

GERD LUDWIG
SLEEPING CARS

February 4, 2016 through March 19, 2016
Reception for the Artist: Thursday, February 4, 7-9 pm

The Fahey/Klein Gallery is pleased to present *Sleeping Cars*, an exhibition of work by contemporary documentary photographer Gerd Ludwig. The exhibition features large scale photographs of resting cars at night throughout Los Angeles. Undeniably the city of cars; these vehicles are the blood in the veins of Los Angeles. Ludwig documents where these iconic Los Angeles inhabitants reside at night— tucked into driveways, proudly displayed in front of homes, glowing under street lamps, covered with tarps or simply left bare. The viewer is invited to become a voyeur, documenting alongside Gerd Ludwig where these cars go to rest at night.

Gerd Ludwig explains in the introduction to *Sleeping Cars* (Edition Lammerhuber, 2016), “My cars are loners. They command their own space and enjoy showing off their presence. Like a devoted bird watcher I have learned to recognize their sleeping patterns. With voyeuristic pleasure I’ve spied on them in their nightgowns. I’ve watched some sleep in the nude; some take afternoon naps and a few lucky ones get to sleep together. I find covered cars more in L.A. than anywhere else. Here, middle-class families generally own more than one car, but their homes only have one-car garages. So many cars are left parked on the street for an extended period – lovingly covered, especially during holidays, when their owners treat them like crated pets.”

The vehicles rest against backgrounds of varying ambient light on the winding streets of the Hollywood Hills to the flat gridded suburbs of the Valley. Nestled in the low-lying fog of these distinctly Los Angeles neighbourhoods, the vehicles begin to take on personalities of their own. Each car’s distinct surroundings create a different tableau and tempt the viewer to construct his own narrative behind each vehicle. Ludwig’s late night scenes of cars sitting alone on streets in the dead of night possess an inherent mysterious quality, and almost bring to mind a forgotten movie set of a noir film, both so intrinsic to Los Angeles.

“I like to photograph during foggy nights or a full moon. A few times the police have stopped me in my work, wondering what I was doing out in the streets in the middle of the night. Was I a Peeping Tom or even worse, a paparazzo? After being shown a few of the car photographs on my iPad, they’ve even colluded with me and tipped me off about interesting cars to check out in the neighborhood. The cars in this project are photographed as I find them. Occasionally, proud car owners will ask me if I want them to move or uncover the car for the photograph, but I generally don’t like them to disturb the cars in their slumber.”

Gerd Ludwig studied photography at the Folkwang University of the Arts in Essen, Germany and started working for publications such as *Geo*, *Stern*, *Spiegel*, *Fortune*, *Time*, and *LIFE*. Upon moving to New York in the 1980s, he began photographing for *National Geographic Magazine*. His focus on environmental issues and the socioeconomic changes following the dissolution of the Soviet Union resulted in his exhibition and book, *Broken Empire: After the Fall of the USSR*, a ten-year retrospective published internationally by *National Geographic* in 2001. Ludwig’s ongoing coverage of post-Soviet Russia has garnered his distinction as the world’s foremost color photographer documenting the region. In 2014 *The Long Shadow of Chernobyl*, his trilingual photo book based on 20 years documenting the aftermath of the Chernobyl accident, was released by Edition Lammerhuber. Gerd Ludwig lives and works in Los Angeles.