Since the early 1970s Billy Sullivan has accompanied New York’s underground, art and fashion scenes with his camera, using the resultant photographic material as templates for oil paintings, pastel drawings and elaborate multi-part slideshow installations. Sullivan shows his friends, family, lovers and muses, as well as the worlds and demimondes in which they move: clubs, ateliers, rumpled hotel rooms and elegant beach houses. In Sullivan’s imagery, which dispenses with any chronological order, the underground scene, the cultural elite and high society are always very close together, as are surface and abyss, the lust for life and the transience of youth. This distillation of Sullivan’s photographs, paintings and drawings showcases an ongoing dialogue between camera and paintbrush that characterizes his work.

Sullivan’s pictures are intimate, sensual and minutely observed. In his latter-day paintings, moments captured by his camera forty years back look as though they’d taken place only yesterday, defying the passage of time. They are unabatedly existential in their painstaking observation of casual beauty, desire and love in their every facet – between family members, lovers, fly-by-night acquaintances and kindred artistic spirits.

Sullivan succeeds in doing wholly without shock effects, voyeurism, irony and maudlin melancholy. The key to his work lies in the sincerity with which he approaches his subjects and to which they respond in kind. He juxtaposes images without comment or value judgment, piecing them together into a visual autobiography that is at the same time a chronicle of bohemian New York.
Press Release

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Still, Looking
Works 1969 – 2016

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