Barbara Probst: Exposures

April 6 — June 2, 2007

1. AD
2. Chicago Life, Spring 07
3. Chicago Life, Winter 06
4. Time Out, 4. 5. 2007
BARBARA PROBST
April 7 – June 2, 2007
On Art

To Capture a Moment in Time

"The world is what we see... and nonetheless, we must learn to see it."—Maurice Merleau-Ponty

At the end of 1999, German artist Barbara Probst (b. 1964), who had been living and working in New York and Munich, began to create and process her 21st century work. Through the construction of photographic exposures and the deconstruction of structural photography, Probst has created bodies of two or more pigmented inkjet prints that offer a unique interpretation of capturing a moment in time.

The first work, entitled Exposure #1: N.Y.C., 545, 8th Avenue, 01.07.00, 10:37 p.m. (2000), showed a dozen unframed photographs, printed to poster size, exposing one single nocturnal urban moment captured from 12 different angles. The scene of a woman (the artist herself) jumping on the floor of a Manhattan rooftop was shot by employing a radio-controlled device that simultaneously activated the shutters of 12 different, electronically connected cameras. In the gallery, viewers were confronted with the tension of the moment from multiple viewpoints, some in color and others in black and white. For the first time, Probst broke a moment in time into a range of perspectives, strategically exposing the illusion of representation.

More than four years later in Exposure #30: N.Y.C., 249 W. 34th Street, 11.20.04, 2:27 p.m. (2004), Probst expressed further complexity and intrigue by playing with the viewer's sense of time and place. She exposed one woman during a single instant in what appeared to be four different sites. The woman was in a park next to a skyscraper, looking nervously into a giant eye and standing on a floor covered with letters. The series was actually shot inside a studio, and Probst placed enlarged print backdrops on three walls and on the floor.

By Sigalit Zetouni

The monochrome park was from film director Antonioni's "Blowup," the skyscraper was Probst's shot of the Empire State Building, the eye came from film director Kubrick's "2001: A Space Odyssey," and the letters on the floor were an excerpt from a Paul Celan poem. The absent narrative in Probst's work allowed the viewer to approach her photographs from all directions. There was no one specific way to read the work and each observer could narrate his/her own complexity of seeing. In 2006-2007, the #30 series and additional exposures were exhibited at MOMA's renowned New Photography group show.

The titles of Probst's exposures are concerned with time and place. In the titles, she abandons any reference to her subjects and openly reflects on the meaning of her methodology. Probst's discourse is not with representation, but rather with its illusion. She signals the observer to decode and question her aesthetic practice and implicitly asks him or her to think.

The only factual truth about the photographs is the specific time and place in which they were shot. Their representation is variable and depends on the eye or lens that is looking. Hence the artist is providing us with the knowledge, found in her titles, and we, the observers, provide the work of art with our own private meaning.

The power and beauty of Probst's exposures are in the process. Her precisely staged concept liberates traditional photography from its static, single view structure. Each viewpoint opens a door to our understanding of pictorial logistics and reiterates the concerns that can arise from the tyranny of representation.

Critic Reinhard Braun writes of Probst's work: "Factuality is enacted in the multi-part, large-format tableaux as a construct of photography itself. The exposures show that ossifications and contradictions, that replacements and appropriations in particular, are part of [the] photographic practice itself, and that they indicate how a picture not only shows something but also causes something else, another picture to disappear..." (Camera Austria International, 85/2004).

Here in Chicago, April 6 and through June 2, the Museum of Contemporary Photography at Columbia College is going to exhibit Barbara Probst: Exposures. The comprehensive show will include 19 works that Probst created between 2000 and 2006. The opening will also mark a book launching celebration as the museum and Steidl Publishing are releasing a new monograph. The hardcover will include color and black-and-white images of Probst's work, as well as essays and interviews by artist and art historian David Bate and philosopher Johannes Meinhartd.
Russian Icons in the Age of the Romanovs continues through May 20. I Remember Purim: Molly J. Schiff continues through April 29. A Blessing to One Another: Pope John Paul II and The Jewish People runs from April 14 through Aug. 11.

Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art, 40 Arts Circle, Evanston, 847-491-4000, hosts Roy Lichtenstein Prints 1956-97: From the Collections of Jordan D. Schnitzer and His Family Foundation April 13 through June 17.

Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum, 1852 W. 19th St., 312-738-1503, presents Arte Textil Maya: Collections of the Centro de Textiles del Mundo Maya through May 27. This exhibition highlights the artistic and creative character of Mayan textiles.

Mitchell Museum of the American Indian, 2600 Central Park Ave., Evanston, 847-475-1030, presents Miquelrius: Recent Acquisitions, an exhibition of gifts made to the museum over the last five years, through July 29.


Museum of Contemporary Photography, 600 S. Michigan Ave., 312-663-5554, exhibits Barbara Probst: Exposures April 6 through June 2. Work by Monika Brandmeier is on display April 6 through May 25.


Newberry Library, 60 W. Walton, 312-943-8900, presents Newberry Consort: Music for the Holy Roman Emperors May 3-6. Call for specific locations.


Roosevelt University Gage Gallery, 18 S. Michigan Ave., 312-341-6458, presents Inside Out: Photographs by Iraqi Civilians and Farzad Noosh through April 27.


Performance
Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University, 50 E. Congress Pkwy., 312-902-1500, presents Rivendance April 3-15.

Beverly Arts Center, 2407 W. 111th St., 773-445-3858, presents the Chicago Improv Festival April 7.

Black Ensemble Theater, 4520 N. Beacon, 773-769-4431, presents Memphis Soul, the story of Stax Records, through May 13.

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Quake is on stage in the Upstairs Theatre through Feb. 19.

The Dance Center of Columbia College presents the Chicago debut of the British Richard Alston Dance Company Feb. 9-11 at 1306 S. Michigan Ave. The LeandroContempo Festival, with contemporary dance from Brazil, Mexico and Chicago, devotes a month of performances to the theme, beginning Feb. 23. For more information call 312-344-8300.

The Theatre School, 60 E. Balbo Dr., 312-922-1999, presents The Last Night of Ballyhoo Feb. 10-19. This Tony Award-winning play highlights a Jewish family’s obsession with Ballyhoo, the fad of the early 1930s, as tensions rise in Europe and Gone with the Wind premieres.


Victory Gardens Theater, 2257 N. Lincoln Ave., 773-787-3000, presents Moom the Messenger, a complex and intelligent indictment of the current state of the American news media, through Mar. 5.

City Lit Theater Company, 1020 W. Bryn Mawr Ave., 773-293-3082, presents Somebody Else’s Foreign Feb. 10 through Mar. 5. Based on a true story, the play is about a North Shore murder case that develops international complications, leaving the woman at her center doubtful as to what crime is really being investigated.

Court Theatre, 5353 S. Ellis Ave., 773-753-4472, presents August Wilson’s Fences through Feb. 12. This Tony and Pulitzer Prize-winning play explores the complicated relationships that hold families together through the perseverance of love and hope. The Glass Menagerie runs from Mar. 9 through April 9.

Hubbard Street Dance Chicago performs its spring programs Mar. 22 through April 9 at the
MoCP
Museum of Contemporary Photography

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Exposure #32: N.Y.C., 249 W 34th Street, 01.02.05, 5:04 p.m., 2005

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ALSO ON VIEW: MONIKA BRANDMEIER APRIL 6 – MAY 25 / TIM RODA APRIL 18 – MAY 25

Annual Benefit Gala April 13, 2007
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