and *Friends* (sub-group of *people*) went for 16,000 USD each (without VAT). This underlines the fact sizes matters in the primary market. From my experience as a dealer in the primary art market I have only experienced a difference in price if the production cost was significantly higher than that of a previous work of the same size.

“The reputation of the artist as well as the size and technique of the artwork are functional and operational as pricing rules because they dissociate economic and artistic value; they guarantee that a dealer does not have to estimate the quality of a work directly when setting the price. In themselves, however, reputation, size, and technique are meaningless criteria: a drawing on paper could be of higher quality than an oil painting on canvas, an unknown artist may make better works than a well-known one, while a small work may require as much labor as a large one [...] Dealers do not hesitate to emphasize, however, that quality is too elusive to function as an understandable pricing principle.”⁹³

Once a price is set it increases due to certain circumstances like institutional exhibition, acquisitions by known collections, participations at fairs,

⁹¹ VELTHUIS 2007, OLAV VELTHUIS, (cf. note 90), p. 119

⁹² VELTHUIS 2007, OLAV VELTHUIS, (cf. note 90), p. 125

⁹³ VELTHUIS 2007, OLAV VELTHUIS, (cf. note 90), p. 126

increasing demand, and after the passage of time. Price levels usually differ from each other by 10–20%.⁹⁴ Essentially however, the pricing of an artist's work is done on a case-by-case basis.

Secondary Market

The art market has surpassed many different economic and political cycles in history, but from an overall perspective, an artist's valuation is not as much affected by the positive and/or negative impacts of those external events as it is by the rest of the economy. Therefore, this paper seeks to investigate whether there are internal impacts within the art market that can have an influence on the artist's valuation. Hence, this investigation is looking at the impact that an art prize such as the Turner Prize or the Hasselblad Award, exhibitions at important institutions, and new series had or may not have had on the valuation of the German photographer and installation artist Wolfgang Tillmans.

Furthermore, the evaluation of real market data in respect to Wolfgang Tillmans is also a focus. Both qualitative data from an interview with his gallerist, Daniel Buchholz, as well as quantitative historic data from the secondary art market retrieved from artprice.com are used for this analysis and at the same time reflected with the influences on Tillmans's valuation development.

Looking at how Tillmans's market has developed, one has to consider all relevant factors. Even influences like the financial crisis have an effect on his sales results without even having a direct relation to the artist. The art market itself reacts not only to financial trends but also to trends in fashion. When it comes to analyzing an artist's market you have to differentiate the primary from the secondary market. Auction results provide one with a detailed view of secondary market sales successes, but when it comes to the primary market it is hard to receive quantitative information and therefore be able to recognize a trend. According to Wolfgang Tillmans's gallerist Daniel

⁹⁴ VELTHUIS 2007, OLAV VELTHUIS, (cf. note 90), pp. 126–127

Buchholz, winning the Turner Prize had an impact on Tillmans's market value. Especially directly after receiving the prize, exhibitions and especially international exhibitions are key factors for an artist's success. Tillmans has always had a solid trend of solo shows and a high number of them were international.

His primary market prices rose after such milestones like winning a prize or important exhibitions. Solo shows or exhibitions at a biennial are crucial for an artist's recognition. It shows the interest and attention of important institutions in the art market and therefore leads to more acceptances. A higher confidence towards the artist's success is created which leads to more demand and thereby to a higher sales volume.

"Prices are more likely to be raised after big exhibitions and with high demand, what naturally occurs after such exhibitions."⁹⁵

New series or formats can also lead to a higher interest in the market. In the case of Tillmans, his earlier works are more offensive than his later abstract works. Most of the abstract works come in bigger formats and they are unique pieces rather than editions. This has a high relevance when it comes to sales.

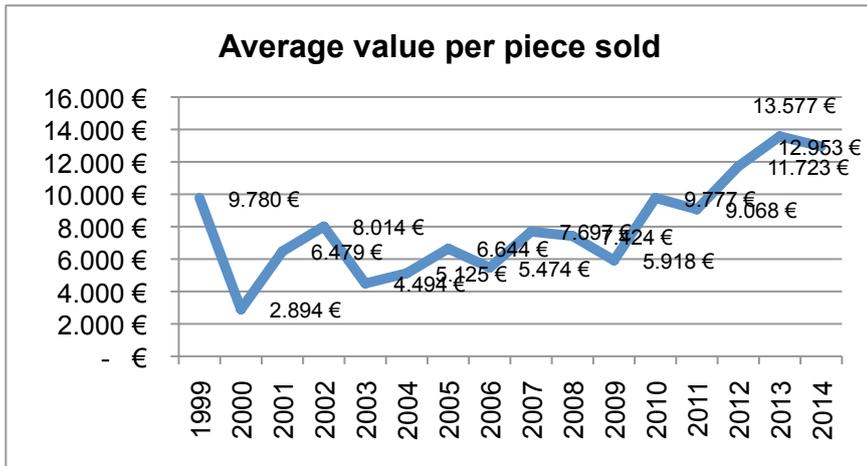
"Especially international exhibitions and the consequently generated media attention are highly relevant. In this case the motif plays an important role as well as the format."⁹⁶

To come to a result on the question if there are impacts on the market one must have an overview of possible influences. Since data is only available from 1999 onwards this inquiry will only use data from that year onwards. Focusing on the secondary market and looking at Tillmans's auction results, 2001 was his strongest increase in turnover.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Interview DANIEL BUCHHOLZ, February 5, 2014, Cologne

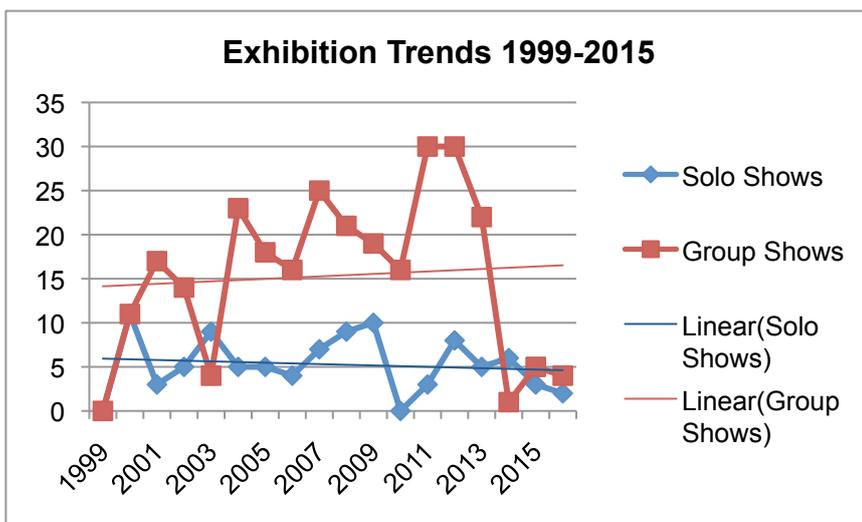
⁹⁶ Interview DANIEL BUCHHOLZ, February 5, 2014, Cologne

⁹⁷ For all auction data: ARTPRICE 2015, ARTPRICE, web page, <http://web.artprice.com/artist/135198/wolfgang-tillmans/index>, accessed on 13.4.2015



Graph 1: Wolfgang Tillmans, Average value per piece sold⁹⁸

As can be seen in Graph 1, Tillmans's average value per piece that was sold rose from €2,894 in 2000 to €6,479 in 2001, which means that he had a +130% rate of growth in this year. What could be influencing factors for these results? Starting in 1999, he had eleven solo shows out of which seven were international and in important art hubs like London, New York, and Los Angeles. He was also represented in twelve group shows out of which seven were located outside of Germany. In the following year, he only had three solo shows but a huge number of group shows, 28 to be exact, as can be seen in Graph 2.



