

**PRESS RELEASE
MELANIE SMITH**

**20 January through 3 March 2001
Opening 19 January 2001, 18 to 20 h**

Galerie Peter Kilchmann is proud to present the work of Dorset, England born, Mexico City based artist Melanie Smith (*1965). Her solo debut in Switzerland, will feature the latest development in her going investigation of the cynical and the ludic, the baroque and the emptiness of a big city (Mexico City).

Smith has been based in Mexico City since 1989. A conceptual artist working in installation, photography, painting, video, assemblages, and sculpture, Smith has been dealing in her work with issues involving the vertigo-like character of visual culture and its display. Themes and concerns revolving around visual signs, grammar and its power embed her on-going proposals that criss-cross forms. As Cuauhtémoc Medina has observed, Smith works with the *brutal real* (as opposed to the 'marvelous real').

Understandably, Smith's work and perspective have been dramatically affected by her Mexican experience. Her early works are postminimal sculptures constructed of galvanized metal, plastic hoses and similar materials. Their formal and conceptual premises gave way to more exuberant expressions in 1993 and 1994 as she absorbed the color, energy and materialism of life.

This is evident in Smith's *Orange Lush* series from 1994 to 1997. Her work with the color orange - how it permeates advertisement and display in Mexico - deals with its aggressive character and having the viewer react/revolt to its violent effect as well as raw and rude qualities. Taking pictures of mundane and homogenous public places that escape the daily routine of the urban dweller but that nonetheless fashion his/her vision, Smith investigates the aggression inherent in the accumulation of objects. Class, race and gender locations spring forth in the passive-aggressive bombardment of signs that explode in one's face on a daily level in the urban landscape of the megalopolis. Smith's on-going concerns with these themes also relate to her position as an European artist in Mexico who needs to position herself.

Smith's new paintings and photographs, which will be on view at Galerie Peter Kilchmann, *"...are understood as symbols of cheapness, realness and the contemporary. However there is an abstract element in the compositions that I make. I want people to use that abstraction as a point of departure from the reality of what they are actually seeing. On the other hand the photos are an attempt to render the real. A lot of my work is based on finding objects in shops that sell the same thing. In the photos I wanted to comment on that homogeneity, not only within the objects but also within the architectural space."* (Melanie Smith)

Smith has had solo shows at Galerie O.M.R., Mexico City, The Anglo, Mexico City, Randolph Street Gallery, Chicago. She was included in group shows such as "Territorios Abstractos" Museo del Chopo, Mexico City, "IV Biennale de Monterrey", Museo de Monterrey, Mexico, "Multi Nationals" University of Boulder, Colorado, "Chromaform. Colour in Contemporary Sculpture" UTSA, Texas, "7 + 1 Mujeres Artistas", The Museum of Modern Art, Mexico City, "Life's Little Necessities", The Second Biennale of Johannesburg, Cape Town, "InSite 97", San Diego and Tijuana, "The Conceptual Trend", El Museo del Barrio, New York.