

Press Release

Paul Pfeiffer

6th September – 11th October 2008
Opening 5th September, 6 p.m.

We are delighted to present the third solo exhibition by New York artist Paul Pfeiffer at carlier | gebauer. Pfeiffer, who was trained at Hunter College (NYC), and in the Independent Study Program of the Whitney Museum (NYC), is considered one of the most important video artists of his generation in the USA. In 2006 and 2007 his works were shown inter alia in New York at MoMA and the Guggenheim, as well as at P.S.1. In addition, in 2007 he also realized *The Saints for ArtAngel*, London. Pfeiffer is currently represented at the Sydney Biennale, as well as in the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. At the end of September „Monologue“, the first extensive survey of his work will open in Spain, at MUSAC, León.

Pfeiffer will be showing three recent works in the exhibition at carlier|gebauer, two of which will be exhibited for the first time. *Live from Neverland* (2006), *Caryatid (Red, Yellow, Blue)* (2008) and *Cross Hall* (2008) are video pieces, in which the character of the installation as an object plays a crucial role. Pfeiffer's work reflects video formats which are dominating contemporary mass media. Television formats, as well as that of the omnipresent surveillance camera, both of which accompany us in our day-to-day lives, are explored, examining their origins. In Pfeiffer's oeuvre, these dominant media apparatuses of perception become the starting point for a fundamental artistic reworking. He raises questions about the quotidian hierarchisation and the evaluations of individuals and spaces recorded by mass media events and signified in emblems of contemporary culture. This often occurs through artistic techniques of isolation: by removing the human figures from the image, isolating from the context in which they are embedded, through the repetition of rooms vibrant with meaning. Pfeiffer's works draw out the eerie and archetypal from the apparently everyday. His art denies the seemingly unquestionable primacy of the visual by reconstructing it in a new modus.

Cross Hall (2008) confronts audiences with live transmission of footage from two surveillance cameras, projected to cover the whole wall. An empty passageway is recorded from the end of a neo-classical corridor, and from a room adjacent to that corridor. Behind the surface onto which the images are projected is a diorama, a model of this imposing corridor, which audiences can only see through a peephole. The actual space remains concealed, whilst the perspective of the surveillance camera defines visible reality and constructs it through the projection. The neoclassical hallway, suggests that what you see is an official building of high importance, but the restricted, personally measured view Pfeiffer offers leaves this suggestion in a vacuum. The mismatch of representative character and individual experience turns *Cross Hall* into an uncanny, an undeterminable place.

The video work **Caryatid (Red, Yellow, Blue)** (2008), presented on three monitors, is part of a series of productions in which Pfeiffer juxtaposes revenants and variations on Antiquity's Caryatids. Whilst these load-bearing figures served as supports in ancient temples, in Pfeiffer's works they move out of these positions and are erased from the image, as is the case in *Caryatid* (2003), or injured as they fall and incorporated into the image as collapsing, injured figures, as is the case in the current work. Whilst the trophy, seeming to float in the rink, was all that remained of the victorious hockey players in the 2000 video, *Caryatid (Red, Yellow, Blue)* (2008) shows football players crashing to the ground after a foul. The image is divided up on three monitors using a scheme based on the primary colours red, yellow and blue, and is thus dissected into its technical components. Here the video image returns to a painterly task, as run through by Barnett Newman in countless varying declensions. At the same time, these looped television recordings of contemporary heroes become the eternally recurring moment of their tragic and ineluctable failure.

Live from Neverland (2006) shows an exaggerated, heightened version of a television live broadcast that notched up some of the highest audience ratings over the last few years. Pfeiffer takes eleven minutes from a live broadcast showing a public address of Michael Jackson, which was filmed at his „Neverland“ Ranch. In it, Jackson, having been publicly charged for sexual abuse, explains himself, addressing the public through the same media which had accused him before. His pleas here is displayed mute on a monitor, while at the same time Pfeiffer combines those images with a choir in a large video projection filling an entire wall. Assuming the form of an ancient Greek choir, the group of around 80 singers recites Jackson's words, perfectly synchronised to his lip movements. Here again the spatial construction of the work plays a crucial part in how it is perceived and here too figures from Antiquity are introduced as a fixed reference point, deployed in a re-staging of the present.

Paul Pfeiffer (born in Honolulu, Hawaii 1966). Lives and works in New York City. Solo exhibitions: 2008: MUSAC- Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León, León, Spain; 2007: ArtAngel, London, United Kingdom; 2006: MC Kunst, Los Angeles; 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, NY; UCLA Hammer, Los Angeles; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Group exhibitions: 2008: Biennale of Sydney, Australia; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA; 2007: Automatic Update, Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; The Shapes of Space, Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY; 2006: Visions du Déluge, Le Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts de Lausanne Palais de Rumine, Lausanne, Switzerland; The Gold Standard, P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, New York, NY; Full House: Views of the Whitney's Collection at 75, The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; 2005: Rundlederwelten, Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin, Germany; Getting Emotional, ICA, Boston, MA; 2004: Faces in the Crowd: The Modern Figure and Avant-Garde Realism, Castello Rivoli, Turin, Italy und Whitechapel Art Gallery, London; 2001: 49th Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy; 2000: The Whitney Biennial, The Whitney Museum, Greater New York, P.S.1/MoMA, New York.

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