

## ICON

Stefka Ammon // Sonja Draub // Susanne Huth //  
 Guests: Eva Meyer / Eran Schaerf

Opening: Friday, 16 May 2008, 7-10 p.m.  
 through 21 June 2008 (Wed.-Sat. 2-7 p.m.)

The quest for the true image is a constant companion on the journey through art: Not only did the *vera icon*, the face of Christ on the veil of St. Veronica, serve as evidence of the human existence of Jesus, it has also been from the beginning an art-specific metaphor for the limits of the representability and mediality of images. In the exhibition "ICON," the image itself is on display in all its manifestations, including its complete disappearance.

**Susanne Huth** addresses reality and fiction with motifs from film and strategies of self-presentation and reenactment. In her installation, she investigates the significance of the metropolis of New York as a cinematic projection screen. For the photo series *Gotham City*, she captured Manhattan scenes in early-morning light that were used as models for *Batman Forever* in 1995 by the first Batman director, Joel Schumacher, who integrated real locations into the artificial studio architecture. The three videos *180 sec* and the artist's book *Maggie, Hilary and me* combine film themes with personal experience: The artist trained for three months in the Brooklyn boxing club Gleason's Gym, thus choosing the same place and schedule Hilary Swank chose to prepare for the role of Maggie in Clint Eastwood's *Million Dollar Baby* (2004). In overlapping the roles of actress, fictional character and artist, she deals with the (filmic) clichés of the American dream, which promises that any goal can be achieved if one just fights hard enough in the struggle for one's own identity.

The concept of *Bildung* [formation, education, cultivation] is so complex in meaning that it has occupied theoreticians of every stripe, from Plato at the beginning to the present day. It refers both to the image itself [*Bild*] and to the acquisition of knowledge. **Sonja Draub** pursues *Bildung*, its impartation and its aura, by concentrating on the moments when it either fails to work or is employed as a strategy of self-mastery. Photographs show views of 1950s-era sculptures and wall mosaics amid public housing in Vienna that, both in its appearance and in its social mandate, appears oddly out of place from a contemporary perspective. Draub juxtaposes these with watercolors in which iconographic motifs of cognition are superimposed on portraits of contemporary individuals. We encounter the multitalented American Miranda July, whose short stories about self-discovery between failure and omnipotence recently became a German bestseller, and who herself is a current media icon of enlightened/ironic self-knowledge.

**Stefka Ammon** investigates cultural projections and media myths in word and image. The subject of her piece *Oriental Black* is our image of Islam, which, with a history spanning centuries, manifests itself in art, politics and the media. The central part of her work, a black marble slab treated with rose oil, becomes a multilayered metaphor providing for olfactory perception as well as visual and haptic. Beyond religious disputes over images, the minimalistic wall piece spurs reflection on the limits of representation: How can a rejection of imagery give rise to projections of the other, the mystical, the unnameable? The fact that the artist chose a type of marble called "Oriental Black" is, in view of this, certainly anything but a coincidence.

An obvious complement to the exhibition is provided by the audio play *Europa von weitem* [Europe from afar] by **Eva Meyer and Eran Schaerf**, in which women at a show of Coptic art assume the roles of museum exhibits and, in the process of appropriation, project tales of their own experiences onto the works on display. Though united by a shared past in Egypt, in the present they live scattered across the entire world, becoming, in the course of the story, projections of a future Europe from afar. Created in 1999, the audio play provides a look back at the eventful development of Europe in recent years. The associative, nonlinear development of the language (typical for the duo of Meyer and Schaerf) presents an open framework for interpretation, an opportunity to reflect on the concepts of history and memory and the relationship between language and imagery.

Carla Orthen