

galerie michèle chomette

24 rue Beaubourg 75003 Paris

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

"NOTHING BUT THE EXORBITANT THING..." Roland Barthes

Guest curator : REGIS DURAND

Mois de la Photo/90 Exhibition

From October 17 until November 24

Special preview Tuesday October 16, 6 to 9 pm

NANCY BURSON - CLEGG & GUTTMANN - PASCAL CONVERT - NOELLE HOEPPE -

ALLAN MC COLLUM/LAURIE SIMMONS - HERVE RABOT - JAMES WELLING.

The book published by Marval Editions, Paris, edited by Régis Durand, will be the first issue of the new Marval serie "Cahiers de la Création Contemporaine"

The exhibition and the publishing have become feasible through the Paris Audiovisuel/Mois de la Photo and Laboratoires Fidia partnerships.

The special ART PRESS issue devoted to photography and edited by REGIS DURAND will be first introduced to the public during that opening.

"NOTHING BUT THE EXORBITANT THING..."

Surrounded by these photographs, I could no longer console myself with Rilke's line : "Sweet as memory, the mimosas steep the bedroom" : the Photograph does not "steep" the bedroom : no odor, no music, nothing but the exorbitant thing. The photograph is violent : not because it shows violent things, but because on each occasion it fills the sight by force, and because in it nothing can be refused or transformed... (Roland Barthes, Camera Lucida - Reflections on Photography, New York : Hill and Wang, trans. R. Howard, p. 91)

This exhibition does not concern itself with the photographs Barthes liked, or might have liked. It does not concern itself either with an attempt to apply a theory or illustrate it -that would be both misusing the artists'work and doing insult to Barthes'reflection, which was always mobile (and on the subject of photography perhaps even more than on any other). The show proceeds, rather, from the idea that one of the characteristics of contemporary photography is its extreme relation to its objects : extreme closeness, extreme distance, extreme enlargement, extreme distorsion, etc. Through various essays written between 1987 and 1990, as well as in Le regard pensif, a book published in 1988,

....

du mardi au samedi 13 h - 19 h hors expositions sur rendez-vous (r) 42 78 05 62

I tried to grapple with this particular question. And then, as I was re-reading a passage in Camera Lucida I had almost forgotten (the passage quoted above), it seemed to me that the great question Barthes never stopped thinking about - that of Presence, and how the Gaze confronts it - had found there its final and yet still unsatisfied formulation. And I saw there an invitation to take it a little further, by confronting several contemporary versions of the complex relation between a photograph and its object.

The seven artists presented here all question, in one way or another, the photographic apparatus as a "representing thing" (to use Walter Benn Michaels' phrase). Some do it while maintaining a more or less fragile contact with the human figure (in the form of "portraits"); others by turning their attention to objects, or even to the pure photographic surface or process, void of all references to the world of reality.

Clegg and Guttman, whose group portraits refer to the history of classical painting (17th century Dutch painting in particular), make manifest the ways in which Power stages its own representation (including the place which the spectator is being assigned in the process). For Nancy Burson and Allan Mc Collum/Laurie Simmons, the human face is no longer a permanent and idealised manifestation of a subject. It becomes instead an indeterminate process, open to dissolution and transformation, and which opens onto the uncanny. Noëlle Hoeppe, with the models she works with, captures not an anecdote but a quality, an affect, an intensity - the peculiar erotic intensity of a subject who is being carried "beyond herself". Hervé Rabot cleanses his "landscapes" of all pictorial rhetoric, and turns them into fractal forms, abstract "flames" in which the presence of the seething energy of matter can still be felt. James Welling, too, questions through various series, the very nature of the photographic surface and of the photographic act - between the realist aesthetic to which it is historically connected, and abstraction which is the real divide in modern art. Pascal Convert, finally, translates onto different surfaces or materials (glass, or in this case, wall drawings) shapes abstracted from the photograph of a now vanished house. By doing so, he explores the inexhaustible capacity photography seems to have to transfer energies and forms, as if its real power lay, not in reproducing images of the real, but in providing the energy (light and memory) for endless elaborations and re-constitutions, not unlike the mind itself...

Régis DURAND