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## Trees, Petals, Dust, Stone: Andy Goldsworthy at Galerie Lelong

by Noah Dillon

**Andy Goldsworthy: *Leaning into the Wind* at Galerie Lelong**

October 22 to December 5, 2015

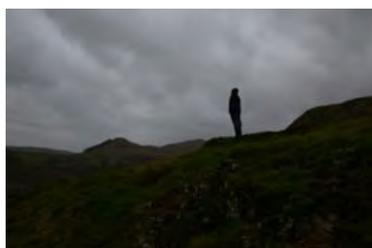
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Andy Goldsworthy, *Poppy spits*, Digne, France, 10 June 2015, 2015. Suite of four unique archival inkjet prints, 12.4 x 18.5 inches each.

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Lelong.

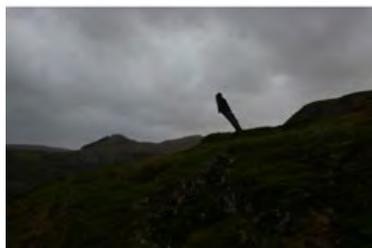
The English critic John Ruskin identified, in his book *Modern Painters* (1843-60), the “pathetic fallacy.” He described it as a form of anthropomorphism, where inanimate objects are given human qualities, emotions, preferences. As a negative demonstration of the fallacy, Andy Goldsworthy draws from the natural world a dense, corporeal show of new and old work, recently at Galerie Lelong. Like much of his work, Goldsworthy’s photos at Lelong document the artist interacting with found terrestrial materials: stones, leaves, flowers, mud, running water. Each work shows either the result of some manual intervention (a ray of light illuminated by dust) or the process of the intervention itself (Goldsworthy scattering dust, or casting a shadow, etc.). Goldsworthy’s work is balanced slimly between the large-scale land artists of the 1960s and ‘70s, and the performative documentarians of the mundane from the same era, such as Richard Long or Stanley Broun.



Straight away, viewers first encounter *Poppy spits*, Digne, France, 10 June 2015 (2015), a set of four photographs showing the artist somniferously spitting mouthfuls of poppy petals into the air. Other images show him releasing a seagull, hiding in a cave, covering himself in mud, digging a hole. The acts are totemic and often look both a bit silly and sensorially profound. Goldsworthy’s affect resembles a body as experiential meat, rather than explorer or biologist. His actions are minimal, abstracting the unrefined materials only as much as necessary to show their qualities in action, rather than an illustration or a means to some other distant end, such as minerals turned to pigment, to paint, to a picture.



The work here is split between work from the 1970s and ‘80s on the one hand, and new photographs and videos on the other. Formal allusions can be read into all of the images. *Hazel stick throws*, Banks, Cumbria, 10 July 1980 (1980), which features branches tossed overhead, creates lines reminiscent of Franz Kline. A video of Goldsworthy crawling through bare hedges — called *Hedge crawl*, dawn, frost, cold hands, Sinderby, England, 4 March 2014 (2014) — resembles early video art by people such as Paul McCarthy, or films by Maya Deren. The slime of *Black sand*, Morecambe Bay, Lancashire, October 1976 (1976/2006) and petals of *Poppy petals*, left hand wrapped by me, right hand by my daughter, washed off in the middle of River Sark, the border between Scotland and England, 12 June 2014 (2014) recall paint, or Kazuo Shiraga. But these are largely ancillary and, by themselves, a kind of pathetic fallacy.



Many of the earlier pieces call up allusions to that era, or the one that preceded it: grubby, back-to-the-land hippies; soldiers in Vietnam mire; or the recently discovered Tasaday tribe, a kind of catalogue of varieties of human relations to the natural world. Goldsworthy’s is a primitivist, animist, pseudo-anthropology. He approaches what the philosopher Eugene Thacker calls “the world-without-us,” distinguished from the domain of civilization (world as productive resource) and from the natural world (a subject of inquiry, classification, a source of knowledge). Instead, Goldsworthy records the mute interactions of one mass against another: body in tree, flower petals on water, dust in air.

Like Bas Jan Ader, Goldsworthy treats basically *the body*, either by slapstick or with more threatening physical danger. It’s meat and eyeballs in a landscape, rather than within a set of human relations and mechanisms. Goldsworthy shows a process of finding out what happens to a body within these spaces, how they affect him physically or what can happen to him there. The show’s eponymous photographic series, *Leaning into the wind*, Dumfriesshire, Scotland, 15 January 2015 (2015), demonstrates this precisely. The artist, standing on a Scottish ridge, leans far into a strong wind, canting at an angle greater than 45°. There’s

Andy Goldsworthy, *Leaning into the Wind*, Dumfriesshire, Scotland, 15 January 2015, 2015. Suite of three unique archival inkjet prints, 23.6 x 35.5 inches each. Courtesy

of the artist and Galerie Lelong.

not a lot to intuit from this, as all of the pieces are laid at the viewer's feet. But that wind on a crag can support a man's body — that such material forces can produce this effect — is shocking. The space and its possibilities are only present because they're unreformed and untranslated by humans. Instead, Goldsworthy lofts his subjects into the air, high enough that we can get a glimpse of how little we know about what they are.



Andy Goldsworthy, Hazel stick throws, Banks, Cumbria, 10 July 1980, 1980. Suite of nine vintage black and white photographs, 12.5 x 18 inches each. Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Lelong.

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