

Press Release

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Camera/Action
Museum of Contemporary Photography
Columbia College Chicago
October 15 - December 23, 2004

CHICAGO - The Museum of Contemporary Photography will present Camera/Action on view from October 15 through December 23, 2004. This exhibition will feature seventeen artists who explore the relationship between performance art and photography: Marina Abramovic, Vito Acconci, Chris Burden, Patty Chang, Valie Export, Young Hay, Tehching Hsieh, Zhang Huan, Tseng Kwong Chi, Ma Liuming, Hayley Newman, Dennis Oppenheim, Barbara Probst, Charles Ray, Roman Signer, Jemima Stehli, Mathew Wilson, and Erwin Wurm.

Camera/Action is a survey of photographic documentation of performance art from the late 1960s to the present. Initially, the experience of a live performance often involved watching a photographer moving in tandem with the artist, with the tacit assumption that photographs can serve as a transparent medium for the translation and preservation of performance. But also included in this history are performance artists who use the camera as a central tool and genesis of their performances, creating what Vito Acconci has aptly dubbed "Photo Activities," that were meant to raise questions about the limits of art production and self-perception. Barbara Probst and Jemima Stehli build on this history by playing with notions of framing, recording, and interpretation in their actions staged for their cameras; Stehli by stripping for her camera and audience, and Probst by simultaneously triggering multiple cameras focused on herself from various angles.

The exhibition then traces the lineage to other contemporary artists who stage actions purely in the service of photographs and videos. Some of these artists continue to center their work on the live performance and use recording technologies to communicate their actions such as Ma Liuming, who sits naked and drugged in front of an audience and asks viewers to interact with him as a camera constantly takes pictures of the scene, or Young Hay, who carries a blank white canvas to locations throughout the world that creates a visual void in the photographs of his travels

Others create ephemeral scenes and sculptures for the camera in which the photograph and/or video both document both the origin and become the end product of their work, such as Erwin Wurm's temporary "sculptures" of people performing absurd tasks or Patty Chang's video of herself squirming with live eels slithering underneath her shirt. In these works the romantic centrality of the artist's body has been loosened, leaving the spectator with more freedom of interpretation. In the process these artists build on and extend the

earlier tradition of performance art and illustrate the mark it has left on the imaginations of many artists practicing today.

The Museum of Contemporary Photography will host an opening reception on Thursday, October 14, 2004 from 5 pm until 7 pm.

This exhibition and related programs are sponsored in part by the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency; Mayer & Morris Kaplan Family Foundation; the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs/Gallery 37; LG electronics, Chicago and American Airlines, the official airlines of the Museum of Contemporary Photography, and our members.

The Museum of Contemporary Photography is free and open to the public weekdays from 10 am until 5 pm (Thursdays until 8 pm) and Saturdays from noon until 5 pm. The Museum is located at 600 S. Michigan Avenue on the corner of Harrison Street. For additional information please call 312-663-5554 or visit us at www.mocp.org