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COKE WISDOM O'NEAL
Happy Little Accidents

March 21 – April 20, 2013
Opening: Thursday, March 21, 6-8pm

Mixed Greens is thrilled to announce *Happy Little Accidents*, Coke Wisdom O'Neal's sixth solo exhibition with the gallery. This latest series of photographs is the result of unlikely circumstances, namely Superstorm Sandy.

This exhibition marks a moment of departure from O'Neal's regular pattern of working. Instead of constructing a rigid environment to explore identity, O'Neal embraces a chance collaboration in which water creates the frame and reinterprets his subject. On October 29, 2012, O'Neal's Red Hook studio suffered total destruction. Tools, books, completed artwork, and unfinished pieces were ruined. And yet, as the floodwaters receded, a series of old family slides emerged reborn. Instead of accepting them as lost, O'Neal rescued the slide sheets to scan and print.

While conflicts between man and nature are often contentious, O'Neal sees this accidental exchange between artist and nature as a fruitful collaboration—one that has strengthened his interest in abstraction. The flood waters produced a series of random results, and O'Neal found himself reminiscing about his early experiences with photography. The storm acted, in a way, as a reintroduction to a medium, and O'Neal is embracing the chaos.

In *Happy Little Accidents,* the floodwaters serve as material, subject, and framing device. Once-crisp images are now cloud-like watercolors, often with distinguishable central details preserved. Air bubbles result in a fish-eye effect recalling the colorfully foggy nature of nostalgia and O'Neal's compulsion to save the past.

O'Neal has long been preoccupied with framing his subjects, and the naturally occurring borders of each watermark make this series no exception. In his ongoing *Box series,* twenty-two foot tall plywood boxes serve as backdrops for the documentation of both individual identities as well as whole communities. In another body of work, *Blue Nude,* nude participants elegantly and actively crouch within a Plexiglas box. The confined space abstracts the subjects' identities to small signifiers such as tattoos and hair color. The boxes from both series serve multiple functions, existing as sculpture, performance, and a resulting photograph.

Before this exhibition, O'Neal was experimenting with abstraction and studying Warhol's *Oxidation Paintings,* but he was questioning a photographer's relationship to abstract mark-making. The hurricane ultimately provided the freedom to let go of what he was holding onto—both metaphysically and physically.

Coke Wisdom O'Neal is a New York City-based artist whose work has been exhibited in numerous venues throughout the United States including the Center for Contemporary Arts, Santa Fe, NM; Northern Illinois University Art Museum, DeKalb, IL; Socrates Sculpture Park, Queens, NY; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Tucson, AZ; the Furman Gallery at Lincoln Center, NYC; Chuchifritos, NYC; and White Columns, NYC. His solo exhibition venues include Mixed Greens, NYC; Finesilver Gallery, Houston, TX; Evo Gallery, Santa Fe, NM; and Aaron Packer Gallery, Chicago, IL. In 2009, he was chosen as a finalist in the Hasselblad Master Competition. The accompanying exhibition traveled to Hong Kong, Copenhagen, NYC, and London. In 2010 he won an inaugural "25 for 25" grant from AOL. He was a 2012 Foundation for Contemporary Arts grant recipient and a 2013 NYFA grant recipient. He will be an artist in residence, working on a large-scale community project, at MOCA Tucson later this year.

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