

Lucien Samaha

The Price of Gas & First Digitals

July 13 – August 17, 2024

Lucien Samaha presents two photography exhibitions curated by Gianmaria Andreetta and Richard Sides, spanning *Schiefe Zähne* and *The Wig*.

At *Schiefe Zähne*, Samaha presents works from two different series. “The Price of Gas” spans 30 years of street photography throughout North America. This series connects an iconography of American life with a depiction of energy consumption, captured through the numerical display of changing gas prices at various moments in time. Samaha readily attends to the much-explored genre of Americana’s ideology, with its iconic imagery of car culture as it emerged in the post-war period, formulating a critical sensibility through observation. Political meaning is expressed through the well-known vista of American modernism and what is eclipsed by it—a different idea of place, less about individual expressivity and more about observation and repetition. Samaha recontextualizes individual shots from an extensive archive of personal images by retrospectively grouping them under the category “The Price of Gas”, indicative of his attentiveness to taxonomy and archival practices.

The second series, “The First Digitals,” includes photographs Samaha made while working at the Marketing Education Center of the Eastman Kodak Company in Rochester, New York using the first digital cameras, which catered to journalists and newspapers. The mundane subjects, their limitations and aberrations, reflect the nascent stage of digital photography, hinting at how the potential for streamlined image processing and distribution quickly captured the imagination of corporations and capital.

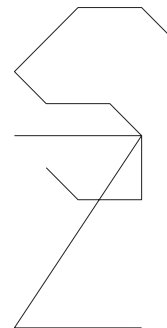
Lucien Samaha (b. 1958) is a Lebanese–American photographer and artist based in New York City. Samaha was born in Beirut and migrated to the US in 1970. After working as a flight attendant with Trans World Airlines from 1978 to 1986, Samaha studied photography and received the first Professional Photography Division Scholarship from Kodak. He later joined the company, becoming the first photographer with access to the prototype digital camera and various new generations as they were produced. Having always documented his life through photography, Samaha claims: “I am often asked if I knew then the relevance of what I was doing, and in all sincerity, first, I was doing my job, and, second, I was photographing, which all along had been my pursuit” (BOMB Magazine, 2020). His archive today counts over a million images collected all over the world, with a significant part being from the US, Lebanon, and the 107th floor of the World Trade Center, where he DJed and hosted the weekly Mondo 107 parties. In addition, Samaha is an early member of the Arab Image Foundation, founded in Beirut in 1997, which aims to track down, collect, preserve, and study photographs from the Middle East, North Africa, and the Arab diaspora.

Schiefe Zähne

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List of Works

Room 1

Police Bus in Times Square, 1995

inkjet print, aluminium frame

66,7 x 100,5 cm

High Noon Manhattan Bridge, 1995

inkjet print, aluminium frame

66,7 x 100,5 cm

Two Kangaroos, 1991

archival inkjet print, prototype digital photograph (DCSP)

Print: 28 x 21,6 cm. Image: 16,5 x 12,7 cm

A Royal, 1991

archival inkjet print, prototype digital photograph (DCSP)

Print: 21,6 x 28 cm. Image: 16,7 x 23 cm

Maggie's Roses, 1995

inkjet print, aluminium frame

40 x 26,7 cm

Jersey Bound, 1995

inkjet print, aluminium frame

40 x 26,7 cm

Room 2

Moonrise over Tucson, 1991

archival inkjet print, prototype digital photograph (DCSP)

Print: 28 x 21,6 cm. Image: 16,5 x 12,7 cm

The Bionauts, 1991

archival inkjet print, prototype digital photograph (DCSP)

Print: 28 x 21,6 cm. Image: 16,5 x 12,7 cm

Casper's Taxi, 1995

inkjet print, aluminium frame

40 x 26,7 cm

Untitled (870300-01-14), 1987

archival inkjet print, black and white film, aluminium frame

40 x 26,7 cm

Untitled (870709-00-19-ANN), 1987

archival inkjet print, color negative film, aluminium frame

40 x 26,7 cm

Untitled (870614-01-17), 1987

archival inkjet print, black and white film, aluminium frame

40 x 26,7 cm

Untitled (870709-00-02-ANN), 1987

archival inkjet print, color negative film, aluminium frame

40 x 26,7 cm

Untitled (LAX-0178-23), 1988

archival inkjet print, color negative film, aluminium frame

40 x 26,7 cm

Untitled (LAX-0174-10), 1988

archival inkjet print, color negative film, aluminium frame

40 x 26,7 cm