

Press Release

Opening of our new gallery space in Holzmarktstrasse with a site-specific installation by Santiago Sierra.

28 March - 30 April 2002

Opening: Wednesday, 27 March 6 - 9 pm

Santiago Sierra is an artist whose well-received exhibitions and performances of recent years (i.e. P.S.1, New York, Kunst-Werke, Berlin and the Venice Biennale) take a stand on the political and social questions of an increasingly globalized world. The artist, who was born in Madrid in 1966 and now lives in Mexico City, focuses on situations in which people are willing to take part in his unusual activities for a small payment. For example, he pays unemployed people or prostitutes to have a line tattooed on their backs, or he pays impoverished immigrants a minimum wage so that they would execute heavy labour tasks, such as moving extremely heavy concrete blocks and carrying them around aimlessly in an exhibition room. Frequently, the artist's works mistreat the human dignity or the body integrity of the volunteers. Frequently, Santiago Sierra is being criticised for his artistic strategy. But the artist's laconic answer to such accusations is: "These are the conditions of your life, which you don't want to see."

For some years, the unbinding of art has been one of the most important concepts dominating the debate on art. Santiago Sierra's work, which clearly pushes the boundaries of conventional gallery showings, enters this debate. Not only does the unbinding of art mean the increase of crossover between different media and art practices in the last decades, but it also describes how questions from sociology, economics, politics and empirical sciences are taken up in artistic practice. If the avant-gardes of the 19th and 20th centuries aimed at liberating themselves from being used by the State and the Church, then the recent past reveals efforts to release art from its self-chosen isolation and to bring it closer to a political or social discourse.

In the tradition of the Performance Art and Happenings of the Sixties and Seventies, Sierra rejects the traditional artistic approach, which regards the work of art as an unchanging unity of decisions about form and content. Sierra's works require the viewing of the work in its process which reveals the mechanisms of exploitation and the uncompromising hierarchy set up in our society: Objects within formal systems of order are the elements of structures of power. "Persons are objects of the State and of Capital and are employed as such. This is precisely what I try to show."

Solo exhibitions 2002: FOKSAL Gallery, Warsaw, Poland; IKON Gallery, Birmingham, England (until April) Claudio Poleschi Gallery, Lucca, Italy (until May).

Group exhibitions 2002: Art & Economy, Deichtorhallen, Hamburg, Germany (until June).

| Yael Davids | A K Dolven | Tracey Emin | Michel François (Mai 2002) | Meschac Gaba | Hans Hemmert
| Jonathan Hernandez | Thomas Huber | Anne-Marie Jugnet et Alain Clairet | Aernout Mik | Jean-Luc
Moulène | Peter Pommerer | Bojan Sarcevic | Santiago Sierra | Christian Schumann | Erik Schmidt |
Thomas Schütte | Fred Tomaselli | Janaina Tschäpe | Luc Tuymans |