



Tim Davis: Upstate New York Olympics (2010-11)

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Image Caption (still from video): Tim Davis, *The Upstate New York Olympics* (detail, *In the Forsythia*) . 2010-2011.

In this newly acquired video installation, artist-poet Tim Davis creates and performs his own version of the Olympic Games. Transforming the neighborhoods, streets, and surrounding countryside of his town into athletic venues, Davis is the sole competitor in these events such as “Abandoned Building Bowling,” “No Trespassing Parallel Bars,” “Snowman Jiu Jitsu,” “Divine Vine Climb,” “Flag Pole Grapple,” and “Stream Luge,” among others. The artist professes to dislike the actual Olympic Games, but as Brian Wallace noted in the catalogue for an exhibition of *Upstate* at the Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art:

When I recently asked Davis directly about the impetus behind this project, he said to me that he was struck by a combined admiration for and loathing of what his age forces him to see as the next generation’s sense of place in the world. He cautiously broached the example of the “Jackass” series of videos and movies as an admirably direct—albeit deliberately non-contemplative—expression of profoundly fraught relationships with the physical world. He also referred to his ongoing interest in the self-effacing—but deeply confident—humor of early West Coast video art by practitioners such as William Wegman and Bruce Naumann, both of whom address mortality, endurance, power, and responsibility with an absurd literalness of narrative and a perverse economy of technical/formal means.

In heroic profile, Davis slyly salutes Old Glory, the state flag of New York, and the flag of “I’m lovin’ it” McDonald’s at the opening ceremony of his games. But the venues and settings of his events—barns, abandoned buildings, fields in flower, lawns under snow—are beautifully composed and filmed, a testament to his career as a photographer.

Davis is a former resident of Amherst, Massachusetts. He now works and lives in Tivoli, New York, and teaches photography at Bard College.