

JAVIER TÉLLEZ

Der Brief über die Blinden zum Gebrauch für die Sehenden

Opening: Friday, April 11th 6 p.m. – 8 p.m.
Exhibition period: April 12th – May 17th 2008

Peter Kilchmann Gallery is pleased to announce the second solo exhibition of New York artist Javier Téllez (born 1969 in Valencia, Venezuela). Besides a video installation we will also show new photographs and a sculpture.

The Letter on the Blind for the Use of Those Who See can be considered as part of a continuing series of projects which the artist develops and produces together with people who are perceived as the outsiders of society. In this way, various works have been created with the help of mentally disabled persons.

The artist has intensively dealt with Diderot's classic, which gave the work its title, and in conjunction with the Buddhist parable "The Blind Men and the Elephant". These two elements form the basis of the artist's latest film. In this narrative, several blind people are asked to touch an elephant on different parts of its body. The different descriptions are generally understood as the antithetical perceptions of reality.

In his film, Javier Téllez concentrates on the initial situation of this story and transfers it to the present time. The disused swimming pool of a bath house in Brooklyn's McCarren Park in Williamsburg forms the background of the black and white shoots, in which the artist captures the encounter of six blind New Yorkers with an elephant. The film, in which a woman and five men approach the animal one after another and comment on how they perceive the elephant by touching, smelling and hearing it, is shot in the documentary "cinema vérité" style. Now and then, the camera shows close-ups of the elephant's fissured skin, while the protagonists speak about aspects of their blindness off camera.

From the beginning of the project, the artist has dealt with the problem of whether it would be possible to produce a film together with persons who cannot see and for whom vision has no significance in their lives. Javier Téllez therefore assigns the voices an elementary role in the film. When placing a major importance on the audible descriptions, he plays with the different forms of perception and questions the pre-eminent position of the visual components within films.

Six large-format photographs complement the film. They are portraits of the respective encounters between the blind persons and the elephant. Also the sculpture which is placed opposite refers to the parable, as Javier Téllez dwells on the different descriptions of the animal. One of them compares the skin with a warm car tyre, another one with a furry sofa cover and a third person with the thick skin of a lizard. According to these specifications, the artist creates an elephant which illustrates how the six blind persons perceive the animal.

The exhibited film was created as a part of the project "Six Actions of New York City" in co-production with Creative Time. Parallel to this exhibition, Téllez's film will also be presented at the Whitney Biennale 2008 in New York. Further works can be viewed in the scope of the group exhibition "Amateurs" in the CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts in San Francisco from April 18th until June 18th, at the 16th Biennial of Sydney from June 18th until September 7th, as well as at MANIFESTA 7 in Trentino, Italy, opening on July 19th. Moreover the artist participates at the project "ISLANDS+GHETTOS" organized by the Heidelberger Kunstverein (Art Society), which will exhibit the artwork "The Greatest Show on Earth" from June 6th until August 31st at Mannheim Kunstverein.

The artist will be present at the opening. For photos and further information, please do not hesitate to contact Florian Seedorf at +41 44 278 10 14 or via email: f.seedorf@peterkilchmann.com.