

**Josef Strau**

**“The Oriental Therapies”**

26 June – 12 September, 2009

Opening reception on Friday, 26 June, 2009

7:00 – 9:00 pm

Josef Strau based his most recent exhibitions on the reconsideration of past works. Functioning as a further chapter of this continuous practice the exhibition at Galerie Daniel Buchholz, the second solo exhibition of the artist in the gallery, is titled “The Oriental Therapies”, a title spawned by a spontaneous poem of the early morning. Containing a kind of table of contents it flows like an ornamental thread through the works of the exhibition. One can read it as part of a continuous poem, left side and right side. The subject reflected in the text is the “artist of history” in a substitutional form of or a projection of the angel of history, dealing and working as the angels’ assistant - or merely as the “deputy-angel-of-history”.

The model “artist of history”, redefined through the literary figure of the “angel of history”, means that he/she is the ‘it’ practicing the subjectivity of walking through time backwards, never looking forward. His/her duty is the permanent observation and recreation of narratives in an artistic practice, which appears to be today not just a political or a literary mode of production alone, but equally a practice of art production.

A theological and literary appropriation these narratives appear here as narratives of confession, of self-depreciation, of repentance. From the exhibition “The Dissidence Coincidence” in Malmö Konsthall through “18 Iniquities” at Greene Naftali in New York Josef Strau tried to list and count some earlier artistic malpractices, partly as a symbolic act and sometimes in short confessional texts producing retrospective acts, he was hoping that by naming, counting and as well by repeating certain malpractices, bad reputations might be redeemed and the weight of guilt reduced for some future time.

The new exhibition is a continuation of this artistic repentance/redemption process. It’s a possible next step on a Jacob’s ladder, a kind of staircase on which the angels run up and down, the oriental repair station. It is the angel’s practice of permanent dedication to the service of repairing - a practice emphatically reintroduced in Obama’s interpretation of the constitutionally defined right of the pursuit of happiness.

The production of text is finally broadly accepted as an artistic practice equal to let’s say photography or painting. Consequently “The Oriental Therapies” is a collection of attempts not to just name earlier malpractice but to show signs of liberation from repressive rules of representation of text. The model of the new practice is appropriated from Roland Barthes’ understanding of two opposing concepts of the writer, the *écrivain* and the *écrivain*. One type of writer is defined by the use of authority, called the author. The second is the artist, who defines himself merely as the one who is just writing therefore lacking any submission to the function of the practice of writing, denying faith in categorical rulemaking.