



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

EXHIBITION:

STEPHEN IRWIN | Check to see if still dead inside

DATES:

April 7 - May 14, 2017

RECEPTION:

Friday, April 7: 6-8pm

INVISIBLE-EXPORTS is proud to present “Check to see if still dead inside,” Stephen Irwin’s second solo exhibition with the gallery.

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The late Louisville-based artist Stephen Irwin, began making the works for which he would become most widely known in the early 2000s. A lifelong heart patient working always in the shadow of his own poor health, Irwin was intensely focused on the aesthetic quality of ephemerality, particularly as it might be staged and performed through interaction with the viewer. Fugitive encounters of all kinds were powerful material: A gay man raised in rural Kentucky, he was not unfamiliar with the perspective that viewed his own desire as shadowed. Of course, desire is always a shadowy, altered state, and memory can consecrate even as it beclouds.

In his “rub-outs,” Irwin would select pages from vintage pornography, undoing the lusty plastic polish of the magazine by rubbing out the sheen and often much of the image itself. Through a variety of astringent processes, he would soften the blunt sexuality of the found image, abstracting the depicted scene and invoking a more suggestive and expansive erotic landscape of tenderness and perversion. Irwin’s work represents, for him, a reduction of these pornographic pages to their most essential forms, and the intimate works conduct a kind of discreet dialogue with art history, at once evocative of Old Master sketches, anatomy studies, quiet portraits of loved ones, and erotic art. And yet their demotic sourcing was crucial; he worked from images, he said, “that were created with little aesthetic regard, for prurient interest alone, to be used and then disposed of.”

“Check to see if still dead inside” collects many of Irwin’s most elemental compositions—the most rubbed-out, blissed-out, scrubbed-down. The works selected for this show are all black and white, with each image reduced to its own barest shadow, a kind of test of just how much can be taken away from a scene, or an encounter, before it truly disappears. Perhaps it never does.

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Stephen Irwin (1959-2010) lived and worked in Louisville, Kentucky. His work has been exhibited at the New Center for Contemporary Art (Louisville, KY); The Speed Museum (Louisville, KY); the Contemporary Art Center (Cincinnati, OH); Maureen Paley (London); Gallery Diet (Miami, FL); r/e Projects (Madrid); PPOW (New York); Vox Populi (Philadelphia); Galerie Stefan Roepke (Cologne); Zephyr Gallery (Louisville); and DePauw University (Greencastle, IN); among others. His work has appeared in *Beautiful Decay*, *The Huffington Post*, *Vice Magazine*, *Butt Magazine*, and *Art Papers*, and is in the collections of the Speed Museum and 21c Museum, both in Louisville, KY.

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INVISIBLE-EXPORTS is located at 89 Eldridge Street, just south of Grand Street. Gallery hours are Wednesday through Sunday, 11am-6pm, and by appointment. For more information, call 212-226-5447 or email: info@invisible-exports.com.