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# MoCP

Museum of  
Contemporary Photography



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## **MICHAEL WOLF: *THE TRANSPARENT CITY*** **Nov 14, 2008 - Jan 31, 2009**

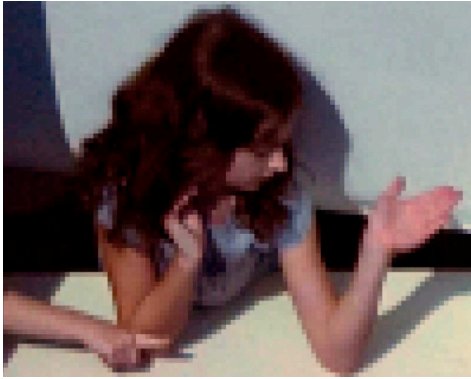
**Artist's Lecture: Michael Wolf**  
**November 20, 6:30pm at Ferguson Lecture Hall, 600 S. Michigan Ave.**

**Curator's Tour: Natasha Egan**  
**December 9, 12pm at MoCP**

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**Chicago** — In November 2008, the Museum of Contemporary Photography presents *The Transparent City*, an exhibition of new work by Hong Kong-based artist Michael Wolf. In early 2007, the MoCP, in collaboration with the U.S. Equities Realty Artist-in-Residence Program, invited Wolf to photograph Chicago's glittering Loop. Wolf, who developed a distinctive aesthetic with *Architecture of Density*, a previous series of stunning, abstracted Hong Kong cityscapes, brings his unique perspective on the changing urban environment to Chicago, a city renowned for its architectural legacy. This is Wolf's first body of work to address an American city. An accompanying book, *Michael Wolf: The Transparent City*, will be co-published by Aperture and the MoCP in fall 2008.

Wolf's photographs of Chicago's structures echo the flattened, geometric urban grids of his earlier work, but they also include glimpses of the office workers and condo dwellers within. While Wolf was in the studio one evening, scanning his photographs for flaws, he zoomed in on one of the windows in an image and noticed a man looking out of it — giving him the finger. Inspired by this discovery, Wolf has included in the series hyper-enlarged, digitally distorted close-ups of windows, that offer--sometimes titillating, but mostly mundane--views into the worlds within our city's shimmering skyline. These voyeuristic, highly formal, and manipulated scenes evoke at once Edward Hopper and Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* and address Wolf's ongoing conceptual interest in the nature of modern urban life.



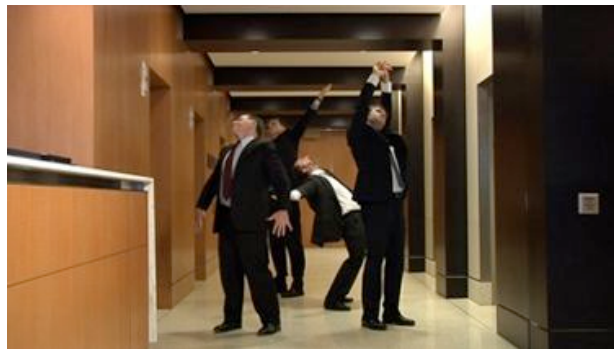
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### **ABOUT THE ARTIST**

**Michael Wolf** (born in Munich, 1954) grew up in the United States, and studied at the University of California Berkeley and with Otto Steinert at the University of Essen in Germany. Wolf lives and works in Hong Kong and Paris.



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### **WORK / PLACE**

**Ann Carlson and Mary Ellen Strom**

**Thomas Demand**

**Lars Tunbjörk**

**Karen Yama**

In conjunction with the exhibition *Michael Wolf: The Transparent City*, which offers a furtive view of contemporary urban life, *Work / Place* looks at the idiosyncratic personal routines that individuals perform inside their offices. The photographs and video in this exhibition investigate the banal, highly ordered, and sometimes absurd nature of office life.

**Ann Carlson** and **Mary Ellen Strom** collaborated with four practicing New York City attorneys for *Sloss, Kerr, Rosenberg & Moore* (2007), a performance video that, through a highly formal vocal score and choreography, reveals the theatrical aspects of litigating and the high-pressure demands of their profession, creating a sort of twenty-first century folk dance.

**Thomas Demand** creates images of rooms and other locations that initially look real but are, in fact, photographs of full-scale, three-dimensional models that he painstakingly constructs entirely from colored paper and cardboard. Although his subjects may seem commonplace, they often carry cultural or political relevance and a smart critique of mass media. Through close inspection, the artifice of his scenes becomes apparent and urges viewers to question the photograph as a faithful record of reality, highlighting the evasiveness of the medium in a world that is saturated with manipulated images.

Using wit to emphasize the banal, **Lars Tunbjörk** portrays the melancholy and absurdity of modern-day office life and the struggle of the individual against corporate homogeneity. Like the artificiality of Thomas Demand's assembled office photographs, Tunbjörk's series underscores the often sterile and constructed nature of work environments.

**Karen Yama's** photographs of the arrangements of personal mementos in office dwellers' work spaces are odd still-lives that expose our desire to modify the work place to feel more like home. These photographic constructions, in which Yama flattens the pictorial space of each composition while retraining the unique grain of each family snapshot contained within, illustrates the peculiar tension between revealing personal information and maintaining the "professional" decorum of the workplace.

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#### **MoCP SPONSORS**

The exhibitions, presentations, and related programs of the MoCP are sponsored in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services; the National Endowment for the Arts; the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency; the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs/After School Matters; the Lloyd A. Fry Foundation; The Elizabeth F. Cheney Foundation; The Mayer and Morris Kaplan Family Foundation; US Bank; Epsom America; American Airlines, the official airlines of the MoCP, and our members.

#### **ABOUT MOCP**

The Museum of Contemporary Photography (MoCP), a resident organization of Columbia College Chicago, is the only museum in the Midwest with an exclusive commitment to the medium of photography. By presenting projects and exhibitions that embrace a wide range of contemporary aesthetics and technologies, the Museum strives to communicate the value and significance of photographic images as expressions of human thought, imagination, and creativity.

#### **ABOUT THE CURATOR**

**Natasha Egan**, the museum's Associate Director and Curator has organized dozens of international and national exhibitions and has contributed essays to numerous publications and magazines. In addition, she teaches in the photography department at Columbia College Chicago and juries local and national exhibitions.

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#### **IMAGES:**

1) Michael Wolf, from *The Transparent City*, 2007  
2) Michael Wolf, from *The Transparent City*, 2007

3) Karen Yama, *Barney in the Vanilla Room*, 2001  
4) Ann Carlson and Mary Ellen Strom, Video Still from *Sloss, Kerr, Rosenberg & Moore*, 2007