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Escape Artist in Levis, from the Elton John AIDS Foundation Photography Portfolio I

Accession Number: 2009:284.8

Artist: Taylor-Wood, Sam

Date: 2008

Medium: Digital chromogenic development print

Dimensions: image: 16 in x 20 in; paper: 20 in x 24 in

Credit Line: Museum purchase

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ABOUT THE PHOTOGRAPHER

Taylor-Wood, Sam

British, b. 1967

Sam Taylor-Wood creates photographs of the human body that forge a connection between physical and emotional states of being. Using herself as the subject in many of her works, the artist twists her figure into a range of precarious poses that suggest moments of rapture within spaces of ordinary existence.

In the self-portrait *Escape Artist in Levis* (2008), Taylor-Wood appears nearly weightless, levitating with the pull of only a few helium balloons. The impossible physics of this image were conceived by the artist in the wake of her recovery from breast cancer, her second encounter with the disease after battling colon cancer a few years earlier. Drawing on her own sense of “freedom from the constraints of illness,” Taylor-Wood shows her body dangling with arms wide open, seeming both transcendent and fragile. Rope supports were used during the production of the image and later digitally removed, creating a seamless depiction of both the exterior physical tension and interior psychology of illness and recovery.

Sam Taylor-Wood was born in London in 1967. Her works have been exhibited extensively including solo shows at Kunsthalle Zurich (1997), Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington DC (1999), MCA, Moscow (2004), BALTIC, Gateshead (2006), MCA Sydney (2006) MoCA Cleveland (2007) and the Contemporary Art Museum, Houston (2008). She was awarded the Illy Café Prize for Most Promising Young Artist at the 1997 The Venice Biennale and was short listed for the Turner Prize in 1998. In addition to her photographs, Taylor-Wood has created a number of videos and short films.

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