

GalerieFrancescaPia

Press release

April, 2008

Joanne Tatham & Tom O'Sullivan Are you feeling our meaning?

April 19 – May 24, 2008

Opening: Friday, April 18, 6 – 8 p.m.

Joanne Tatham (*1971) and Tom O'Sullivan (*1967) first attracted international attention with the installation of their monumental letter sculpture „HK“, in which the words HEROIN KILLS were spelt out across the gallery of Tramway in Glasgow. These words may sound like a simplistic and moralising slogan from the Thatcher era, yet as a six metre high artwork they were open to other interpretations and were able to query their meaning, status and function. This became all the more apparent when the lettering subsequently resurfaced in the form of a stylish gold necklace at the parties for the artworld jetset that marked the opening of the Venice Biennale, where it served as a test to assess contextual shifts of meaning. The artists went on to create a variation on this theme by having the announcement for their exhibition at Galerie Francesca Pia proclaim that „ecstasy kills,“ a heading culled from a club-scene poster.

Joanne Tatham & Tom O'Sullivan's oeuvre is made up of a vocabulary of motifs, symbols and forms – cubes, frames, a pink and black diamond pattern or a stick figure. Through the variation and repetition of motifs they create a system of referentiality that is as complex as it is confusing, prompting the viewer to discern the outlines of a fairy-tale-like narrative in the work before him. Influenced by literary forms, Tatham & O'Sullivan's work can also be reminiscent of songs or poems with their recurring verses and refrains. In this way their pieces fit together to form stage-like, occasionally glamorous installations that seek a direct conversation and confrontation with their audience. The artists' agenda leads the viewer astray and into dead-ends of interpretation and revolves around the very issue of how meaning is created and works of art are (mis)interpreted.

An art-critical disposition is evident in the forms of Minimal or Land Art that they frequently revive. Cubes, rhombi and pyramids are decorated, or rather disguised, by hand-painted patterns and materials such as straw and house paint that bring to mind the forms of ornamentation of tribal cultures. Rhetorical titles such as „The Other being an Image like an Image of what you see“ or „The Ontology of Thingamajig“ allude to doctrines of art discourse, serving not only as a travesty, but also to underscore that their works defy easy categorization and rash attribution to a particular movement, while at the same time critically challenging it.

Since 1995, Joanne Tatham & Tom O'Sullivan live and work together in Glasgow.

In addition to new drawings, photographs and paintings, we are pleased to present, within the exhibition, a new version of the frame or zero object „This has reached the limit conditions of its own rhetoric.“

Selected previous exhibitions:

Smart Project Space, *The This & The That of a Category Error*, Amsterdam, 2007

Tate Britain, *Art Now Life Work: Rory MacBeth, Joanne Tatham and Tom O'Sullivan and Sue Tomkins* (Live Performance), London, 2006

Galerie Francesca Pia, *Is this is what brings things into focus?*, Berne, 2005

Venice Biennale, Scottish Pavillion, *Selective Memory*, Venice, 2005

Studio Voltaire, *Oh We Will, We Will, Will We*, London, 2005

Kunsthaus Glarus, *Thing Thingamajig and Other Things*, Glarus, 2003

Tramway, *HK*, Glasgow, 2001

Galerie Francesca Pia, Limmatstrasse 275, 8005 Zurich, www.francescapia.com

Art Basel 39, June 4 – 8, 2008, Hall 2.1, Booth V2

Thomas Bayrle, opening June 30, 2008, 6 - 8 p.m.