

KERRY SKARBAKKA
The Struggle to Right Oneself
February 4th – March 31st, 2005

Fifty One Fine Art Photography is proud to present Kerry Skarbakka's first European show: 'The Struggle to Right Oneself'.

"... Philosopher Martin Heidegger described human existence as a process of perpetual falling, and it is the responsibility of each individual to catch ourselves from our own uncertainty. This unsettling prognosis of life informs my present body of work. I continually return to questions regarding the nature of control and its effects on this perceived responsibility, since beyond the basic laws that govern and maintain our equilibrium, we live in a world that constantly tests our stability in various other forms. War and rumors of war, issues of security, effects of globalization, and the politics of identity are external gravities turned inward, serving to further threaten the precarious balance of self, exaggerating negative feelings of control.

My current photographic work is in response to this delicate state. It comprises a culmination of thought and emotion, a tying together of the threads of everything I perceive life has come to represent. It is my understanding and my perspective, which relies on the shifting human conditions of the world that we inhabit. Its exploration resides in the sublime metaphorical space from where balance has been disrupted to the definitive point of no return. It asks the question of what it means to resist the struggle, to simply let go. Or what are the consequences of holding on?

Using myself as model and with the aid of climbing gear and other rigging, I photograph the body as it dangles from dangerous precipices or tumbles down flights of stairs. The captured gesture of the body is designed for plausibility of action, which grounds the image in reality. However, it is the ambiguity of the body's position in space that allows and requires the viewer to resolve the full meaning of the photograph. Do we fall? Can we fly? If we fly then loss of control facilitates supreme control.

It is necessary to point out that I do not consider myself a glorified stuntman; nor do I wish to become a sacrifice to art. Therefore, safety is an important factor, however the work does carry with it a potential risk of personal injury as I engage the moment. This is unavoidable as much of the strength of the images lie in the fact that they are all recorded on location.

The images are layered with references to an experienced background in sculpture and painting, and the cinematic quality of the work suggests the influence of commercial film. The dimensions are important to establish a direct relationship between the image and viewer. The images stand as ominous messages and reminders that we are all vulnerable to losing our footing and grasp. Moreover, they convey the primal qualities of the human condition as a precarious balancing act between the struggle against our desire to survive and our fantasy to transcend our humanness ..."

Kerry Skarbakka