

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

111 South Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60603  
t 312.443.3626 f 312.443.0193 www.artinstituteofchicago.org

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**MEDIA CONTACTS:**

Erin Hogan  
(312) 443-3664  
[ehogan@artic.edu](mailto:ehogan@artic.edu)

Chai Lee  
(312) 443-3625  
[clee4@artic.edu](mailto:clee4@artic.edu)

**ART INSTITUTE DEBUTS NEW SERIES BY  
CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHER UTA BARTH**

**... and to draw a bright white line with light. On View May 14 through August 14, 2011**

Los Angeles–based artist **Uta Barth** (b. 1958)—best known for her sensual, contemplative photographs of domestic tableaux without action or incident—will be premiering a new body of work titled ***...and to draw a bright white line with light.***, created specifically for the Art Institute of Chicago. The images, 15 large-format inkjet prints, will be on view alongside works from two earlier series in the **Modern Wing's Bucksbaum Gallery (G188)** from **May 14 through August 14, 2011.**



Uta Barth has said, “*Seeing Is Forgetting the Name of the Thing One Sees* is the title of a biography of Robert Irwin. Long before that it was a line in a Zen text. No words could better describe the intentions and aim of my work throughout my career.” Since the early 1990s, she has focused insistently on visual and photographic perception. Observing the incidental and atmospheric becomes, for Barth, a subject in and of itself. She is less interested in what the camera is pointing at than in guiding the viewer’s attention to the fundamental act of looking. Unlike other photographers who focus on tangible subjects and maximum clarity in their work, Barth uses specific techniques to thwart viewers’ expectations of the medium and align it more closely to the less precise act of seeing. In her series *Ground* (1992–1997) and *Field* (1995), for example, her attention to the forgotten picture plane of the background resulted in objects being out of focus due

to a shallow depth of field. All of her projects are directed at bringing to the fore the minute acts of perception and misperception that make up a person's visual apprehension of the world. And at the same time that Barth encourages the viewer to fill the emptiness of an image, she also encourages an appreciation for the everyday objects that we no longer "see." In each new image series, Barth simultaneously expands and refines her investigation of the nature of vision, always pushing the camera to show us more about the way we see.

In ... *and to draw a bright white line with light.*, as with much of her earlier work, the domestic setting is fertile ground for Barth's nuanced explorations of changes in atmosphere. On an August day, Barth was mesmerized by the play of light as she drew her curtains. For the first time in her work, she intervened in a scene, manipulating and molding the curtains to create lines and curves of light. The word "photograph" means "drawing or writing with light"; Barth's new images, then, are quite literally photographs. As the light expands from a sliver to a wide ribbon across sequences of images, the simple subject is transformed into a complex photographic experience describing perception and the passage of time.

In this exhibition at the Art Institute, her new work is contextualized by examples from two earlier series that engage in similarly attentive looking. Her 2002 series *white blind (bright red)* began with the artist staring in a prolonged fashion at a tree outside her window. The ghostly images mimic the afterimages that result from optical fatigue and continue as a visual memory even after one turns away. Presented as a sequence of panels, a technique Barth has employed in many series, the photographs imply the motion of time, with its mix of continuity and rupture. In 2007 she produced *Sundial*, a body of photographs made in her house at the transitional moment of dusk. In these pictures, as the sun marks time, objects fade in and out of visibility, and light becomes an almost liquid substance.

Barth's work has been exhibited widely and is well represented in museum collections, including The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Solomon R. Guggenheim Collection; The Tate Modern, London; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis. *Uta Barth* at the Art Institute is the artist's first major solo exhibition in a Chicago museum.

*Uta Barth* is curated by Elizabeth Siegel, associate curator of photography at the Art Institute of Chicago. Generous support for the exhibition is provided by the Exhibitions Trust: Goldman Sachs,

Kenneth and Anne Griffin, Thomas and Margot Pritzker, the Earl and Brenda Shapiro Foundation, Donna and Howard Stone, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Sullivan, and an anonymous donor.

**Image credit:** Uta Barth. German, born 1958. ... *and to draw a bright white line with light (Untitled 11.3)*, 2011. Inkjet print, 37 x 56 in. Courtesy of the artist; 1301 PE, Los Angeles; and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York. © Uta Barth, Courtesy Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York, and 1301PE, Los Angeles.

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10:30 am–8:00 pm Thursday

10:30 am–5:00 pm Saturday, Sunday

**TARGET FREE THURSDAY EVENINGS AFTER 5:00 pm**

Closed Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day.

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Children 14 and over, students, and seniors \$12.00 Includes all special exhibitions

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Children under 14 always free

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