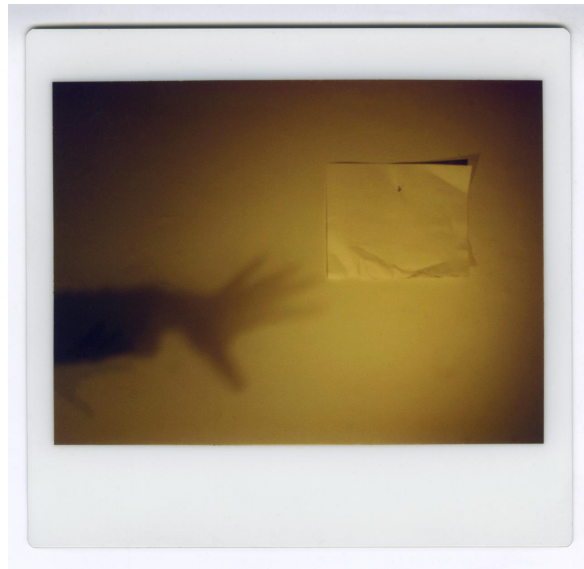


Robert Beck / Robert Buck

Robert Beck, *Vestige*
March 9–April 15, 2018
Opening Reception: Friday, March 9, 6–8PM



Robert Beck, *Untitled (Shadow hand and paper)*, 1979
Kodak Colorburst 250, 3 3/4 x 4 inches / 9.5 x 10.2 cm

"[Art] is a free spot in society, where you can do anything." – Chris Burden

Ulterior Gallery is pleased to announce two consecutive exhibitions by New York-based, transdisciplinary artist Robert Buck, who in 2008 changed his father's name from Beck to Buck as a work of art. The first exhibition, *Vestige*, will premiere an array of Beck's Kodak instant photographs from 1979 and 1980, taken during the artist's first years in New York City. The second show, *Second Hand*, will debut an installation of Buck's ongoing series of amended thrift store paintings, which he began ten years ago to coincide with the act of renaming himself.

Vestige will be on view March 9 through April 15, 2018, with a reception for the artist Friday, March 9, from 6 to 8 pm.

In 2008, Robert Beck, motivated by developments in his art making, conducted a seemingly simple maneuver: he changed his last name by a single vowel, from e to u. As a conceptual gesture, one that also reflected contemporary social developments, this re-nomination fundamentally influenced who Buck became. By altering his surname by one letter, he challenged the title and privileges traditionally bestowed by the Name-of-the-Father, and the patriarchal institutions it upholds, such as family, church, law, and commerce. Consequently, something subtle yet profound transpired. By re-conceptualizing himself—making a name for himself—Buck ensured that what he experienced, created, and lived henceforth would not escape the effects of the transition from e to u—or, as it can be heard, from "me to you."

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The first exhibition, *Vestige*, is comprised of a constellation of Kodak Instant photographs taken after Beck first moved to New York City. Each image captures a moment staged by the artist, traces of his early creative life. The scenes or actions are fragments of a larger narrative, which the viewer is invited to reimagine. In one image, night surrounds a young woman lying in a concrete gully, a portrait of keeping darkness at bay. In another photograph, Beck himself is seen reflected in a bathroom mirror, posed with his hand over his mouth, eyes wide, as if he espies something menacing just beyond the frame. Another image shows the shadow of an outstretched hand reaching furtively for a blank sheet of paper. Forty years on, these Kodak photographs index the transitory nature of the body, technology and life. “Instant” indeed!

Buck’s inspiration for the *Vestige* installation was Le Corbusier’s Notre Dame du Haut chapel: both the architecture—specifically the broken grid of windows—as well as the hallowed context, which the religious aspects of some of the images echo. A few of the Kodaks are hung at elevated heights, with stepstools provided for the viewer’s use. Engaging their bodies to look, viewers become more keenly aware of the corporeal aspects of the images. This subtle action underscores a central theme of the exhibition: the body as a vestige in our increasingly techno-scientific, hypermodern age.

The subsequent exhibition, *Second Hand*, opening April 21, presents the artist’s ongoing series of amended readymade paintings. For these works, the artist appropriates signatures from sign-in books from his exhibitions as Buck, and using a one-inch grid, transcribes them—second hand, as it were—onto paintings that the artist bought in thrift stores. He then signs them “R. Buck.” The paintings are displayed on retail metal grid panels; the 3-inch grid amplifies the smaller trellis on the canvases. By recovering discarded paintings and infusing them with new meaning by superimposing a signature left in a gallery guestbook, then “notarizing” the amendment with his self-made name, Buck attests to the “second hand” nature of the Name-of-the-Father in the 21st Century.

About the Artist:

Robert Beck was born in 1959 in Baltimore, MD. He has lived and worked in New York since 1978 and currently spends time in far West Texas. Beck graduated with a BFA from New York University, Tisch School of the Arts Film and TV Department in 1983, and the Independent Study Program of the Whitney Museum of American Art a decade later. He has been exhibiting nationally and internationally since the 1990s. Beck/Buck’s work is included in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; San Francisco Museum of Art, San Francisco, CA; Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX; Getty Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA; Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, OH; and Centre Pompidou, Paris, France; among others. Recent solo and group exhibitions include *Strange Attractor*, Ballroom Marfa, Marfa, TX (2017); *Robert Buck: States of America*, Pizzuti Collection, Columbus, OH (solo, 2016); and, in collaboration with Donald Moffett, *Range: Experiments in New York, 1961 – 2007*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY (2017).

About the gallery:

Ulterior Gallery is an emerging art gallery on the Lower East Side of New York City. Established by Takako Tanabe, a Japanese gallerist originally from Tokyo, Ulterior is committed to the exhibition of works by an intergenerational array of artists of diverse cultures and backgrounds.

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