

Oto Gillen
Wandler 2016 – 2022
June 3–August 15
2022

The storefront is filled with twenty-nine photographs of gasoline-powered “inverter generators” taken between October 8th, 2016 and May 8th, 2022 on the streets of Manhattan.

Most mobile food vendors in New York City opt to use these generators to power their curbside businesses. Ruggedly built, these portable combustion engines with power inverters feed a steady flow of grungy electricity to an expanding array of LED lightbulbs illuminating well-worn cooking surfaces, side-scrolling electronic signage and maybe a soiled Bluetooth speaker hanging over the grill. These machines have allowed motivated individuals the freedom to work day and night off the power grid.

The first time I photographed one of these generators in 2016, it was simply to take note of this omnipresent but overlooked piece of equipment on the street. As the years progressed however, what began as a subject of repellent curiosity evolved into an idiosyncratic portrait of a strange vented box endlessly replicating itself across the city. These machines are everywhere in New York; tiny motors thirsty for gasoline encased in crusty red plastic belching invisible fumes but if improperly maintained, a sour smoke.

The rear facing room downstairs hosts one photograph taken on July 22nd, 2020. It depicts an afternoon summer rainstorm on a New York City street. Backlit by oncoming traffic undeterred by the tropical downpour, it records the heaviest rainfall I can remember in years.

-Oto Gillen, June 3rd, 2022

Oto Gillen (b. 1984) lives and works in New York City. Recent exhibitions include *Wax Gourd*, LOMEX, New York City; *Stranger Approaching*, Bridget Donahue Gallery, New York City; *Compass Rose, And Now*, Dallas; *Evidence*, Metro Pictures, New York City and *The Whitney Biennial 2017*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York City. This is Oto’s first solo exhibition in Europe.