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Tad Beck: Channels

Beck's usage of the nude figure returns us to the age of Thomas Eakins, where the fact of being unclothed was accepted, without question, as an aesthetic state without political or social undertones.

The Philadelphia painter Thomas Eakins (1844-1916) used photography to pose and study his models, before incorporating them into paintings. An album of his work was recently uncovered, dubbed the "Grafly Album." Beck restaged Eakins' original tableaux using models from his own social circle, then composited them into the original photographic settings. Beck matches Eakins' models limb for limb, but allows anachronistic elements (wristbands, hairstyles) to reveal his digital overlay on top of the "original." The resulting images are mounted in period-appropriate silver repoussé frames, borrowing from Beck's "fictional history" of the original silver prints. The framed works are then re-photographed against a monochromatic black field, and finally printed as monolithic 42-inch squares. Beck confronts Eakins' Victorian moral-aesthetic with the rigors of his minimalist-conceptual artistic practice.

Closing February 20 at Samuel Freeman Gallery