Graph 2: Wolfgang Tillmans, Relevant Shows 1999–2015

⁹⁸ Analysis based on data from: ARTPRICE 2015, ARTPRICE, web page, <http://web.artprice.com/artist/135198/wolfgang-tillmans/index>, accessed on 13.4.2015

However the year 2000 was very important in Tillmans's career. Along with Glenn Brown, Michael Raedecker, and Tomoko Takahashi he was nominated for the Turner Prize. On November 28, 2000, he was announced as winner of the prize and an exhibition of works by the shortlisted artists followed from October 25, 2000 to January 14, 2001, at the Tate Britain. As a result of receiving the Turner Prize, Tillmans gained broad recognition and media attention. The announcement was broadcast on Channel 4 and print media also reacted to this event.

“I can very well remember the headline in the *Sun*: ‘German Gay Photographer Catches the Turner.’”⁹⁹

According to his gallerist Daniel Buchholz, the success of winning the Turner Prize had many effects on his career, but he also mentioned that the Turner Prize was stronger in 2000 than it is today, and Tillmans still profits from it in comparison to later winners. Back then he was already a well-known artist.¹⁰⁰ This may explain why his prices went up in 2001. In total his turnover has increased constantly since 1999.

As shown in Graph 1 the average value per piece sold has risen from €9,780 in 1999 to €12,953 in 2014 with a top in 2013 with €13,577 plus the turnover trend has risen from a low in 2000 with €34,730 to €284,975 in 2014 and again a top with €515,918 in 2013.

The year 2003 was a weak year in the art market in general. Tillmans's 52% of unsold lots on auctions highlight that bad season. Whereas in comparison to his constant increase in turnover, the data on his sold lots at auctions that year does not reflect that upward trend but resembles the various peak years with sold lots of up to 39 pieces in 2005 and 2006. In these two years the average value per piece was around half of the average of today. Nevertheless, in 2006 he received his second highest hammer price of €63,808 at Phillips De Pury, New York. His highest hammer price was €89,559 in 2014 at Christies, London.

⁹⁹ Interview DANIEL BUCHHOLZ, February 5, 2014, Cologne

¹⁰⁰ Interview DANIEL BUCHHOLZ, February 5, 2014, Cologne

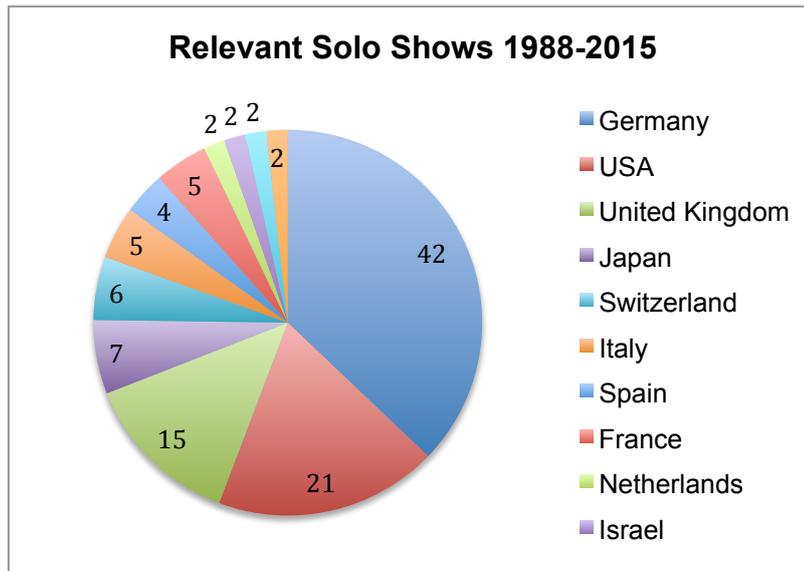
In 2001 and 2013 he sold almost the same number of lots at auctions as in the years 2005 and 2006. Both are important years though. In 2001, he had the highest increase of average value per piece and in 2013 he had the highest average value per piece to this date (see graph 1).

Upon closer inspection of his unsold lots, three years stand out: 2002, 2003, and 2008. As already mentioned the art market reacts to every possible influence. The year 2003 was, in general, a negative year in the market, and the irregularity in 2008 is definitely due to the global financial crisis. Therefore, the unusual data from these years can be based on those events. In 2002, his annual growth climbed by 81% but in the same year 58% of his lots on auction remained unsold.¹⁰¹

Wolfgang Tillmans is like other photography artists of his time mostly sold in the United States (37.7%) and the United Kingdom (32.4%). Only 17.8% of his works are sold in Germany, while this is only 6.3% of his total turnover.¹⁰² Other countries have nearly no relevance. But one must consider that these are only points of sale. Therefore, the strong percentages of the United States and the United Kingdom are due to the art market hubs New York City and London where the biggest auction houses like Christie's, Sotheby's, Phillips and Bonhams have their headquarters and most of the auctions are held. In conclusion, this means that most of his works are sold in these countries but his collectors can be situated all over the world. The gallerist confirmed that these countries have no significant relevance when it comes to the primary market, which goes along with the distribution of Tillmans's relevant solo shows, where Germany, for example, stands out, even though his works are being sold in other regions (see Graph 3).

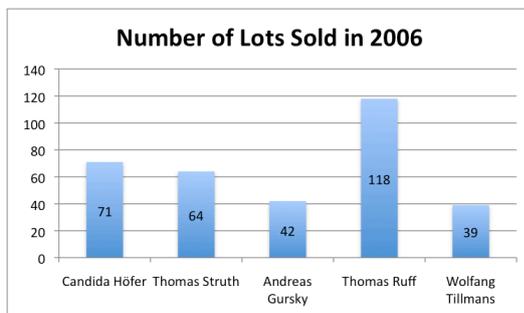
¹⁰¹ ARTPRICE 2015, ARTPRICE, (cf note 97)

¹⁰² ARTPRICE 2015, ARTPRICE, (cf note 97)

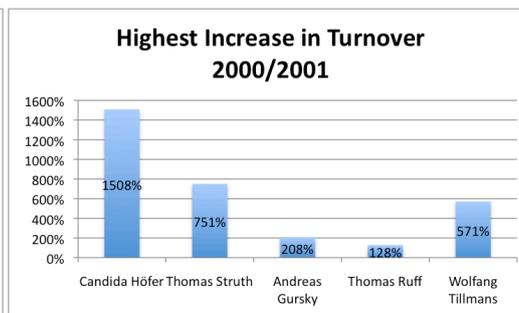


Graph 3: Wolfgang Tillmans, Relevant Solo Shows 1988–2015¹⁰³

Putting Tillmans into perspective with his fellow German photographers such as Candida Höfer, Thomas Struth, Andreas Gursky, and Thomas Ruff from a secondary market point of view, it clearly reflects the fact that the market of contemporary photography first arrived at an all time peak in 2006, whereas the highest increase in turnover of these artists already started in 2000 and 2001 (see Graphs 4 and 5).



