

# Felix Gonzalez-Torres

## *Specific Objects without Specific Form*

Felix Gonzalez-Torres, one of the most influential artists of his generation, was born in Cuba and emigrated to Puerto Rico before settling in New York in the early 1980s, where he studied art and began his practice as an artist. His work combines elements of Conceptual art, Minimalism, political activism, and a deeply formal concern with a wide range of media, including public billboards, drawings, and the use of readymade, ordinary objects—clocks, mirrors, light fixtures. Amongst his most famous works of art are his candy piles and paper stacks from which viewers are allowed to take away a part of the artwork. Each version of these affective recastings of minimalism's hard-edged geometries and materials offers a model of the artwork as premised on its own instability and potential for change: an object without an already preset or specific form.

The result is a profoundly human body of work, intimate and fragile even as it destabilizes so many seemingly unshakable certainties (the artwork as autonomous and fixed, the exhibition as a place to look but not touch, the author as the ultimate form-giver). In these, as in all his work, Gonzalez-Torres challenged the notions of public and private, originality, authorship and authoritative structures (in art as in life). The artist has been the object of important retrospectives during his life as well as after his early death by AIDS in 1996.

For this exhibition, Wiels will present a comprehensive survey of his body of work including both rarely seen and more known drawings, collages, photographs, sculptures, and installations, as well as interventions in public space while proposing an alternative to the idea of a singular, fixed, or totalizing retrospective. Over the course of its duration at Wiels, ***Felix Gonzalez-Torres: Specific Objects without Specific Form*** will evolve. A first version of the exhibition by curator Elena Filipovic will open to the public and, half way through its duration, opening on March 5, 2010, the artist Danh Vo, whose own practice has been deeply influenced by Gonzalez-Torres's work, will re-install the exhibition, potentially adding or removing artworks, changing such things as lighting, labels, or the order of presentation, in other words, effectively making an entirely new exhibition.

Thus defying the conventional retrospective exhibition format and acknowledging the centrality of instability, the passage of time, and the questioning of authority to Gonzalez-Torres' artworks, each version of ***Felix Gonzalez-Torres: Specific Objects without Specific Form*** will replace the idea of the single, authoritative exhibition. It instead offers its visitors the possibility of not only finding a new vision with each visit, but also of experiencing an exhibition that doubles in meaning and possibility over the duration of the show.

This project will also importantly be the reflection of the emerging artist participating as curator. Extending the long history of artist-curated exhibitions, from the avant-garde to the present, this project may reveal as much about Felix Gonzalez-Torres as it will about the particular optic through which an artist like Danh Vo appropriates and understands Gonzalez-Torres' work. In this way, this exhibition complements the current international interest in Vo's work, offering audiences a new way to view his sources, influences, and practice.

Curator: **Elena Filipovic**, Associate Curator at Wiels Contemporary Art Centre, Brussels with Danh Vo.

**Danh Vo** (born in 1975 in Saigon, Vietnam) is a graduate of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Copenhagen and the Städelschule, Frankfurt. He currently lives and works in Berlin. In 2008 he participated, among other exhibitions, in Manifesta 7, Rovereto and had solo exhibitions at the Kunsthalle Basel and the Kadist Art Foundation, Paris. He was among the finalists for the Nationalgalerie Prize for Young Art (2009).