Around the Corner: Zoe Leonard and Petra Wunderlich, 2006

Christian Philipp Müller

Exhibition statement as written by Müller in 2006.

Walking Tours: **Christian Philipp Müller** on Nov. 10, 11, 12 and Dec. 15, 16,17 at 2pm.

Film Screening: **Ken Jacobs** will screen and discuss his first film *Orchard Street* (1956) on Saturday, Nov 18, at 6pm. In addition three movie trailers by Jacobs will be on view during the duration of the exhibition.
Orchard explores the Lower East Side and its rapidly changing identity with **Around the Corner**, an exhibition organized by Christian Philipp Müller.

Organized by Christian Philipp Müller

Zoe Leonard contributes a site-specific window installation along with dye-transfer prints of local storefronts from her extensive photographic record of the neighborhood. Petra Wunderlich exhibits a selection of photographs from a subject that has occupied her since her first stay on the Lower East Side: the local synagogues and the secular buildings framing them. In a new walking tour, Christian Philipp Müller connects these artistic projects to the current conditions of the Lower East Side with an emphasis on the aesthetics of obsolescence in the context of rapid gentrification. The presentation and discussion of filmmaker Ken Jacobs' first film "Orchard Street" (1956) enriches the exhibition with a unique perspective in film and an expanded historical view.

Around the Corner is an exhibition constructed as a series of contrasts. In the immediate present, developers are subjecting the zoning plan of The Lower East Side which dates back to 1961 to an aggressive revision. This new plan calls for the creation of high construction corridors along the area's major avenues and a division of its resulting spaces between "new zones" and "authentic" tenement blocks, blocks already irrevocably changed, according to long-time residents and business owners grappling with the neighborhood's raucous night life and the constant disruption of construction sites. Walking along lower Orchard Street, long-held businesses are framed by empty storefronts and for-rent signs (or vice versa). Among them Orchard's brightly lit, spare window display presents a single row of modestly-sized vintage suitcases: a work by Zoe Leonard. "The street sells itself," the callers proudly proclaim.

Leonard lived close by lower Orchard Street for many years. After acquiring a second-hand Rolleiflex camera locally in 1998, she began systematically recording her neighborhood block by block.

I remember as a kid how excited I was to learn the word anachronism. I thought it amazing that an object could be out of its own time – that it could actually carry another time with it. So these pictures are about place and time. They are pictures of here and now, but also pictures of there and then. They look across place and across time. -- Zoe Leonard

The nearly extinct dye transfer process, Leonard's choice of photographic process for the project, reflects her ideas about obsolescence. The twelve photographs on view are part of a large body of work titled "Analogue" which captures global changes from the mechanical to the digital age. "Analogue" will be shown internationally in 2007.

German artist Petra Wunderlich encountered Eugene Atget's photographs while studying painting in Paris in the 1970's. These vintage prints triggered her move back to Germany to study photography. In 1994 Wunderlich started to document religious buildings on the Lower East Side (and across the five boroughs) with her large format 5" x 7" Plaubel camera. Among the observations Wunderlich's images slowly discern is that many local synagogues have been converted into Buddhist temples or Baptist churches, while others have been torn down and a select few restored. Wunderlich's composing and cropping of these vertical buildings is done in-camera on site to produce incredibly sharp, horizontal views. The images are printed by the artist on a Japanese paper of a very high silver content. Wunderlich describes her time-based and conceptual process as focused on imponderables.

Ken Jacobs' "Orchard Street" was shot half a century ago and depicts the frantic bargain hunting of merchandise that looked already obsolete during the 1950's. During the exhibition, trailers of Jacobs' famous experimental films are presented on a monitor. *"We are all interplanetary travelers. Our feet are not standing on the planet we are going to die on."* --Ken Jacobs