

Olaf Rauh

Paris Code

September 9 – October 7, 2006

Galerie Jean-Luc and Takako Richard presents the second one-man-show of works by Olaf Rauh, a young artist born in 1968 who lives in Leipzig. The gallery is exhibiting a whole series called *Paris Code* consisting of twelve photographs taken in Paris in 2004. The titles often refer to shop signs such as Toto, Chanel, Jennyfer... The feeling one gets is of following in the footsteps of someone strolling through the streets, seeking a truth about Paris other than a documentary or tourist's image of the city. Rauh takes a more detached view, and goes beyond contemporary documentary photography. His street scenes are blurred by horizontal streaks, shapes are distorted, almost disappear or become unrecognizable, sometimes even ghost-like. In this impression of speed and moving traffic, only the advertising signs have a strong enough presence to remain still.

The images recall the powerful effect the first photographs taken using the famous B setting had in their day, by which very long exposures were made possible. Those pictures, with their long trails of red and yellow lights left by passing cars transformed our way of seeing the city at night. Here we are faced with a new type of picture. Time is not extended, but rather fragmented, stretched out and shortened at the same time. Time/space is used as a variable, no longer as an equation but as a field of experimentation in richer and more complex telescoping effects made possible by the age of digital photography.

Olaf Rauh is one of the first photographers to have developed the new visual codes of digital photography. In 2001 his series called *Playgrounds* showed us very highly pixellized pictures for the first time. In the series called *Paris Code* the video image flow precedes the photograph. The films were projected fast forward and in slow motion, and after this were photographed. Paradoxically, Rauh strives to present "clean" pictures in the sense that they are the kind of "image subjects" that contemporary photographic artists have accustomed us to. The Lambda type photographic film freezes the surface under a shiny coat. These photographs exaggerate the codes of advertising images.

In each picture digital technology is used to produce a visual effect that gives a better reading of reality. In 2004 the digital transformations carried out by Olaf Rauh highlighted the dominant role of automobile traffic in the daily life and perception of Paris. These pictures reflect the population density of Paris but also the concentration of urban space here.

While belief in the saying that "the camera never lies" has become completely obsolete given the infinite possibilities of manipulating digital images, Olaf Rauh has invented a significant and relevant representation of reality by using new digital vocabulary.