

## KATHRIN SONNTAG DRACULA'S GHOST

OPENING FRIDAY, MARCH 20, 2009, 6-9 PM

EXHIBITION MARCH 21 – APRIL 25, 2009, TUES – SAT, 11 AM-6 PM

Kathrin Sonntag's objects, photographs, films and installations are concerned with the material of daily life and the various possibilities of their perception. She is interested especially in the narrow tightrope walk between reality and fiction, between the familiar and uncanny – and how easily the appearance and meaning of things can transmute into the irrational through the slightest shift of perspective.

Central to the exhibition is "Dracula's Ghost", a filmic essay which describes the bizarre mutations of meaning undergone by the Dracula myth in Romania. Shown in a makeshift cinema-space, the film explains that the vampire Dracula was actually an imported concept, appearing in Romania only after the opening of the borders for tourism in the 1960s. Dracula thus functions as a reflection of the western visitor's expectations and desires. As Dracula's commercial potential began to dawn, the borders between real and fictive locations and characters were intentionally blurred in order to appeal to the tourist's thirst for the strange, unexplained and uncanny. In this manner, the figure of Dracula has transformed from an 18th century vampire to a 21st century ghost haunting Romania.

Beyond the superimposition of reality and fiction, the film also addresses the connection between the Dracula myth and the filmic medium, which has served as its primary mode of achieving international fame. In a scene from E. Elias Merhige's "Shadow of the Vampire" worked into Sonntag's film, the vampire is confronted with the very medium that has built his myth. He switches on a film projector and with deep emotion watches the light play upon the wall. The filmic medium allows the night wanderer to watch that which for hundreds of years has been refused him – the rising sun.

With the aid of a bag of tricks borrowed from the horror genre, Kathrin Sonntag pieces her own Super 8 footage of Romania together with her interview of Nicolae Paduraru, the president of the Transylvanian Society of Dracula, and film and sound fragments taken from popular Dracula films. Alongside this poetic interplay of documentary and fiction, facts and seduction, the artist displays found objects, images and a booklet; all of which disclose further readings and periphery venues of the Dracula phenomenon.

Parallel to the gallery show, Kathrin Sonntag's exhibition "SUPERKALIGRAILISTIGEXPIALIGETIK" can be seen at the GAK - Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst, Bremen and the group show "A la surface de l'infini" in la Galerie, Noisy-le-Sec (F).

The film "Dracula's Ghost" was made possible through the friendly support of FLACC, Workplace for visual artists, Genk (BE)