

ARTE FUSE

Welcoming Summer with a “Splash” at Margaret Thatcher Projects

By Jennifer Wolf



William Betts’ current exhibition, entitled *Splash*, at Margaret Thatcher Projects offers a subtle peek at the limits of privacy, cased in the guise of celebrating summer fun in the sun. Adapted from security footage gathered at public pools and the like in the artist’s hometown of Miami, the paintings focus on the waterborne activities of everyday people, blissfully unaware that their fun is being caught on camera. Thus, the content of *Splash* hedges the line between ethereality and permanence, the sinister and the light-hearted, and voyeurism and celebration, in its dual embrace of Big Brother-like surveillance and the simple quotidian pleasures of the individuals at play in the paintings.

Technically too, Betts’ work is a joy to encounter. Pointillist in conception, each image is composed of grids of perfectly round dabs of acrylic paint. Viewed up close, the paintings dissolve from readable images into an abstract array of color, ruled by the blue hues of the water. Unexpectedly, they become almost photographic in clarity when viewed through the lens of a camera. Using a limited palette of less than a dozen colors, the result is reminiscent of both the graininess of the relatively low-quality footage from which the imagery is drawn, as well as the optical nature of the Ben-Day printing process. In this way, the paintings included in *Splash* bring historical influences ranging from Georges Seurat to Roy Lichtenstein directly into an Orwellian interpretation of the 21st century, providing a thought-provoking glance at this seemingly ubiquitous form of voyeurism as well as simply a great introduction to the summer.

William Betts: *Splash* at Margaret Thatcher Projects

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