



MISHA STROJ

making discoveries, being a discovery?

Opening: 11/05/2006, 7pm

Exhibition: 12/05/2006 -25/08/2006

Press Release

Misha Stroj's latest art practice oscillates between a laconic and sceptical point of view regarding the art production process. The desire of cognition and of conquest in contrast to the stiffness of the resulting trophies will be critically examined. The artist draws his conclusion of first experiences in the art world, that the creation of surface as an object serves the viewer to expand the possibilities of their own greatness and that it stands for the success and increase of the value of the artist. It seems as though there is a higher need for artists than art works. Misha Stroj's work questions the notion of discovery in the art world and will try to find out who discovers who.

Stroj insists that the development of new strategies and the interaction with his surrounding is a crucial aspect of his work. The quality of his work lies in being able to show the limits to this process by asserting that it is inadequate to promise an opening through the fabrication of solid things, meaning sculptures.

The paradoxical other promise he gives for this exhibition is the fundamental renunciation of the production of compensatory worlds and people. This abdication would happen if one would succeed in constructing the conception of a gaze, which is a contact. Stroj admits that his sculptures merely describe such a contact rather than being the contact itself. For Stroj, within the framework of an institutionalised encounter "discovery" and "touch" only exist as linguistic substantives. The artist admits an obsession with language and the zest that creates an endless space between the solid objects and the events, which happen on the surface of these object.

The exhibition will show the traces of the following ideas:

The depiction of longing, of departure and interspaces will be varied in several reliefs. The relief is mostly organized in relation to a building and expresses in Stroj's eyes a restrained will to expand. For the installation artist and sculptor this approach resembles more like a withdrawal.

There will be a machine for seeing as a wall object formulating the unavoidable cloddishness of every tempted approach to the gaze. The machine demands the contact with the eyeball and therefore loots the vision.

Another relief will deal with a hallucination of the gaze, which is not able to distinct accurately and to identify. In Samuel Becket's *Company* a boy is asking his mother repeatedly, if the space to the sky is probably bigger than it appears. The repetition of the question is ambiguous and the presumed closeness of the sky could also affect the face of the mother, who answers the doubts of her son with a clongorous slap in the face. The openness of a linguistic sign also creates a vague displacement for the reader. The relief simulates the view to the sky with some sort of face in between, which is moved through a hand getting closer and moving away at the same time.

The current modernist exegesis is pointed out by dealing with a work by Paul Gauguin. Stroj will present one of Gauguin's paintings in a plaster relief, trying to show the independency of the work complex of the represented and at the same time stressing the inventiveness in order to break the euphoria. It is easy to see that the paradisiac lust to control not only extends to the colour.

The central installation will be seen as an alternative confinement of the desire to expand. The healing aspect of every touch will be displayed in relation to a detail of Tolstoy's *The death of Iwan Illjitsch*. The protagonist of the narration is sick of the falseness and unkindness of his estranged surrounding. Only in contact with his butler, by putting both his legs on the shoulders of the frugal peasant does he experience consolatory and pain free hours. Pier Paolo Pasolini adapts this detail in his film *Teorema*, where a mysterious guest distracts the wealthy members of an industrial family: this happens not only through his immediate naturalness (like Pasolini stresses) but also through an actual touch. Misha Stroj is interested in the promises of the artworks, or even the artist, for the private viewer. He therefore ponders various occasions where he could put his shoulders to somebody's disposal.

Misha Stroj (1974/Ljubljana/SLO), lives and works in Vienna.

Solo shows at Engholm Engelhorn Galerie, Vienna (2003), Group shows at Galerien der Stadt Esslingen, Villa Merkel (2005), Kunstverein Arnsberg (2005), Lebt und arbeitet in Wien, Vienna (2005), Manifesta 5 San Sebastian (2004) etc.

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