

Press Release

Alex Morrison - Staging Rebellion

Curated by Vanessa Ohlraun

Opening: Friday, 6 May 2005, 6 - 9 pm

Exhibition period: 07.05. - 18.06.2005

Opening hours: Tuesday - Saturday, 12 - 6 pm

Exceptionally open: Sunday, May 8, 12 - 6 pm

Book launch at MünzSalon: Friday, 13 May 2005, 8 pm

Büro Friedrich is pleased to present a solo exhibiton of Vancouver-based artist Alex Morrison - Staging Rebellion - curated by Vanessa Ohlraun.

The work of Alex Morrison centers on an investigation of urban structures and their sub-cultures. In his documentations of youth lifestyles, particularly the culture of skaters, he questions to what extent sub-cultural expressions can be considered authentic, especially in the face of strategies of staging and their commercialization by the media. The artist demonstrates how images of “radical” subjectivities become commodified through the media, thereby subverting the individuals’ claims to authenticity; at the same time, he points to the complicity of the various actors. His work “Poached” (2002), for example, shows a skatepark which an American film production company constructed as a filmset for a television series in Vancouver. The activity of shooting and staging the young skaters becomes the focus of attention and displaces the act of skating itself, which becomes merely theatrical in function. In a similar manner, “Open Air Cinema” (2004) displays a graffiti contest which was organized by municipal institutions in Berlin to encourage adolescents to participate in artistic activities. In the foreground of Morrison’s photographs are several cameras filming the contest, which in turn comes to appear somewhat fabricated. Another work by Morrison entitled “Housewrecker” (2002) documents a group of adolescents destroying a house in what might be considered a ritualized destruction in the guise of a party. Morrison’s representation of these events reveals the individuals’ self-conscious, performative relationship with the camera and thus exposes the staged character of these allegedly “rebellious” acts. However, his work also suggests a desire to retrieve the political potential of such actions and to affirm the legitimacy of this form of protest. The artist’s dual position as an observer and as a member of the skater community, most explicitly reflected in “The Patterer’s Diary” (2002), lends his works an edgy ambivalence, as he oscillates between empathy with the political sensibilities underlying the represented experiences, and a critical distance from the protagonists’ theatrical behaviour. Ultimately, his critique targets not this kind of behaviour itself, but the constrictions placed on urban adolescents and the spaces they inhabit.

Alex Morrison was born in 1971 in Redruth, UK, and currently lives and works in Vancouver. His work has been widely exhibited in Canada as well as in the United States, the UK and Germany. Solo exhibitions include the Frankfurter Kunstverein in 2003, the Contemporary Art Gallery in Vancouver, the Henry Art Gallery in Seattle and the Künstlerhaus Bethanien in Berlin in 2004. He has participated in numerous group shows, including at the Vancouver Art Gallery ("Drawing the World: Masters to Hipsters") in 2003 and the Palm Beach Institute of Contemporary Art ("I Feel Mysterious Today") in 2004. Alex Morrison is represented by Catriona Jeffries Gallery in Vancouver.

Book launch:

Christina Ritchie, Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver, and Nicolaus Schafhausen, Frankfurter Kunstverein, are co-publishing the first book on Alex Morrison: "Giving the Story a Treatment" (Lukas & Sternberg, Berlin/New York, 2005). This book will be presented at the MünzSalon on May 13 at 8 pm, Münzstrasse 23, Berlin Mitte.

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