

Olaf Breuning

25th August – 21st October 2007

Since the late 1990s, this Swiss artist (born 1970 in Schaffhausen, lives and works in New York) has produced quotation-rich works, which refer back to the imaginary visual memory of the West and its pictorial worlds. He has gained recognition through his films, staged photography, and colourful, huge-eyed, infantile sculptures and drawings, which comment on reality in a laconic manner. A primary element in his work is an artificiality, which each presentation and figure composition makes visible and in so doing opens up a large range of reception forms. In this substituting of each original and challenging significance, the image and subject combine to form a motionless, waiting coexistence in a theatrical adult playground of stage effects, upon which the works are arranged, shrugging their shoulders in the absence of a narrative superstructure.

In the migros museum für gegenwartskunst, Olaf Breuning presents an arranged architecture of art transport boxes, whose bizarre inhabitants can be discovered by exhibition visitors on a pleasant stroll through its sculptural course. The wooden totem poles peppered with waxy candles like barbs in *Oh, yes ... it is a garden!* (2005) resemble huge toys. They provoke thoughts of the uncanny, for in spite of their ostensible simplicity, a clear meaning is absent, and in this place where each function is dispossessed they appear like the ritual objects of an unknown society. The blending of playground and ghost train is consummate in *Woman and the Dead* (2007), in which a small girl glances in stunned incredulity at her skeletal seesaw partner and looks to the observer. *The Humans* (2007) are ghostlike marble sculptures, part fairy-tale figures, with strong facial expressions, as if something had been given to or taken away from them. *The Eatmes* (2007) – small fantasy figures made out of food, on a table – in the end prove to be artificial plagiarisms, and in spite of all their decorative attractiveness are not at all fit for human consumption. With their big eyes, *The Collectors* (2007), placed in their transparent seedling tray recall the animated household items in the Disney cartoon version of *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), in the brief moment before the operator loses control of the scenario and drowns in the activating power of the animistic objects' colourful, psychedelic round dance.

Hung alongside the sculptures are tableau-like photographs and drawings, comprising only few strokes but saturated with bleak humour, whose punch lines succinctly reveal the futility of sustainable and evocative narration. For instance *Ice Sculpture* (2007), at the moment of viewing has long been melted, or was perhaps never made of ice. And in the work *Can someone tell us why we are here?* (2006), a group of people dressed in cardboard boxes with writing on them answer the redundant rhetorical question as we read the cardboard body boxes, which together make up the work's title. Visitors become displaced in an oversized, naive world by experiencing the disbelief of children, which produces a kind of self-consciousness imposed by their perceptions and imaginations. Nothing is more real anymore, and in the midst of this question about the real and the relevant, a great homelessness is created, in which the image of the past in its virtual historical excursions is disclosed as the historicising cliché of a non-existent, wild beginning.

At the end of the tour, the film *Home 2* (2007) that refers to *Home* of 2004 is shown in a temporarily looking exhibition situation made up of different kind of chairs. In *Home* Breuning showed a double projection in which, on one side, the protagonist is shown lingering restively in a stereotypical hotel room, and simultaneously on the other as a restless, unfounded soul looking for home by travelling through exotic parts of the world. The stage scenery effect binds both scenarios together. In the continuation *Home 2*, the main character is sitting on an island in Papua New Guinea, and wants to escape this small world in which he is nothing more than an imitation gorilla in a cheap ape costume. Freshly woken from a dream, he begins a conversation with his ape mask, in which the differentiation between the fictive and the real world becomes increasingly blurred, and from which he travels for 30 minutes through a world where African ways of life meet with Appenzell regional traditions.

Works by Olaf Breuning were most recently to be seen at the exhibition *Swiss Video* at the Tate Modern in London (2006), and at the Mori Art Museum in Tokyo in the context of *all about laughter* (2007).

Exhibition curator: Heike Munder.

!SUMMER PARTY!

Following the Private View on 24th August 2007, the summer party will take place in the courtyard.

!THE MUSEUMS' LONG NIGHT!

Saturday, 1st September 2007, 7pm–2am featuring bar service and a performance by Mark Divo: *In der Ruine brennt noch ein Licht*. Including a cattle-show!

!PUBLIC GUIDED TOURS!

Sundays, 26th August, 9th and 23rd September, 7th and 21st October, 3pm, as well as Thursdays, 13th September and 11th October, 6.30pm.

Family Tours for children aged 5 and up (in the company of adults)

Journey into the world of Olaf Breuning with museum Education Officer, Birgit Meier. The tour will take place on Sunday, 30th September, 2007, from 3pm to 4pm. No advance booking is necessary.

During the exhibition the migros museum für gegenwartskunst will be offering workshops for children and young people. For further information please see: www.migrosmuseum.ch

Opening hours: Tues / Wed / Fri Midday–6pm, Thurs Midday–8pm, Sat/Sun 11am–5pm.

Entrance to the museum on Thursdays between 5pm and 8pm is free.

For visual material as well as further information please contact: presse@migrosmuseum.ch

migros museum für gegenwartskunst
Limmatstrasse 270
8005 Zürich

T. +41 44 277 20 50 F. +41 44 277 62 86
info@migrosmuseum.ch www.migrosmuseum.ch

The migros museum für gegenwartskunst is an institution of the Migros Culture Percentage.
www.kulturprozent.ch