Graph 4: Number of Lots Sold¹⁰⁴



Graph 5: Highest Increase in Turnover¹⁰⁵

This brings up the question of whether the general recognition of photography as an artistic medium in the mid-'90s leads to these results. A third commonality is that all of them show a positive upward development of

¹⁰³ Analysis based on data from: ARTPRICE 2015, ARTPRICE, web page, <http://web.artprice.com/artist/135198/wolfgang-tillmans/index>, accessed on 13.4.2015

¹⁰⁴ Analysis based on data from: ARTPRICE 2015, ARTPRICE, web page, <http://web.artprice.com/artist/135198/wolfgang-tillmans/index>, accessed on 13.4.2015

¹⁰⁵ Analysis based on data from: ARTPRICE 2015, ARTPRICE, web page, <http://web.artprice.com/artist/135198/wolfgang-tillmans/index>, accessed on 13.4.2015

their prices. On the one hand, this could be because of the acceptance of photography as art, but on the other hand it could also be a result of the rapid growing art market in the last years. Record prices seem to emerge frequently and more people than ever seem to buy and, especially, invest in art. But what is for sure is that photography is fully integrated in the dealing of contemporary art. The constant enhancement of technology is most likely one of the most important reasons for this. The massive evolution of cameras, paper quality, and most importantly the archival quality of the materials have given the market, which has only arisen since the mid-'90s, the opportunity of arriving to full recognition in the art world.

Looking at the development of Wolfgang Tillmans, as a progressive photographer-artist, it becomes clear that the awarding of the Turner Prize has definitely pushed his valuation in the art market further towards a notable level. Therefore, the Turner Prize can validly be regarded as an internal art market effect, which can positively push an artist's valuation—as noted by the strong statements of Tillmans's gallerist Daniel Buchholz in Cologne. Most importantly, this is only possible because the Turner Prize is recognized as a valuable art prize by the international art world. Time will tell if winning the Hasselblad Award, awarded by the Hasselblad Foundation in 2015, will have a similar effect on his market value or if the impacts of awards have changed due to the massive overflow of art prizes and awards. Additionally as Germany has no real art capital and is rather divided in a federal cultural system, it is even more important for an artist like Wolfgang Tillmans to receive an art prize in an art capital like London.

At the same time other German photographers with a similar reputation and valuation to Tillmans have also experienced a comparable push in their sales and valuation during the same period. Therefore, the investigation in this regard has proven that an award such as the Turner Prize does have an impact, but more importantly, the art market itself reacts upon certain artist developments, meaning that Tillmans was awarded the Turner Prize during a period where photography as a part of the contemporary art world has experienced a strong market recognition and market growth.

After looking at Wolfgang Tillmans's market more generally and focusing on impacts like exhibitions or prizes it is crucial to look at the prices of his various series to investigate if certain series have more success in selling on auction than others. To analyze his series I worked with the categorization from *if one thing matters, everything matters*, using the overall categories with their different sub-categories. Therefore I structured all available data on works sold on auction and separated them by the following categories:

1	People
1a	Friends (e.g. social situations, nude/sex, social portraits, family)
1b	Sittings (e.g. commissioned portraits, self-initiated portraits, published as fashion, nude reportage)
1c	Crowds/strangers (e.g. nightlife, celebration, subculture, activism/demos, cityscape, soldiers, reportage, trade/shopping, Tube)
1d	Self (e.g. self-portraits)
2	Still Lives
2a	<i>Faltenwurf</i> (e.g. <i>Faltenwurf</i> , hanging, lying, bed)
2b	Still Lives (e.g. flowers/plants, fruits, windowsill, on table, windows, paper)
2c	Interior architecture (e.g. man-made artifacts, interior architecture, architecture)
2d	Animals
3	Struktur
3a	Landscape (e.g. bridges, rivers, industrial architecture, landscape, cityscape, nightscape, Aufsicht, sea borders)
3b	Sky (e.g. sky, flying, astronomy, eclipse, sun)
3c	(light)/abstract corresponding with the category photographic/light
3d	Surface structures (e.g. details, surface structure, water surface, clouds, light effects, shade)
4	Photographic/Light
4a	Abstract (e.g. abstract, blushes type, mental pictures, super collider, light marks, strings/lines, silver)

5	Installations & groups of works
5a	Installation & groups of works that have been sold at auction

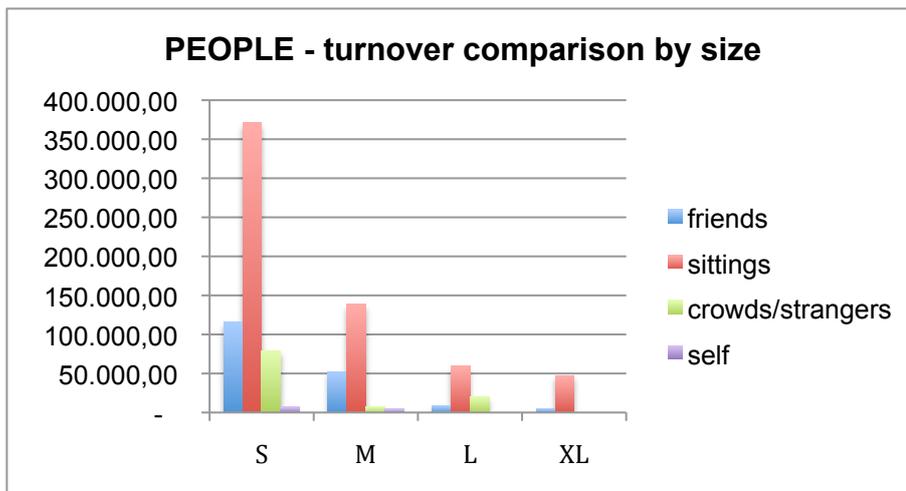
Within these categories I additionally divided them by size, small (approximately 30 x 40 cm), medium (approximately 60 x 50 cm), large (approximately 180 x 120 cm), and extra large (everything bigger than two meters). We already know that the small size in most cases is an edition of 10, the medium size an edition of 3 and large as well as extra large are mostly unique pieces or editions 1/1 with one artist proof.

People

Starting with *People* one directly recognizes *Sittings* as the strongest series with an accumulated turnover of €370,840. *Sittings* is, one could say, the series with which he gained acceptance as a photographer within the market for contemporary art. Portraits by celebrities or politicians like Kate Moss, Jude Law, Moby, Gilbert & George, Simon de Pury, Tony Blair and many more received a lot of attention. Some of them were made for fashion magazines, others were commissioned portraits. Among *Sittings* are not only the portraits of famous personalities but also self-initiated portraits or what are often considered portraits of his generation. Those are the most iconic images of his early works. Works like *Suzanne & Lutz*, *White Dress*, *Army Skirt* (1993), *Alex and Lutz in the Trees* (1992) or *Lutz & Alex Schwanzgriff* (1993) achieve extraordinary prices in all sizes compared to his other works. *Suzanne & Lutz*, *White Dress*, *Army Skirt* (1993) (Image 29) was sold for example at Christies in London in 1999. This edition was medium sized, 61 x 51 cm, and was estimated at €4,752 to €7,920; it achieved a price of €20,594. *Alex and Lutz in the Trees* (1992) (Image 28) also has reached high prices a couple of times and was never sold in the same range as other images of the same size. Once a small size edition of the picture was estimated at €6,247 to €9,370 by Christie's London in 2001 and it was sold for €21,865.



