

Press release

Paul Pfeiffer

Pirate Jenny

8th March – 16th April 2005, Tuesday to Saturday, 11 a.m. – 6 p.m.
Opening 5th March, 6 p.m.

We are pleased to announce our next exhibition. Starting on 8th March 2005, carlier | gebauer will be showing Paul Pfeiffer's second solo exhibition. In the USA he is among the best-known and most influential video artists of his generation. In 2000 his works were shown at the Whitney Biennial in New York and in 2001 at MIT in Cambridge. In 2002 his work was honoured with the prestigious Bucksbaum Award and he was one of the youngest artists to have a solo exhibition at the Whitney Museum in New York, with another solo show in 2003 in the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago. His works were shown in Germany last year at K21 in Düsseldorf, in the Hygiene Museum in Dresden; prior to they were displayed at the Kunst-Werke in Berlin, the ZKM in Karlsruhe and the Hypo-Kunsthalle in Munich.

Paul Pfeiffer works with video, digital photographs and installations. His work foregrounds his grappling with commercial production of images and their reception. His installations are often surprisingly small, the technical equipment is perfectly and precisely designed, and are conceived as part of the work. They are small gems, sparkling, closed systems. On the screens and in the projections Pfeiffer frequently manipulates television recordings of sporting events and other symbols of pop culture that have been broadcast a million times, removing the narrative core of the events depicted, in a laborious manual process using digital technology. The aesthetics of the altered surface are reminiscent of painting and gain depth. Pfeiffer sketches out an aesthetics of absence; the edges of the image are still visible, with their once iconic, now empty, centre. The media code becomes legible. Pfeiffer's work results in images consumed every day acquiring a mystical, almost religious charge and pointing us towards completely different contexts of meaning, having been profoundly or imperceptibly changed. The viewer becomes an archaeologist, searching for traces, trying to detect whether anything of the familiar images remains. carlier | gebauer is showing the most recent video works by the American artist, all from 2004: *Empire*, *Memento Mori*, *Caryatid* (2004), *Live Evil* (Bucharest) and *Sunset Flash*.

Empire shows the development and growth of a wasps' nest over a three-month period. Pfeiffer films the queen gradually building her nest, laying her eggs, establishing her rule; through the duration of observation, unprecedented in video art, he generates a "real time" view of the creation of a complex and hierarchical social system.

Memento Mori came into being outside Chiswick House in London and is a tiny screen set in the wall. A fly is visible, kept at the centre of the camera's focus with Pfeiffer's hallmark motion-tracking and flies endlessly over the patterns of classicist architecture. *Memento Mori* recalls a video game; the fly is the subject, soaring over Chiswick House with a fly's characteristic movements.

Caryatid (2004), like the first version with the same title, is shown on a monitor to which a mirrored and chrome surface has been applied. Pfeiffer portrays football players, bent double with pain, falling to the ground. Pfeiffer's interpretation of the television footage has the players looking like felled caryatids, Greek load-bearing figures bursting and exploding.

Live Evil (Bucharest) is the fourth version of the Live Evil series. The corner projection shows Michael Jackson as a Rorschach projection, the head and torso transmogrify the pop star into a sci-fi monster, its movements and shadows still clearly taking Jackson as a reference point.

Sunset Flash is Pfeiffer's first autobiographical work. It was shot at a large family get-together in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Against the backdrop of a magnificent sunset, the family members, from German, Filipino and Navaho backgrounds, take snapshots of each other, enter and leave the scene. The projection shows the reddish-orange sunset, with the family in front and the starbursts of the camera flashes. Sunset Flash is reminiscent of Empire, and narrates the emergence of a community in a similar mode.

Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse is the famous photo series derived from Albrecht Dürer's eponymous woodcuts. The photos show individual basketball players in front of the spectators' terraces, freed from all identifying features, in triumphant, thunderous poses. The large-format photographs unravel the code of sports arenas as places of religious veneration, with the protagonist as saints.

The installation **Vertical corridor** is an ironic reversal of the less-is-more paradigm of modernism. A tiny opening set in the wall allows us to look onto a stark antiseptic corridor, illuminated by neon strip lighting, which seems to extend behind the wall. Through a periscope we look into an installation that penetrates over 2 metres vertically into the wall.

Paul Pfeiffer (born in Honolulu, Hawaii 1966). Lives and works in New York City. Solo exhibitions: 2004: K 21 Kunstsammlung, Düsseldorf; 2003: Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; List Visual Art Centre, MIT, Cambridge; 2002: Orpheus Descending, Public Art Fund, World Trade & Financial Centers, New York; Barbican Art Centre, London; UCLA Hammer, Los Angeles; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Group exhibitions: 2004: Faces in the Crowd: The Modern Figure and Avant-Garde Realism, Castello Rivoli, Turin, Italy and Whitechapel Art Gallery, London; 10 Commandments, Hygiene Museum Dresden; 2003: Cairo Biennial, Egypt; The Squared Circle, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; 2001: 49th Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy; Loop, Kunsthalle der Hypo-Kulturstiftung, Munich & PS1, New York; 2000: The Whitney Biennial, The Whitney Museum, Greater New York, P.S.1/MoMA, New York

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