

**WA.R.TER
The War Over Water**

Street artist, SP38, and photographer, Cathy Cat-Rastler, at Galerie Maud Piquion & Partner / Berlin.

Opening: 22 January 2010, 7pm, Galerie Maud Piquion & Partner, Brunnenstr. 38, 10115 Berlin.

Galerie Maud Piquion & Partner is pleased to present a double exhibit featuring works by street artist, SP38 and the photographer, Cathy Cat-Rastler. The two French artists provocatively convey one of the most central issues of this century in an artistic context: water as a symbol of climate change. The media already use masses of standardized images of melting glaciers and arid deserts to illustrate global warming. Both artists, however, pursue their own exclusive strategy in their approach: they place a focus on the artistic nobilization of water as something that is collectively and self-evidently recognized as a resource. In doing so, they express their politically motivated urge to educate and decontextualize in order to raise more public awareness of the already prevalent potential for conflict associated with natural resources and climate change.

Both artists have in common the fact that their work tiptoes on the fine line between art and the political manifest and thus approaches the viewers as active protagonists who are being questioned about their social stances. SP38, the street artist who already garnered immense attention at the Berlin Biennale when he pasted his "Vive la Bourgeoisie" and "Who Kills Mitte" posters around the streets of Berlin, will rather ostentatiously cover the entire façade of the gallery with posters stating, WA.R.TER, in gold lettering. As a painter and posterer, SP38 concerns himself with the political issue of water in the sense of its status as a limited resource and the continued lack of accessibility to clean water for millions of people.

An imposing demonstration of the violent potential for war over this precious resource will be exhibited in the inner space of the gallery through a bathtub installation and wall collage produced from his recycled works. In putting the roots of conflict on the wastefulness and decadence of the Western World, the installation and collage lead into Cathy Cat-Rastler's sociologically inspired photographs. Cat-Rastler focuses on the preciousness and dearth of water by staging possible future scenarios. In doing so, she presents water as a museum-worthy relic. It is not without irony that she photographs the natural element as a precious gem preserved in a cheap plastic bag, although laid out on a bed of black velvet. This is Cat-Rastler's way of concertedly jabbing at the societal unawareness of the extravagance criticized by SP38. With "Heatwave Transgression 1", which depicts a young, beautiful woman sunbathing in a lounge chair between two cars and refreshing herself with a trickle of water from a gutter, the artist mirrors the ever-prevalent ignorance about actively protecting the environment. The provocatively ironic displacement of a fun vacation in a drab parking spot, and the accompanying enlightened anticipation of impending doom, is taken to even starker extremes in the photograph "Bankable Water 2", in which standard plastic water bottles are locked away in a high-security bank safe like the most treasured of gold bars.

For both artists, the future prospects for a greater appreciation of water are unanimously bleak. If nothing changes, water will become a rare and expensive commodity whose ownership will mean power over life and death. They are both fighting against this possible apocalyptic outcome. The exhibit will be running at Gallery Maud Piquion until February 26th, 2010.

(Text: Monika Nowak / Translation: Melissa Maldonado)