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Baibakov Art Projects and Paul Pfeiffer Announce Project for Third Moscow Biennale



Paul Pfeiffer, Caryatid (Red, Yellow, Blue), 2008. Courtesy of the artist and Thomas Dane Gallery, London.

MOSCOW.- [Baibakov art projects](#) announced a collaboration with American artist Paul Pfeiffer, a special project of the Third Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art. Opening October 22, 2009 "Perspective Machine" is the artist's first solo exhibition in Russia. For this site-specific project, the artist will develop on his critique of the spectacle, converting the unique space of the former Red October Chocolate Factory into a "Perspective Machine."

Almost forty years ago, the theorist Guy Debord formulated what he called the "Society of the Spectacle," a world regulated by images in which one experiences the representation of reality rather than reality itself. Paul Pfeiffer is part of a new generation of young artists taking on the contemporary spectacle, in a society where advances in digital technology have reinvented the idea of an iconic image. Pfeiffer employs techniques such as zooming and cropping in his practice, focusing his attention on a single detail, in such a way that the larger image becomes almost unrecognizable. His work contrasts scale and modes of spectatorship, preserving the tension between what is revealed and what is obscured.

The exhibition opens with a work that signals to the visitor that not everything is as it seems. In Vertical Corridor, Pfeiffer encourages the viewer to peer through a tiny peephole in the wall of the gallery, only for them to discover an impossibly massive space behind. This peephole is the only access to this immense space, questioning the validity of the spectacle and reminding the viewer that every such spectacle must bow to the limits of one's perspective.

In his photographic and video work, Pfeiffer explores the processes of image making within the context of the entertainment industry. Using found footage from television, film, and sports events, he interferes with the construction of the spectacles they produce. The artist gives his images pseudoheroic titles, often culled from Judeo-Christian mythology. By suggesting contemporary celebrities as the new saints, he reminds his viewers that sainthood has always been inherently dependent on the power of the image.

Pfeiffer's earliest works from the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse appropriate photographs of Marilyn Monroe, a figure of enormous fascination and media fixation. In these, the artist digitally excavates all traces of the actress' body, shifting his attention to her surroundings, making the impact of her presence, rather than her body, the focus of the work. The photographs are eerily luminous - a portrait of a halo rather than a saint.

In later works from the same series, Pfeiffer shifts his attention to a different type of saint. Raiding the archives of the NBA (National Basketball Association) the artist erases contextual elements, such as scoreboards and baskets, to isolate individual players in a moment of athletic endeavor. Bodies appear suspended in what is now senseless striving, recalling romantic tales of heroes and martyrs.

In John 3:16, a video work which is also drawn from the archives of the NBA, Pfeiffer presents the events of a basketball game from the perspective of the ball. The ball itself remains fixed in the center of the image, while players' hands, baskets, and the court flash in and out of view. The video is presented on a miniature wall-mounted monitor designed by the artist. It inspired a second and much larger projection, The Morning after the Deluge,

which echoes the compositional arrangement of John 3:16 through its use of a central sphere. This video was created by combining footage of a sunrise and sunset - as the sun sinks in the top frame, it rises in the bottom, so that the "sun" remains complete, as the light around it shifts.

Curated by Maria Baibakova and Kate Sutton, "Perspective Machine" is the fifth exhibition from BAIBAKOV art projects. "Perspective Machine" will run concurrently with the exhibition "Luc Tuymans: Against the Day." Both Pfeiffer and Tuymans address the construction of perspective in a culture of spectacle using very different technique. Pfeiffer manipulates appropriated imagery to isolate and critique the construction of the spectacle; Tuymans integrates his own perspective, reinterpreting images as paintings. "Against the Day" finds its subject matter in sources as diverse as video games, reality television shows, and cell phone photography, both complementing and contrasting with "Perspective Machine."

Paul Pfeiffer was born in Honolulu, Hawaii in 1966, but spent most of his childhood in the Philippines. In 1990, the artist relocated to New York, where he attended Hunter College and the Whitney Independent Study Program.

Pfeiffer is the recipient of numerous awards and fellowships, most notably becoming the inaugural recipient of The Bucksbaum Award given by the Whitney Museum of American Art (2000). In 2002, Pfeiffer was an artist-in-residence at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and at ArtPace in San Antonio, Texas. In 2003, a traveling retrospective of his work was organized by the MIT List Visual Arts Center and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago.

Since that time, he has had solo exhibitions at institutions including MUSAC, León, Spain, and Thyssen Bornemisza Art Contemporary, Vienna, Austria, and collaborated with initiatives including The Project, New York, and Artangel, London. His work has been featured in exhibitions at SMAK, Ghent; The Guggenheim, New York; MoMA, New York; Castello di Rivoli, Torino, Italy; and the Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, and as part of the 49th Venice Biennale and the 2002 Busan Biennale.

Pfeiffer is represented by Thomas Dane Gallery, London, and Carlier Gebauer, Berlin.

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