PARROTTA CONTEMPORARY ART

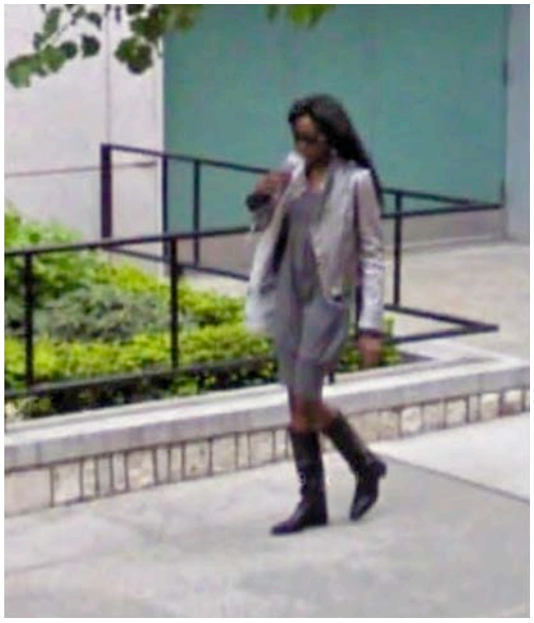
PRESS RELEASE

Edgar Leciejewski »New York City - Ghosts and Flowers«

Oskar Schmidt »The American Series I – XII«

February 3rd – March 10th 2012
Opening reception, Thursday, February 2nd 2012, 7 pm

Galerie Parrotta Contemporary Art is pleased to announce the two solo exhibitions "New York City – Ghosts and Flowers" by Edgar Leciejewski and „The American Series I – XI" by Oskar Schmidt. Both exhibitions focus on highly relevant issues of our social constitution: Edgar Leciejewski points to phenomena of a constant shift of boundaries between public and private in his pictures. Oskar Schmidt, in light of the current economic and financial crisis, explores photographies by Walker Evans. Those stand emblematic for the misery of the rural population during the Great Depression in America in the 1930s.



Edgar Leciejewski's new works comprises a series of large sized pictures showing seemingly ghost-like pedestrians on the streets of New York – blow-ups of the Internet service "Google Street View". During his stay in New York, the artist – using this procedure – chose the very medium that transforms distance into closeness that transforms one's own closeness to an object back to a photographical distance.

Google's camera vans fan out on sunny days and at times when the streets should be as deserted by people as possible. If it happens that someone still walks into the picture, an image recognition software automatically blurs the face. It is exactly these supposedly de-identified people – sources of irritation with „Google Street View" – who turn into the actual protagonists in Leciejewski's pictures. The portrait-like depictions turn these nameless pedestrians within the medium into prototypes of the New York society.

The Google algorithm complies with buildings, not with people who – as Adriano Sack logically remarks – become "homme trouvés" in the pictures. Their appearance on „Google Street View" is random, their appearance in Leciejewski's works, however, is the product of a precise artistic selection.

"The Google algorithm goes by buildings, not by people," Leciejewski says about the cracks, blurry areas, and digital misconstructions in the pictures he uses in his work. They are taken from Google Street View, the large-scale project for which the corporation deploys camera-equipped vehicles to capture streets all over the world. These cameras – in Germany, the project met with considerable opposition – are the equivalent of Andy Warhol's running tape recorder from the early 1970s. Impassive producers of a testimonial record. The artist processes the images, selects the parts he will use, removes details. Or he will leave them in for compositional reasons, thus with the bottles on the stoop outside the brownstone. The people in his photographs are hommes trouvés – their appearance on Google Street View is accidental, whereas their appearance in Leciejewski's work is the result of a precise artistic selection. Their anonymity renders them symbols and projection screens. Where is the gangly boy in the ultramarine T-shirt going? Did the two men recognize each other as they passed in the street? Might that woman with the first-rate legs not be Naomi Campbell? The people in this series are unreal and hence movable images of ideas associated with New York City: sex, success, love, money, danger, beauty, etc. They walk across the street, are captured by the camera, the artist discovers them, shapes their images, then makes large-format prints he mounts in a gallery. This process turns them into ghosts." Text: Adriano Sack.

Oskar Schmidt presents his latest work titled "The American Series I – XII". In this, he creates new portrayals of selected photographs by Walker Evans – today part of the cultural memory – in a two-pronged way. To do this, he set up life-sized settings in his studio, with which he produced detailed remakes of Walker Evans' pictorial compositions. A weathered wooden wall with worn aluminium tableware or an old chair in front of it, various details of a modest wooden hut or a piece of torn hardwood floor with battered everyday objects can be found in the pictures. Oskar Schmidt depicts these minimalist and deserted stagings with invariable light conditions.

Oskar Schmidt's photographs are quotation and construct at the same time – here, gradual shifts in perspective and objects force the characteristic of the designed results compared with their drafts.

Schmidt's works point to pivotal questions of photography such as authenticity and authorship while at the same time dealing with their elemental basic requirements: light and shadow.

Along with the media-reflecting approach gained through the process of annexation, Walker Evans' photos meet with a re-contextualisation. In this historical dimension, Oskar Schmidt's pictures – in spite of their fascinating calm and contemplative beauty – leave us with thoughts about the possible effects of our current social situation at the same time.

"Looking at photographs means bringing the past to mind in the form of an image. With his new works, the artist Oskar Schmidt shows that this form of visual recollection indeed also concerns the history of photography itself. Schmidt's entire "American Series" is informed by an exceedingly concise and sober pictorial language – one which is reduced to black and white and which we somehow think we have already seen before. In actual fact, however, not one of these images existed until recently. Yet they all refer to photographs taken by the American Walker Evans during the Great Depression in Alabama. Schmidt picks up this legendary photographic series from 1936, intensifying it into stunning still lifes which seem to stem from that time. It is a jarring impression of timelessness that we confront in these tableaux." Text: Professor Steffen Siegel.

Short CVs

Edgar Leciejewski (*1977) studied dramatics, philosophy and history of art at Freie Universtität Berlin as well as photography at the Academy of Visual Arts Leipzig. His works were presented in a solo exhibition at the Stadtmuseum Munich, Germany, as well as numerous group exhibitions, among others at Kunsthalle Wien, Austria or Witte de With - Center for Contemporary Art in Rotterdam, Netherlands. Alongside to the exhibition at Galerie Parrotta, further works from the series „Ghost and Flowers" are displayed at the NRW-Forum Düsseldorf. Reviews of his works were featured amongst others in an artist portrait on ARTE and publications „Himmel ohne Wolken" (2011) und „NYC – Ghosts and Flowers" (2011).

Oskar Schmidt (*1977) studied at Burg Giebichenstein University of Art and Design Halle and at the Academy of Visual Arts Leipzig. He currently lives and works in Berlin and Leipzig. His works were presented at the Leipzig Museum of Fine Arts (2011), Germany, at the Zabludowicz Collection in London (2010), UK, Art Collection der Deutschen Börse in Frankfurt (2010), Germany, Goethe Institut in Washington (2010), USA, Kunsthalle Rostock (2009) and at C/O Berlin (2009) and are currently displayed at the Zabludowicz Collection in New York.

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Duration of exhibitions

February 3rd to March 10th, 2012

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Opening hours

Tuesday to Friday, 11 am – 6 pm
Saturday, 11 am – 4 pm

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Location

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We would be grateful for an announcement and/or press coverage of this exhibition, and would sincerely appreciate receiving a sample copy or, in the case of online publications, a link.

Kind regards,
Sandro Parrotta.