Image 28: Wolfgang Tillmans, *Alex and Lutz in the Trees*, 1992¹⁰⁶ Image 29: Wolfgang Tillmans, *Suzanne & Lutz, White Dress, Army Skirt*, 1993¹⁰⁷



Graph 6: PEOPLE – Turnover comparison by size¹⁰⁸

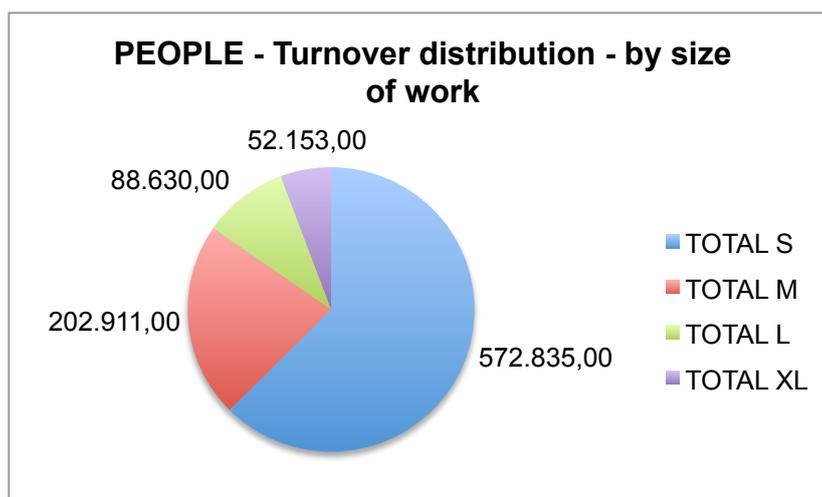
Looking at the turnover comparison by size it is quite clear, that small-sized images are the most sold in the *People* category. This may have several reasons, but one must not forget that the small-sized images are editions of 10, so technically there are nine more of them on the market compared to the

¹⁰⁶ ARTBERLIN 2015 ARTBERLIN, web page, <http://www.artberlin.de/kuenstler/wolfgang-tillmans-lutz-and-alex/>, last access on 26.04.2015

¹⁰⁷ MOMA 2015 MOMA, web page, http://www.moma.org/collection/browse_results.php?criteria=O%3ATA%3AE%3Avo162687&page_number=19&template_id=1&sort_order=1, last access on 26.04.2015

¹⁰⁸ Analysis based on data from: ARTPRICE 2015, ARTPRICE, web page, <http://web.artprice.com/artist/135198/wolfgang-tillmans/index>, accessed on 13.4.2015

medium-sized images of the same picture. In addition to the higher amount of existing editions the sales price also plays an important role. High-numbered editions and small formats are always estimated at lower prices than smaller editions in a bigger format. Looking at the total turnover of all sizes from works of the series *Sittings* since 1999 it is still the small size which reached the highest total with €370,840, but the medium sized works achieved more than a third of the price, €138,447, with much fewer sold works in total. The average price of the small size is €5,794.38 with a total of 63 works being sold on auction since 1999, whereas the average of the medium size is €10,649.77, with a total of 13. These results provide solid evidence to the previous theory that the series and size of work with the highest amount of sold lots is not always the most profitable one. There are only very few large- or extra large-sized sold works, if they are high priced. For example *Kate Sitting* (1996), inkjet print, 200.3 x 136.5 cm, has been sold for €35,454 (hammer price) at Phillips London in 2013. The original estimate was €29,545–€41,363 including the buyer's premium. This equals a 31.94% growth rate from 2012 to 2013.¹⁰⁹ The high estimate is due first to the size and edition (edition 1/1) and second to the motif. *Kate* is among Tillmans's iconic motifs and is quite popular outside of buyers.



Graph 7: PEOPLE – Turnover distribution – by size of work¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ ARTPRICE 2015, ARTPRICE, (cf note 97)

¹¹⁰ Analysis based on data from: ARTPRICE 2015, ARTPRICE, web page, <http://web.artprice.com/artist/135198/wolfgang-tillmans/index>, accessed on 13.4.2015

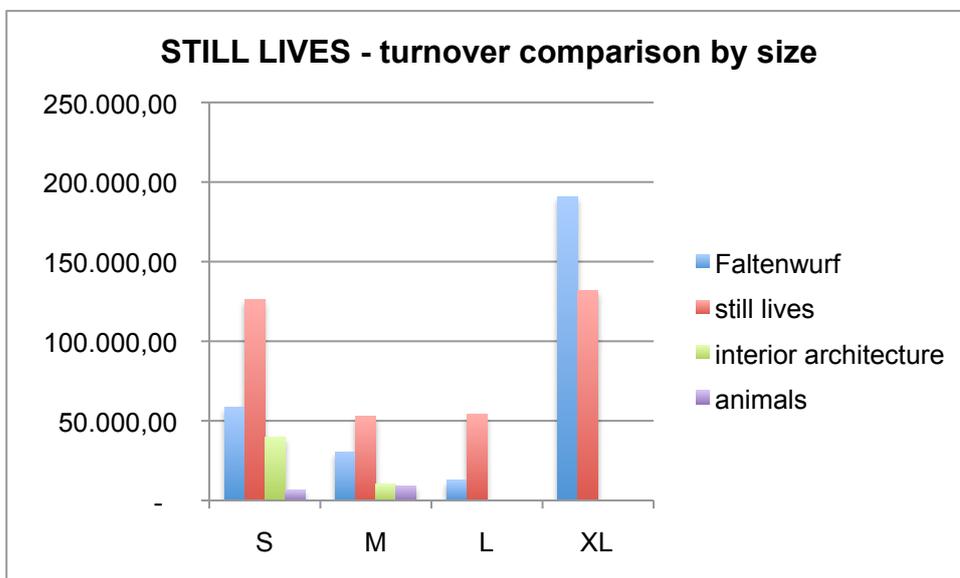
Despite iconic images or rare large sizes on the market the graph above shows that in the whole category of *People* the small size is still the one with the highest turnover amongst all four series. This is definitely due to the amount of sold works on auction in that size.

Putting the two dominating series with *People* into comparison, it is again clear that *Sittings* is the strongest series, whereas *Friends* follows with an accumulated turnover of approx. €160,000, which is still only a quarter of what *Sittings* made.

Throughout *People*, all series follow the same trend that sales of smaller sizes of works amount to the higher results on the secondary market.

Still Lives

In the category of *Still Lives* the distribution of size is slightly different. Thirty-six works have been sold from the *Faltenwurf* series, for example. Out of this thirty-six, twenty were small works, seven medium, one large, and seven extra large.



Graph 8: STILL LIVES – turnover comparison by size¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Analysis based on data from: ARTPRICE 2015, ARTPRICE, web page, <http://web.artprice.com/artist/135198/wolfgang-tillmans/index>, accessed on 13.4.2015

Three subgroups, *Faltenwurf*, *Still Lives*, and *Interior architecture* have had several extra large-sized lots on auction, of which all have been sold successfully. Nearly every time those sizes and the respective edition of 1/1 appear on auction, they sell well. *Socks on Radiator* (1998) was sold for €39,106 including buyer's premium at Christie's, London, in 2014. But not only does a large work from *Faltenwurf* sell well, *Pomodoro* (1993) out of the *Still Lives* series sold for €37,365 including buyer's premium at Phillips, New York, in 2013.

As we can see in graph 8 the total turnover comparison by size shows, that all small size works have accomplished nearly the same amount as those few extra large works. Thirty-eight small works achieved a total of €126,282 whereas five extra large works netted €131,776. Similar to the works from *Sittings* many smaller works appear on the market, but large works overtake them rapidly when it comes to turnover. Even though this is straight forward, looking at works from Tillman's *still lives* category can be compared to other categories such as *people*, when it comes to large-sized pieces sold at auction.



