

Thomas Eggerer
"O Pioneers"

January 13 – February 14, 2006
opening reception on Friday, 13 January, 7-9 pm

Under the title "O Pioneers!" Thomas Eggerer (1963* Munich, lives in Los Angeles) is showing a group of new pictures, drawings and collages in his third solo exhibition at the Galerie Daniel Buchholz. The title of the exhibition alludes on the one hand to Walt Whitman's poem "Pioneers! O Pioneers!" and on the other to Willa Cather's novel "O Pioneers!" But while Walt Whitman's poem is a euphoric hymn to the settlement of the American West, Willa Cather places a female figure (a settler in Nebraska) at the centre of her novel, for whom nature is not just land to be appropriated and cultivated, but the place where she can find herself. In accordance with the fundamentally expansive, forward-looking tone of the settlement-myth, the figures in the wide open constructions of the pictures face the challenge to act. Heights have to be climbed, long distances travelled; there seem to be possibilities open to both the collectives and the individual. The documentary, seemingly neutral character of the photographs that the pictures are based on is sharpened or transformed: the solid, material composition of the architecture and landscape which frames them is contrasted with entropic material (sand, mud, water, gas). This erosion of spatial definition accentuates the already aggressive, apocalyptic overall impression. It is an important aspect, however, that the precise choreography of the figures, whose every detail and gesture is integrated into the overall pattern of movement in the picture, does not treat them as victims, but accords them a sovereignty beyond any mechanism of social control. Thus, for example, three small format pictures show bearded men sitting in water or mud. The connotations of the bathing figure as a topos in the history of painting are primarily female or androgynous. The men in these pictures appear defenceless and disorientated in their nakedness, yet they seem less to be overcome by their exposure in space, and more to be enjoying the lack of control inherent in their obviously ambivalent status. The works in the "O Pioneers" exhibition represent a continuation of Thomas Eggerer's fascination with pictures of collectives, of their ideologies and their social and cultural premises. In linking the single motifs thematically his intention is to underline the fact that nature and architecture are, in equal measure, both social constructions.