

**Philip Wiegard**

*Ghost of Chance*

17 January – 28 February 2009

Philip Wiegards works follow human customs of sight and the cognition of the world connected to that. Doing so, their phenomenological elements are being examined, exaggerated or deconstructed. The application of perspective is thereby repeatedly a central interest, which, on both a cultural-historic as well as a philosophical level, relevantly contributed to how humans understand locality, space and time and through that themselves.

In various bodies of work Wiegard has emphasised on the application of perspective in different art-historic ages, e.g. Pieter Brueghels beggars and cripple figures in the Flemish renaissance or de Chirico's "*pittura metafisica*" as a forerunner of surrealism. With a self-made camera Wiegard also created photographs that adapted to the cubist and modernist relations of light and perspective and that, as the central perspective used in his sculptures, staged a unique concomitance of abstraction and reality of space and time.

The latest sculptural and photographic works made for the exhibition apply aesthetic elements and symbols into the epoch of great expeditions in the late 19. Century.

The title of the exhibition „*Ghost of Chance*“, in reference to William S. Burrough's novel of the same name, hereby stands as an allegory for the missed "*hint of a chance*" of an utopian society to live in harmony with nature and it's forces.

The desire for self-determination, liberation and happiness as well as the search for "the pristine", "the savage" or "lost paradise" that motivated so many of 19. Century explorers, tragically often led to the destruction of the last hideaways of their idealised world and ended, at least in Burroughs novel, with the distinction of their own species.

The reason for this might lie in the contradictoriness of discovery and conservation. Finding the primal, unspoilt place always also means it's destruction, if not by immediate violence or illness, then surely on the long run through compromise and accommodation.

The sunken, paradisiacal harbour and the adventurous quest for it, which in Burrough's novel appears as "*museum of lost species*", reappears in Philip Wiegard's "Ghost of Chance" both in his sculptures as well as in his photographs.

A "*Megatherium Americanum*", a giant sloth that was extinct upon the arrival of men in South America over 10'000 years ago, serves as interlinking element in the exhibition. Another sculpture is made of a central perspectively diversified snakeskin or a train compartment. Photographs, again made with the self-made camera, portray the megatherium together with various characters: explorers, cave men or druids in an unreal stage design, illuminated with different projections of spaces and images of nature, reminding slightly of symbolistic theatre.

Philip Wiegard not only created parallels between culture-historical phenomena and their consequences such as emigration of nations, the great discoveries and later colonial expeditions or exoticism as a result of this. But the megatherium becomes symbol of quest, discovery and destruction of human genesis as a philosophical problem of modern times.

It speaks of human yearning for the discovery of this source of existence, of hope for an innocent, untouched world, where all human lapses and crimes have not been committed yet. In doing so, it seems to always also represent confronting one's own "savage", "alien" or "pristine". A memory slumbering in humans it may be, which is threat as well as origin of being human.

Hence Wiegards series of photographs is named „*Ultima Esperanza*“ (Engl. "*Ultimate hope*"), which on one hand can be understood as reference to tragic attempts of utopian societies, like the colony *Libertatia* described by Burroughs in „*Ghost of Chance*“. On the other hand, it is also simply the name of the region in Patagonia, where many remains of megatherias have been found in caves.

By illustrating this mythical creature and its translation into a real object, looking at the contemplator with its glass eye, Philip Wiegard builds a connection between a discourse on expedition and exoticism as regard content and formal aspects of perspective and space.

The explorers changed perspective and their world through their travels which is being represented by the geographical cards of an age. It is this sort of geographical view on space, time and distance that can also be found in Philip Wiegard's sculptures and photographs. They describe an open space with various entrances, a surface on which gaze turns nomadic, representing the world on the verge to its absence, they are illustration of reality and diagram of idea at the same time.

For further information and images please contact the gallery:

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Works by Philip Wiegard (\*1977, based in Berlin, D) have been presented amongst others at:

migros museum für gegenwartskunst, Zurich, CH (g, c 2008), Kunsthhaus Glarus, CH (g, 2008), Laura Mars Grp., Berlin, D (s, 2007), Furini Arte Contemporanea, Arezzo, IT (s, c 2007), Artnews Project, Berlin, (g, 2008), Museo di Icone Russe, Peccioli, I (g, 2008), Kunstverein Regensburg, D (s, 2005), Les Complices\* (s, 2004, 2003).

s= solo show  
g= group show  
c= catalogue