Image 30: Wolfgang Tillmans, *Socks on Radiator*, 1998¹¹²



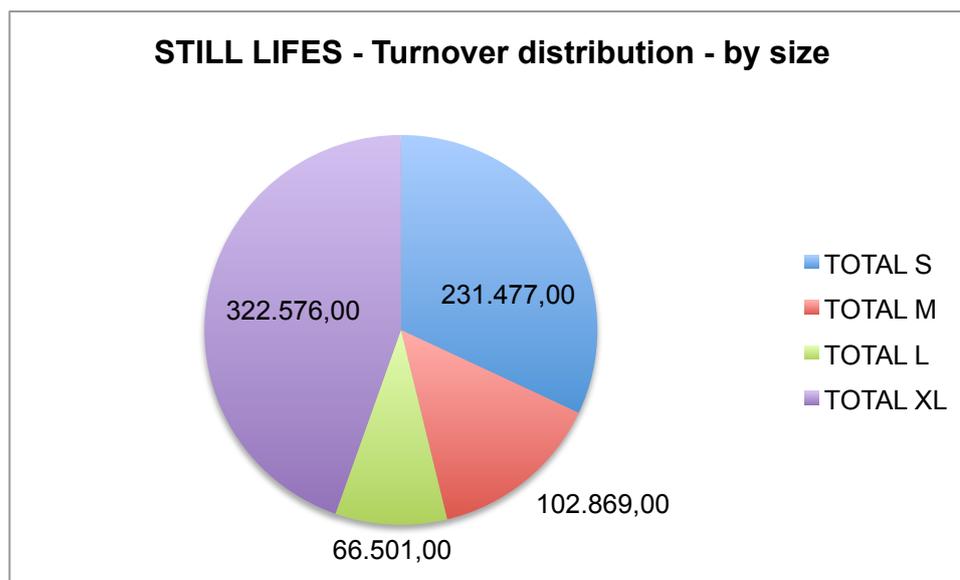
Image 31: Wolfgang Tillmans, *Pomodoro*, 1993¹¹³

The turnover distribution by size graph (graph 9) shows us that in the case of

¹¹² MOMA 2015 MOMA, web page, http://www.moma.org/collection//browse_results.php?criteria=O%3AAD%3AE%3A8044&page_number=31&template_id=1&sort_order=1, last access on 26.04.2015

¹¹³ ARTNET 2015 ARTNET, web page, http://www.artnet.de/künstler/wolfgang-tillmans/pomodoro-jB_PBEgoqcU5sAyN9Nv9ng2, last access on 26.04.2015

the category *Still Lives* extra-large is the strongest and small the second strongest rubric in total turnover. Luckily a comparatively high number of extra large works have been sold on auction. Taking this into perspective and looking at the high results of those works the strong turnover is not surprising. *People* and *Still Lives* are more or less earlier works, although both categories do contain series with recent works or have ongoing series. Nevertheless in general one could assume that most of the works are earlier works. It is interesting to see how those series from the same time do differentiate themselves from each other at auction results. Works in the category *People* seem to be sold more frequently and if an iconic piece appears prices go very high. *Still Lives* on the other side are also very present on the market, but high prices are mostly achieved through bigger sizes. Of the subgroups *Still Lives* is by far the most sold.



Graph 9: STILL LIVES – Turnover distribution – by size¹¹⁴

Struktur

Struktur comprises four subgroups; *landscape* (including bridges, rivers, industrial architecture, landscape, cityscape, nightscape, Aufsicht, sea borders), *sky* (including sky, flying, astronomy, eclipse, sun), *(light)/abstract* (which corresponds heavily with the category *photographic/light* and is hard

¹¹⁴ Analysis based on data from: ARTPRICE 2015, ARTPRICE, web page, <http://web.artprice.com/artist/135198/wolfgang-tillmans/index>, accessed on 13.4.2015

to differentiate from it) and *surface structures* (including details, surface structure, water surface, clouds, light effects, shade). As (*light*)/*abstract* and *photographic/light* are, firstly, thematically very close to each other and, secondly, are strongly connected to each other in the diagram (Image 1) *if one thing matters, everything matters* established by Wolfgang Tillmans for the eponymous catalogue, thus they are considered as one in this analysis. The results are discussed under *photographic/light*.

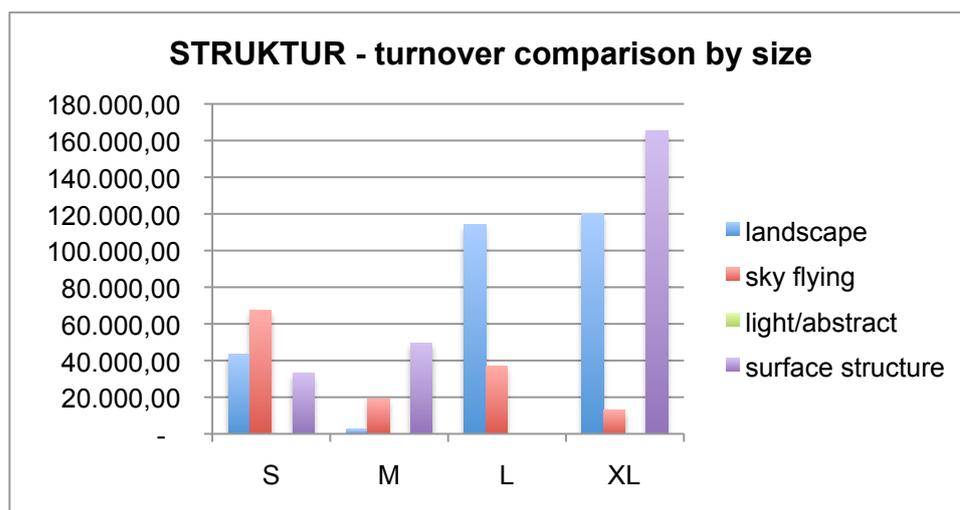
Compared to the other categories *Struktur* has fewer sold lots on auction than other categories. *Landscape* with 26 sold lots is the series with the most sold works in the category. *Landscape* and *Sky* illustrate a similar allocation of sizes, but *Surface structure* displays a variation compared to all other series reviewed before. Only six out of sixteen works are small; five medium, one large and five extra large works have been sold between 2003 and today. *Watersurface* is a rare series, which reaches high prices when on sale. *Freisch* (2001) is, after the iconic images of Lutz and Alex, one of the most expensive small-sized images sold by Christie's, London, for €11,993 including buyer's premium. Despite the small size and an edition of ten the work realized an unusually high price, which happens quite rarely in that combination.



