

FIFTY ONE

FINE ART PHOTOGRAPHY

USA¹

Peter Granser Kate Schermerhorn

(13 March – 3 May 2008)

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USA² is a dual exhibition with photographic work by Peter Granser (an Austrian citizen who lives in Germany) and the USA-based Kate Schermerhorn. Both have a keen eye for the exaggerations, absurdities and stereotypes that decorate the edges of American popular culture. Their personal observations offer us diverse and critical points of view of the American way of life, but are always bathed in a subtle sense of humor. They show us the USA ‘squared’ or with all its exaggerations and excesses, exhibited in a time when American elections flood our tv-screens with an abundance of issues this nation faces today.

Peter Granser (°1971) depicts in his series entitled *Coney Island* the eternally American dream. He reveals to us the seaside amusement park Coney Island (NY) that was created in the 19th century imagining the America of tomorrow and its new leisure activities. Coney Island is now rusted and dirty, but still so quitessentially American, that Granser presents to us its characteristic facets and morbid charm. On the strips of hot concrete floor, bejewelled exhibitionists can be spotted posing for pictures. Young women dressed in 1950s swimsuits look the part, with a streak of scarlet lipstick and high pony tails, but we also meet throwbacks from the 1970s New York gay scene,... These are all allusions to times past.

The British photographer Martin Parr, well known for his humorous social reportage, has clearly been an influence to Granser. The photographer even switched from black and white to colour after meeting Parr in 1997. One can also discover in his pictures a clear fascination for William Eggleston and Stephen Shore and their view of reality and everyday life.

The work of **Kate Schermerhorn** (°1966) focuses more on the West Coast of the USA, where she grew up and returned to after a period abroad. The images reveal the aspects of LA that relate to the reality/fantasy theme. She researches the tiny edge between the real and the unreal in different forms: a plastic cactus on the sandy ground of a real desert; a realistic looking rock turning out to be a stereo speaker... She continually asks herself: What is Los Angeles: La La Land? City of Angels? Entertainment Capital of the World? City where Dreams are Made? Schermerhorn’s work is a detailed and critical observation of her culture; sometimes she tries to figure out what Americans do for fun and exactly why, while other series refer to the interchangeable nature of the real and the unreal in LA. To escape in yet other images from all of this, into the vastness and contemplation of the Pacific Ocean. Her work can be formally associated with the American observations by Walker Evans and the colour images of everyday life by William Eggleston.

We kindly invite you at the opening of ‘USA²’ at the 13th of March from 18.00 – 21.00.
