

DEREK ELLER GALLERY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Liz Magic Laser

chase

May 21 - June 26, 2010

Opening Reception: Friday, May 21, 6 - 8 pm

Special Performance: Friday, May 21, 7 pm

"A man can be replaced at any time but a paybook is sacred if anything is." -*Man equals Man* by Bertolt Brecht

With *chase*, Liz Magic Laser reinterprets Bertolt Brecht's 1926 play *Man equals Man*. The project includes a feature-length video, an installation of ephemera from the production of *chase* as well as a theatrical set that will serve as a backdrop for a live performance.

Working in collaboration with nine actors, Laser staged Brecht's play in the ATM vestibules of banks throughout New York City. Videotaping each actor's performance separately, she edited the scenes, creating a complete version of the narrative. The element of estrangement in the original play is heightened through jump cuts and spatiotemporal shifts. The actors were instructed to deliver their lines to the bank's ATM machines and unsuspecting patrons. In the final edited version, the characters seem to converse with one another through mechanical and human conduits. Laser writes:

"I see the ATM as a contradictory space that on one hand constructs an utterly private experience and on the other reduces the individual to a completely generic and anonymous subject. *Man equals Man* is an allegory about a man who relinquishes his private identity to assume power as an egoless machine."

Originally set in colonial India, *Man equals Man* is both a comedy and a disturbing social parable that recounts the dehumanizing metamorphosis of an ordinary man into an instrument of authoritarian and capitalist design. At the start of the play four soldiers drunkenly vandalize a temple. One soldier, Jeraiah Jip, is severely injured. His comrades decide they must find a temporary replacement for him in order to avoid being punished for their crime. They pick up a local simpleton, Galy Gay, on his way to buy a fish for his wife. The soldiers cajole him into pretending to be Jeraiah Jip, eventually manipulating Galy Gay into fully adopting the missing soldier's identity through the use of Jip's paybook. Predating the concept of brainwashing, Brecht presents a man who relinquishes his individuality to become a war machine.

In addition to presenting the videotaped production of *chase*, Laser will also stage a live performance during the exhibition opening. *The Elephant Calf* was originally a farcical play within the play *Man equals Man*, but Brecht later extracted it from the script and proposed that it be performed in the theater's foyer during the intermission. With her production Laser takes up this project of bringing actor and viewer into closer proximity. After the performance, the set and costumes (made in collaboration with Felicia Garcia-Rivera) will remain as an installation.

This will be Liz Magic Laser's first solo exhibition at the gallery. Her work will be included in the upcoming *Greater New York* at MoMA PS1. A recent graduate of The Whitney Museum Independent Study Program and Columbia University's MFA program, Laser's work has been shown at The Center for Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv, Smack Mellon, The Prague Biennial, and The Art Institute of Chicago, among other venues.

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Collaborators:

The performance work was developed in collaboration with actors **Annika Boras, Andra Eggleston, Gary Lai, Liz Micek, Justin Sayre, Doug Walter, Michael Wiener, Max Woertendyke** and **Cat Yezbak**.

Set and costumes for *The Elephant Calf* were done in collaboration with **Felicia Garcia-Rivera** and included production coordination by **Mia Tramz**.

A playbill booklet was designed by **Lauren Adolfsen** and includes texts by **Carmen Dell'Orefice, Lucy Gallun, Jordan Troeller, Tom Williams, Alberto Pepe** and **Spencer Wolff**.

Derek Eller Gallery is located at 615 West 27th Street, between 11th and 12th Avenues. Hours are Tuesday - Saturday from 11 am - 6 pm. For further information or visuals, please contact the gallery at 212.206.6411 or visit www.derekeller.com