Image 32: Wolfgang Tillmans, *Roadworks 98*, 1998¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ ARTNET 2015 ARTNET, web page, <http://www.artnet.com/artists/wolfgang-tillmans/roadworks-98-VUqc7b4peYEDFRM8RQN3Rg2>, last access on 26.04.2015

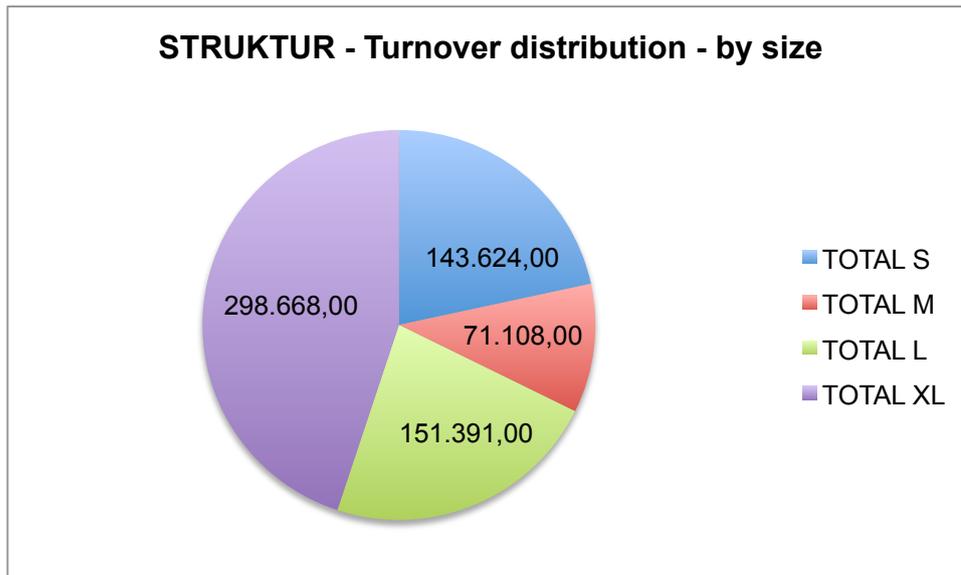
Roadworks 98, 1998, belonging to the subgroup *landscape*, is an example of a work that only reached the low estimate, when one would have thought it could have sold for a much larger amount. With dimensions of 137.1 x 202.6 cm it is clearly an extra large size, but with an unusual edition of 3 plus 1 artist proof. Phillips New York estimated the work as valued between €11,557 and €15,410, it achieved a hammer price of €9,246 (€11,095 including buyer's premium). In spite of the size it was sold below the estimate, could the reason be because of its larger edition? Normally all large formats are unique or an edition of 1, there are four pictures of *Roadworks 98* in the same size. This is definitely the reason for the low estimate, the reasons behind the results can only be guessed, as is always the case with auction results.



Graph 10: STRUKTUR – turnover comparison by size¹¹⁶

Why prices rise on auction can have many reasons. Maybe two financially strong bidders want the same piece of art and do not care if the price is reasonable or not. Maybe there are no bidders because the general financial situation is not good. Maybe someone missed the work and did not know it is on auction.

¹¹⁶ Analysis based on data from: ARTPRICE 2015, ARTPRICE, web page, <http://web.artprice.com/artist/135198/wolfgang-tillmans/index>, accessed on 13.4.2015



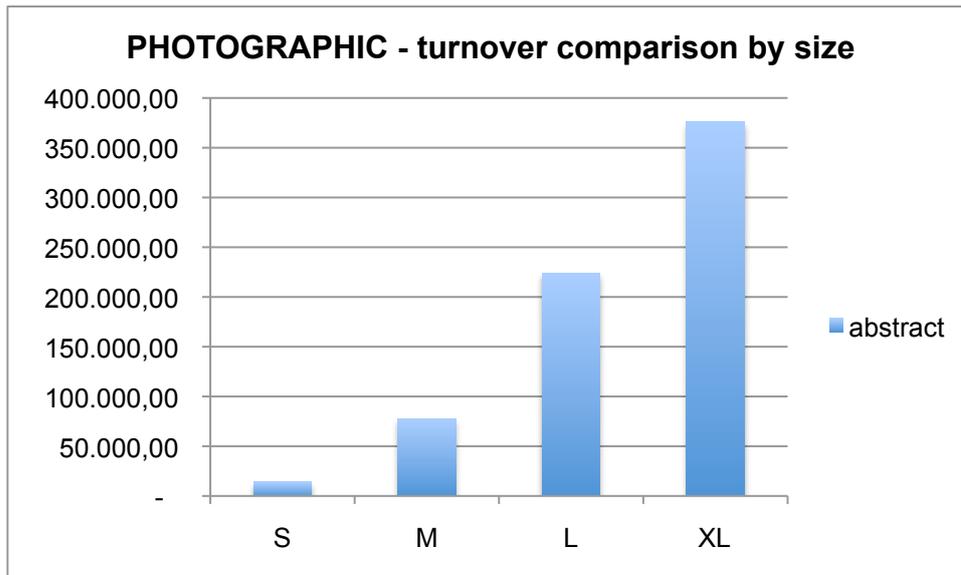
Graph 11: STRUKTUR – Turnover distribution – by size¹¹⁷

Struktur is the first of all analyzed categories in which the small size is the only the third strongest size in turnover. Already when looking at Still Lives the extra large size appears to be much stronger than the other sizes, but still the small size played a big part in the turnover distribution by size. Moreover, this category has almost an even distribution between the various sizes that Tillmans has produced. Therefore one can say that *Struktur* has the extra-large formats as its champion in terms of sales as the topic of that category is best perceived by the collectors when shown in large formats.

Photographic/Light

Of all categories and sub groups *Photographic/light* is the one with most large sizes. In total only three small works of this series were sold at auction. Whereas nine medium-, six large-, and eight extra large–sized works have been sold quite successfully. This distribution is also strongly noticeable in graph 12 that shows the turnover comparison by size for this category.

¹¹⁷ Analysis based on data from: ARTPRICE 2015, ARTPRICE, web page, <http://web.artprice.com/artist/135198/wolfgang-tillmans/index>, accessed on 13.4.2015



Graph 12: PHOTOGRAPHIC – turnover comparison by size¹¹⁸

Photographic/light is a category with no subgroups, or at least it seems to be like this because Wolfgang Tillmans did not surround them with a circle in his sketch for *if one thing matters, everything matters*. *Blushes*, *Metal Pictures*, *Super Collider*, *Light Marks*, *Strings/Lines* and *Silver* for example are series, which belong to the category of *Photographic/light*.

When looking at the result of all abstract works from 1999 until today two results stand out. One is *Freischwimmer, 56* (2004) and the second is *Lighter, Green I* (2008). *Freischwimmer, 56* (2004) was signed on auction at Christie's in November 2014. It is in a format of 240 x 180 cm and is a signed artist proof. The chromogenic print is mounted to a board. The estimate was €38,558–€51,176 and the achieved hammer price was €89,558 (€110,668 including buyer's premium). The estimate was doubled and the sale was a huge success. Looking at the price realized by works from this group it is obviously the most expensive of all his series in average per piece.

