Through January 12, 2008

Beate Gütschow

FORTHCOMING MONOGRAPH: Beate Gütschow: L/S/S co-published by MoCP with Aperture, Fall 2007

Jan Theun van Rees

FORTHCOMING MONOGRAPH: Jan Theun van Rees: One Wall Away: Chicago’s Hidden Spaces published by U.S. Equities in collaboration with MoCP

Columbia COLLEGE CHICAGO

Beate Gütschow:
S#2, 2005
Light Jet Print
Courtesy Produzentengalerie, Hamburg and Barbara Gross Galerie, Munich

Jan Theun van Rees:
Interior: Cloud Gate Sculpture II
Courtesy of the artist and U.S. Equities
Beate Gütschow: LS / S

LECTURE
Aikiko Ono
Friday, October 26, 2007
3 pm
Museum

Ono will discuss the physical and mental construction of real and imagined landscapes in the work of Beate Gütschow and in the practice of landscape architecture. Ono, who co-wrote the introductory text for Beate Gütschow: LS/S, is a practicing landscape architect with an MA in the history of art and architecture.

FILM SCREENING
13 Lakes
Thursday, November 1, 2007
600 S. Michigan Ave.
Room 901

James Benning’s non-narrative film simply observes 13 lakes, from across the United States filmed in ten-minute takes, challenging the viewer to see the landscape as an artist might: by noticing and deciphering small details and changes within the natural world.

While the LS series recalls 17th-century landscape painting, the S series makes reference to more recent media—black-and-white architectural and documentary photography of the 1950s and ‘60s. The LS series depicts an Arcadian state while the S series is post-apocalyptic, revealing failed social ideals through alienating architecture. Photographing in Berlin, Chicago, Kyoto, Los Angeles, New York, and Sarajevo, Gütschow appropriates buildings, parking lots, stairways, and people. Reconfiguring these elements of architecture from different areas of the world, she synthesizes a disorienting cosmopolitan space with a confused temporality. Just as she positions picnic-goers in her landscapes, here Gütschow recontextualizes images of homeless people and tourists—fixtures of the modern city. That these displaced subjects seem hardly out of place in Gütschow’s S series reveals something about the cities in which they were photographed. Despite the utopian ideals behind the modern architecture, cities are less hospitable than we idealize them to be.

Gütschow’s process conﬁrs substantially more latitude for making ideas visual than photographers using analog ﬁlm enjoy. The photographer’s ability to tell a story is constrained by the physical orientation of subjects in the focal ﬁeld, but Gütschow starts like a painter with a blank canvas. She combines pictures from a variety of times and a wide range of geographical places while a traditional photographer is tied to the moment when and the place where the photograph is taken. In spite of photography’s inherent ability to record facts, Gütschow creates a visual space that can be more readily accessed with the tools of ﬁction.

Natasha Egan, Associate Director and Curator

LECTURE
Beate Gütschow
Thursday, October 25, 2007
6:30 pm
Ferguson Lecture Hall
600 S. Michigan Ave.
1st Floor
Presented in conjunction with the Columbia College Photography Department.

CURATOR’S TOUR
Natasha Egan
Tuesday, November 6, 2007
Noon
Museum

Beate Gütschow’s exploration as an artist directly probes questions of pictorial representations of reality. As a student in Hamburg and Oslo, she explored verisimilitude initially as a painter and installation artist and eventually became attracted to photography for its apparent, though qualified, ability to more faithfully and accurately represent reality.

This exhibition surveys two of Gütschow’s photographic series: LS and S. LS is an abbreviation for Landschaft, or landscape, and S is for Stadt, or city. Both series posit questions of idealization—one of nature and the other of urbanity. Drawing from her enormous archive of collected images, mostly taken with analog ﬁlm, of trees, buildings, clouds, hills, and people, Gütschow’s pictures are montages consisting of up to a hundred different images assembled together digitally. Her ﬁnal constructions at ﬁrst glance appear as if captured from reality but upon closer inspection they are revealed as ﬁction.

