

FOXY PRODUCTION

STERLING RUBY

THE MASTURBATORS

October 16 - November 21, 2009

Foxy Production presents *The Masturbators*, a multiple channel video installation by Sterling Ruby that provocatively complicates the genre of performance video. Ruby uses porn stars as performers, positioning his viewers as the voyeurs of his actors' intimate sexual actions, in a charged examination of the role of the artist and the construction of masculinity.

Male porn actors are asked to masturbate to climax, solo, in an empty room standing on color-coded towels. Instructions are given by the artist, a still photograph is taken, and then, as the action begins, the actors are left alone, never being sure if anyone is watching from the other side. Without their usual performance context, each pursues the given task with varying results.

With pornography's formulaic sets and scenarios removed, the actors are left somewhat adrift, giving each performance an experimental air. The work's combination of endurance and improvisation is reminiscent of early performance video, where an artist was often alone in the studio, performing acts of repetition and physical stamina and often addressing the relationship between artist, artwork and audience. Ruby reworks this genre, multiplying and refracting it through the use of professional porn stars who collapse the roles of actor, performer, and artist.

With their tattoos, their armors of muscles, and the moans, groans, and grinds of their excessive libidinous acting out, the veneer of hyper-masculinity becomes sharply visible, and the theatricality, the script, of maleness becomes starkly clear. The work sustains a tension that goes beyond the experience of duration and repetition, beyond the humor, fear, anxiety, or lust of witnessing sexual performances: it is a tension inherent in male desire and the abiding fictions that seek to both define and sublimate it.

The Masturbators will be documented in a forthcoming publication in collaboration with PaceWildenstein, New York.

STERLING RUBY makes richly glazed biomorphic ceramics, large-scale spray-painted canvases, poured urethane sculptures, nail polish drawings, various forms of collage, and hypnotic videos. His work is a form of assault on both materials and social power structures. He takes his subject matter from a wide range of sources, including marginalized societies, maximum security prisons, modernist architecture, artifacts and antiquities, graffiti, bodybuilders, the mechanisms of warfare, cults and cult members, and urban gangs.

STERLING RUBY (b.1972) lives and works in Los Angeles. He holds a BFA from The Art Institute of Chicago and an MFA from the Art Center College of Design, Pasadena CA. Selected exhibitions include: MoMA, New York (solo screening); ICA, Philadelphia (both 2009); GAMEC, Bergamo (solo) 2008-09; Bergen Kunsthall, Norway; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (solo); Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing; The Drawing Center, New York (solo) (all 2008); The Moscow Biennale for Contemporary Art (2007); The California Biennial (2006); The Renaissance Society, Chicago; The Turin Triennial (both 2005-06); Aspen Art Museum (2005); Netherlands Media Art Institute/Montevideo, Amsterdam (both 2005).

A monograph on Sterling Ruby's work was recently published by JRP Ringier.

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