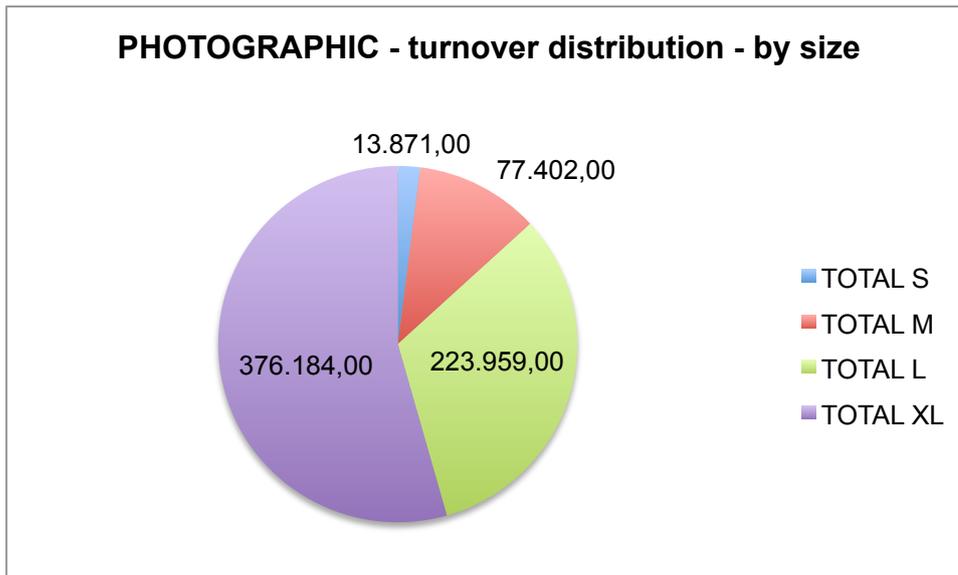
¹¹⁸ Analysis based on data from: ARTPRICE 2015, ARTPRICE, web page, <http://web.artprice.com/artist/135198/wolfgang-tillmans/index>, accessed on 13.4.2015



Image 33: Wolfgang Tillmans, *Freischwimmer 56*, 2004¹¹⁹

Lighter, Green I (2008) is the second work in this category which achieved a surprisingly high result at auction. It was sold at Phillips, New York, in September 2013. The unique work is signed and measures 61 x 51.1 cm. The experts of Phillips estimated the work at €11,218–€14,957 and it was sold for €33,655 hammer price (€42,068 including buyer's premium). As *Lighter* is a series that rarely appears on auction, one might think it is a much sought-after series and therefore reaches prices that are nearly three times the original estimate. But looking at the only two other works from this series this impression vanishes quickly. *Lighter, Blue Up III* (2008) and *Lighter, Blue-Black 1* (2008) have both only fetched prices slightly higher than the lower estimate. This brings one to the conclusion, that the sales result of *Lighter, Green I* (2008) is an exception.

¹¹⁹ VMAGAZINE 2015 VMAGAZINE, web page, <http://www.vmagazine.com/site/content/3204/v-want-it>, last access on 26.04.2015



Graph 13: PHOTOGRAPHIC – turnover distribution – by size¹²⁰

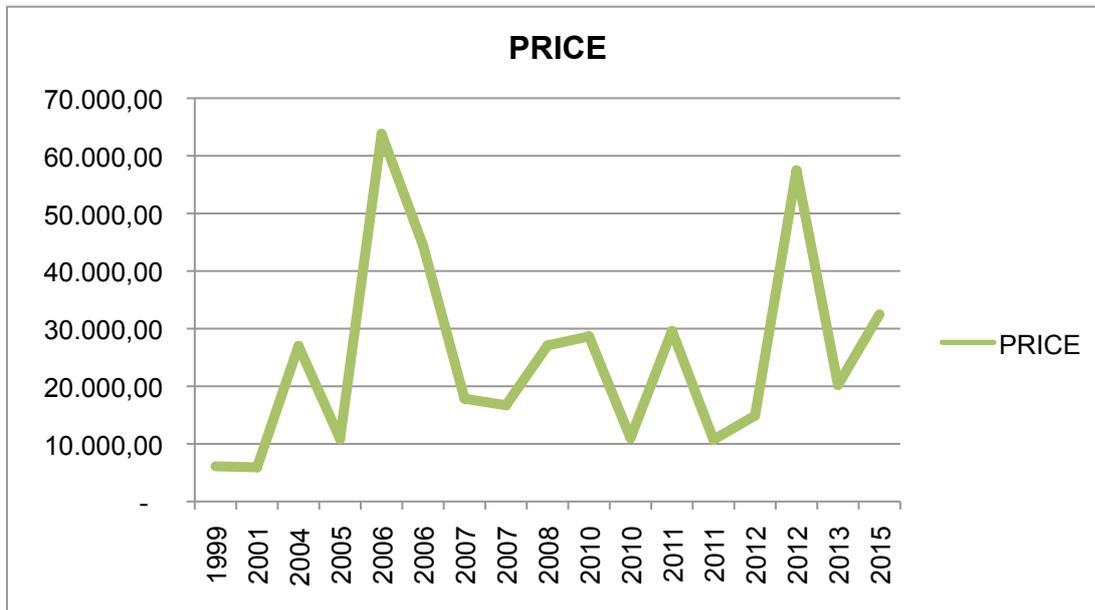
As mentioned before, only three works of a small size have been sold from this category, this is clearly visible in graph 13 showing the turnover distribution by size. The two largest formats are far stronger in turnover in comparison to the other two sizes. Eight extra large works as well as six large works are much stronger than the nine medium and three small works, which is reasonable because larger sizes have a higher demand, but this also means that *Photographic/light* is the category with the highest number of large-sized works sold at auction.

Installations & Groups of Works

In addition to the four categories created by Tillmans I looked at the results from the secondary market of his sold installations and groups of works. From 1999 to today sixteen installations or groups of works have been sold at auction. Those sixteen sold lots form a total price of €424,971, which is an average of €24,998 per sold lot. Nearly all of them reached a price above €10,000, with one achieving €63,808. Whether it is based on the number of images or that an installation can be rebuilt as discussed before is not quite clear, both achieve similar prices. But in graph 14 two peaks in 2006 and 2012 are visible. In 2006 he had one of the highest number of sold lots at

¹²⁰ Analysis based on data from: ARTPRICE 2015, ARTPRICE, web page, <http://web.artprice.com/artist/135198/wolfgang-tillmans/index>, accessed on 13.4.2015

auction. Concerning the annual turnover, 2012 was to this day the second strongest year with a total turnover of €422,030.¹²¹



Graph 14: Price – Installations & Groups of Works¹²²

Overall Comparison

After looking closely at every category individually it is necessary to compare the results with each other and therefore to gain an overall understanding of the market situation. The ranking in terms of overall sales comparison is: *People*, *Still Lives*, *Photographic/light*, *Struktur*, and *Installations & groups of works*. Even though the small size is the dominant size in *People* the amount of works sold is so high that the overall sales result is still higher than in categories with a high number of large works sold, like *Photographic/light*, *Still Lives*, or *Struktur*.

¹²¹ ARTPRICE 2015, ARTPRICE, (cf note 97)

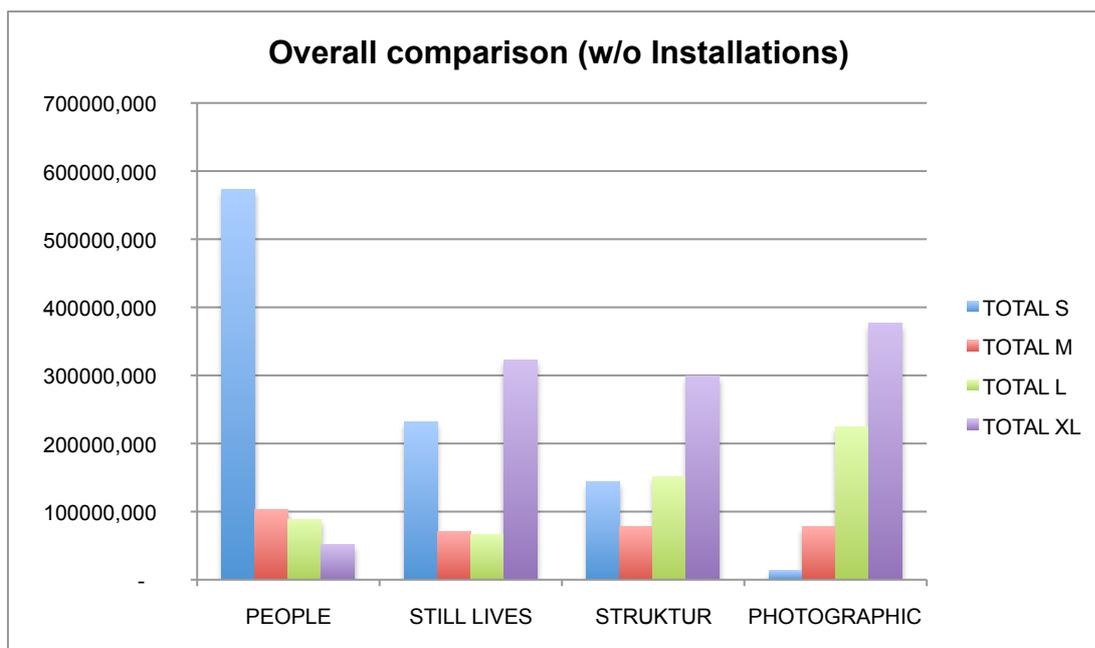
¹²² Analysis based on data from: ARTPRICE 2015, ARTPRICE, web page, <http://web.artprice.com/artist/135198/wolfgang-tillmans/index>, accessed on 13.4.2015