Inﬂuenced by artists such as Claude Lorrain, John Constable, and Nicolas Poussin, the LS series follows the rules of romantic landscape painting of the 17th-century. Traditional landscape paintings are organized with three distinct spaces: the foreground serves as the viewer’s entrance into the picture, usually framed by trees like a stage set; the middle ground contains a river or path and people looking outward; and the background vanishes in the far distance. The frame suggests an expansive terrain. Using these rules, Gütschow creates an idyllic landscape by mixing elements of pictures taken from parks, construction sites, pristine nature, and people engaged in leisure activities. The deliberate inclusion of familiar 21st-century elements like garbage, trees cut by chainsaws, and people in T-shirts endows an otherwise romantic landscape with implausibility and suspicion.

Museum of Contemporary Photography
COLUMBIA COLLEGE CHICAGO
600 S. Michigan Ave.
Chicago, Illinois 60605
Telephone 847-637-5554
mocp@chicagocolumbia.edu
Free and open to the public
Monday through Saturday from 10 am to 5 pm
Thursday until 8 pm
Sunday noon to 5
The exhibitions, presentations, and related programs of the MOCP are sponsored in part by the Lloyd A. Fry Foundation; the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency; The Mayer and Morris Kaplan Family Foundation; The National Endowment for the Arts; After School Matters; American Airlines, the official airline of the MOCP; and our members.

The monograph Beate Gütschow: LS/S, copublished by the MOCP and Aperture, was supported by the Lannan Foundation and the Robert Mapleton Foundation. This exhibition has been co-presented by the Goethe-Institut Chicago. Special thanks to Louise and Eric Franck Collection, London.
Michigan Ave., 312-915-6394, presents Painting Ethiopia: The Life and Work of Qes Adamsu Tesfaw through Nov. 4.

Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art, 40 Arts Circle, Evanston, 847-491-4000, hosts Casting a Shadow: Creating the Alfred Hitchcock Film through Dec. 9.


National Museum of Mexican Art, 1852 W. 19th St., 312-738-1503, presents Annual Day of the Dead Exhibition through Dec. 16.

Newberry Library, 60 W. Walton, 312-943-9090, presents Mapping Manifest Destiny: Chicago and the American West and Pueblo's Geography and Renaissance Mapmakers, both Nov. 3 through Feb. 16.


Renaissance Society, 5811 S. Ellis, 773-702-8670, hosts a new film installation by Steve McQueen through Oct. 28. Meanwhile in Baghdad... runs Nov. 11 through Dec. 21.


Swedish American Museum Center, 5211 N. Clark, 773-728-8111, hosts Roschud Sioux: A Lakota People in Transition through Nov. 25.

Performance

About Face Theatre presents the world premiere of Wedding Play Oct. 24 through Dec. 2 in the Steppenwolf Garage Theatre, 1624 N. Halsted, 312-335-1650.


Chicago Human Rhythm Project concludes its season with performances of Global Rhythms 3 and Thanks 4 Giving Nov. 23-25 at the Harris Theater for Music and Dance, 205 E. Randolph, 312-334-7777.

Chicago Shakespeare Theater on Navy Pier, 600 E. Grand, 312-595-5600, presents Cymbeline through Nov. 11. Stephen Sondheim’s Passion continues through Nov. 11.


Court Theatre, 5535 S. Ellis, 773-753-4472, presents Thyestes through Oct. 21.

The Dance Center of Columbia College Chicago, 1306 S. Michigan Ave., 312-644-6620, presents the world premiere of Zephyr Dance Oct. 25-27.

Goodman Theatre, 170 N. Dearborn, 312-443-3800, features Passion Play: a cycle, a theatrical re-enactment of Christ’s final days in three different eras, through Oct. 21.


The House Theatre of Chicago presents The Magnificens, a magical clown show, through Nov. 3 at the Victory Theatre, 3111 N. Western, 773-251-2195. In conjunction with Broadway in Chicago, the House Theatre presents The Sparrow through Dec. 31 at the Apollo Theater, 2540 N. Lincoln, 773-935-6100.


