

# ANTHONY REYNOLDS GALLERY

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## PRESS RELEASE



## ZOO

### RICHARD BILLINGHAM

30 MARCH – 5 MAY 2007

Anthony Reynolds Gallery is proud to present the first London showing of work from Richard Billingham's series, *Zoo*.

For the past few years, Billingham has been recording images, in video and still photography, of animals and animal behaviour. He has travelled the world, visiting Zoos from Antwerp to Addis Ababa, Berlin to Buenos Aires, Dudley to Tel Aviv. Billingham's fascination with this subject matter goes back much further, to memories of childhood outings and to his profound, life-long relationship with landscape and the natural world.

There have been many instances of artists, and particularly photographers, turning their attention to animals in captivity, often drawing parallels with human behaviour. Billingham's work is different; there is the pictorial brilliance and depth of understanding that we know so well from his celebrated pictures of his family and the images of his home environment that followed and there is an almost tangible empathy that is achieved without a trace of sentimentality. In this exhibition we are showing five of these haunting, large-scale photographs

Billingham has also made a remarkable series of video works concentrating on the archetypal repetitive behaviour so disturbingly adopted by caged or restricted creatures. We are presenting four of these. In a wall-sized image of an elephant's skin, swaying across the surface, to and fro, the physicality of the creature and the beauty of the image, both confined by an enclosure, form a union that is deeply moving. On a monitor the lowered head of a tapir nudges back and forth its immobile eye returning an unblinking soulful gaze. Into an empty frame of turquoise blue a seal looms into view and vanishes again, a long looped passage in and out of the void, a perpetual circling odyssey in watery space. High on the wall a strutting kea turns and rushes back, turns and rushes back, screwing its head skywards as it bolts. The video works are presented in different formats and sizes, each grouping allowing for both the independence of the single subject and the association of their shared context.

The video work was commissioned by VIVID with National Lottery funding through the Arts Council England. *Richard Billingham, ZOO*, a major new book, is published by VIVID on 22 March 2007

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