Graph 15: Overall sales comparison¹²³

Still Lives, *Struktur*, and *Photographic/light* are quite close to each other with a difference of only around €60,000. Just looking at the overall sales comparison without considering the sizes is not only inaccurate but also leads to false conclusions. Graph 16 shows the sales results broken down by size. The effect that size has on a sales price can be observed in the diagram. Whereas *People* gains its high overall result by the quantity of works being sold at auction, *Photographic/light* reaches high results through larger size works being sold at auction. For example one hundred eighty one sold works of all sizes from *People* achieved a total turnover of €916,529 and twenty-five sold works of all sizes of *Photographic/light* reached €691,416. This underlines the fact that the size is the essential criteria when estimating and selling works by Wolfgang Tillmans at auction. But exceptions do happen as we have seen with small sizes of the works like *Lutz & Alex* and also with large works like *Roadworks*, 98. In general one can say that small works do appear much more frequently on the market but only achieve moderate prices whereas most of the large works are sold over the estimate, but do not appear on auction that often.

¹²³ Analysis based on data from: ARTPRICE 2015, ARTPRICE, web page, <http://web.artprice.com/artist/135198/wolfgang-tillmans/index>, accessed on 13.4.2015



Graph 16: Overall comparison (w/o Installations)¹²⁴

In conclusion, this investigation reveals that the valuation of an artist is dependent on many aspects and it shows that today the award of an art prize is at least as influential as the number and location of an artist's solo and group shows, as well as his presence in the international art market, such as art fairs, auctions, and of course galleries. In the end, all of these aspects clearly lead the reader to conclude that they can only help to calculate and forecast an artist's valuation, since the contemporary art market is one of the least transparent.

Furthermore, when comparing the different categories, one phenomenon stands out, which is remarkable since Tillmans, intentionally or unintentionally, has achieved within each of his categories that which is considered at least one, if not two master works among the different sizes. Therefore, looking at it from a market point of view, Tillmans has a well-balanced portfolio of different series and different sizes allowing the collectors to essentially purchase all of his works and thereby reflecting all of his talent and artistic purposes while still holding all the benefits from the portfolio theory.

¹²⁴ Analysis based on data from: ARTPRICE 2015, ARTPRICE, web page, <http://web.artprice.com/artist/135198/wolfgang-tillmans/index>, accessed on 13.4.2015

Interview Daniel Buchholz, February 5, 2014, Cologne

IH: Mr. Buchholz, which effects did receiving the Turner Prize have on both Wolfgang Tillmans and yourself, as his gallerist? Did the prices develop positively right after the award? In 2001, Tillmans had the highest increase in turnover on the secondary market —do you see any connections there?

DB: Back then, the Turner Prize was more in fashion than it is today. I can very well remember the headline in the *Sun*: “German Gay Photographer catches the Turner.” There have definitely been some effects. Tillmans was already known then, but he wasn’t really taken seriously by big collectors due to his work for some magazines. As of yesterday, he is a Royal Academician of the Royal Academy of London.

IH: Since 2001, he sold more works in 2005 and 2006 on the secondary market. Does the primary market reflect the same thing? Is it because of his usually rather abstract motifs that his sales were better in these years, or can it also be dependent on the fact that these motifs have a larger format?

DB: Prices are more likely raised after big exhibitions and high demand, what naturally occurs after such exhibitions. Especially international exhibitions and the consequently generated media attention are highly relevant. In this case the motif plays an important role as well as the format since they are mostly “artist proofs.”

IH: If receiving an award like the Turner Prize has an effect on the market price, do you think that it has more of an effect on the primary or secondary market?

DB: Price changes are always decided together with the artist. The higher the efforts and the demand, the higher the price. In general, this is a continuous process with a gallery, whereas there are changing tendencies on the secondary market.

IH: What is the reason that an artist like Wolfgang Tillmans has such a high market share and turnover in the US and the UK? Only 16% of all pieces sold on the secondary market are sold in Germany, which corresponds only to 6% of his total turnover. Are his collectors mostly based in these two countries or is it because the big auction houses are based there?

DB: It is probably because the auction houses have responded to our international shows and the announced price increases when they have even tried to speculate on it, which is something that we always try to protect our artists from. Generally speaking, I cannot say that the majority of his collectors are from the US or UK; we are selling, for example, a lot of works to Spain as well. There is definitely a correlation that the secondary market is mostly taking place in London and New York.

IH: Did those works, which were part of the Turner Prize nominees' exhibition as well as the later Tate exhibition, have an increase in terms of collectors' attention and price?

DB: That's difficult to say, there are some individual iconic motifs, which are highly popular, whereas the installations matter most. The artist wants that all of his works are seen comparable to each other. The large formats and exemplary motifs like *Lutz & Alex* or *Tukan* are very popular. The same holds true for his later abstract works, but not every work is always available on the market, of course.

Conclusion

After approximately two decades of artistic activities, Wolfgang Tillmans stands for a strong player in today's art market. He is regarded as one of the most original and innovative artists of his generation. In this thesis, I have tried to re-draw his career, his foundations and his personal approach as well as to summarize his thoughts. Similarly important to me was to describe the conditions and market mechanisms for the production of art works today. That's due to the fact that Tillmans's works are mainly created by working with one medium – photography, which is a mass medium today that is used for various creative areas as well as businesses.

Of major interest is the finding that the spontaneity conveyed by Tillmans's works is a result of an exactly calculated composition, where their contents are in relation to his feelings, proclivities, antipathies etc., which makes it eminently autobiographically loaded. Nevertheless, Tillmans manages to bring these components into a formal category and translates them into his own poetry that only gradually opens up to the beholder. Critical in this context is that the process of reaching one's own awareness of the artist one finds a commonly valid formulation. This has always been the case with important art works of all times. Hence, Tillmans, who positioned himself as an artist using modern mediums, can be placed unconditionally in the continuum of our culture's arts.

His specific contribution lies within the fact that he managed to both ask and answer the questions relating to his generation using his own aesthetics and own ways of placement. Tillmans is for sure an intellectually and conceptually working artist. This resembles specifically a German tradition, which is comparable to the approaches of artists like Joseph Beuys or Gerhard Richter – despite the different individual artistic results.

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