Lifeline Theatre, 6912 N. Glenwood, 773-761-4477, features The Island of Dr. Moreau through Dec. 2.

Lookingglass Theatre Company, 821 N. Michigan, 312-337-0665, presents No Child, the acclaimed one-woman show by Nilaja Sun, through Nov. 18.

Mercury Theatre, 1745 N. Southport, 773-325-1700, presents The Men and Their Music through Oct. 28.

Northlight Theatre, 9501 Skokie Blvd., Skokie, 847-673-6300, presents The Misers through Nov. 11.

Floor top, 9:42, 2005; 212 x 177 cm, lightjet print, Beate Gütschow, courtesy of Productiongalerie Hamburg, Barbara Gross Galerie München, Collection Louise and Eric Franch, Museum of Contemporary Photography, LWP10, 2001, 116 x 160 cm, C-print, Beate Gütschow, courtesy of Productiongalerie Hamburg, Barbara Gross Galerie München, Collection Louise and Eric Franch, Museum of Contemporary Photography, Saltair, costume design, Priscilla Lane in Salt Air: 1942, gouache and gouache on illustration board, Leonard Staley Collection, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Creating a Shadow: Creating the Alfred Hitchcock Film, Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art.
The visually seductive work of German painter/photographer Beate Guetschow is on exhibit at the Museum of Contemporary Photography.
Technology
no substitute
for impact

By Alan G. Artnet
Tribune art critic

Technology always promises great leaps forward, but the seductive use of technology in visual art just as often can lead to giant steps back—as it has done in the work of Beate Guetschow, at the Museum of Contemporary Photography.

The German painter, installation artist and, now, photographer shows selections from two series: "LS," which stands for Landschaft (landscape), and "S," which abbreviates Stadt (city). The prints, according to the fashion of the day, are enormous; and the images, also according to fashion, have been digitally constructed by sampling many, many rural and urban scenes to piece together new ones with Photoshop.

The results are virtually seamless color and black-and-white images that in "LS" resemble Romantic paintings and in "S" severe architectural studies. Both impress viewers on the elementary level of how the artist did them, and that is supposed to get us to forget how this sort of thing was done before it was ridiculed and eventually swept away by the masters of modern photography.

Constructing images from several negatives was done to popular acclaim within the first 30 years of the medium by Henry Peach Robinson and Oscar Rejlander. The public loved it because results looked like paintings. A long battle was waged to get photographs to look like photographs. Once the battle was won, few photographers resorted to the techniques of Rejlander and Robinson because they were seen for what they were, sentimental manipulation.

In the final decades of the 20th Century, however, artists trained in other fields came to photography in great numbers. Some were ignorant of photographic history, others indifferent. So practiced long laughed at not only were renewed with the "advantages" of digital technology but also made profitable when photo images the size of billboards attained prices once reserved only for paintings.

Read the lengthy interview with Guetschow in the monograph that accompanies the exhibition (Aperture, 83 pages, $35) and she talks about photography and painting much as some 19th Century lensmen did, with the difference being that she is not sentimental about the connection. Her pictures are, of course, deadpan—fashion again—right down to the listing of technical information on each margin. And the worlds she creates in the "LS" and "S" series are, despite the veracity of the one and the barrenness of the other, equally chilly.

Astute viewers may discover irregularities in scale and oddities of topography that give away Guetschow's practice. One certainly can make something of this, and in the monograph either she or her interlocutors do. But the tiny proofs, as it were, that her landscapes are constructed do not count for much visually in almost 6-by-9 prints, so as is true of a lot of art nowadays, knowing something is there seems more important than it actually having impact.

Recommended for those who enjoy the game of reviving the discredited and presenting it as if it were positive and new.

"Beate Guetschow: LS/S" continues at the Museum of Contemporary Photography, 600 S. Michigan Ave., through Jan. 10. 312-663-3554. artnet@tribune.com
Technology no substitute for impact

By Alan G. Artner

Tribune art critic

November 22, 2007

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