

ZURICH

Christoph Schlingensief

MIGROS MUSEUM FÜR GEGENWARTSKUNST

Theater director, filmmaker, and political agitator Christoph Schlingensief has a reputation for pointing out society's sore spots and affronting moral sensibilities with the drastic measures he employs in his ongoing fight against hypocrisy. His recent collaborations with art institutions are a consequence of his belief in the cross-pollination between various media such as film, theater, and visual art. "*Querverstümmelung*" (Crossmutilation), his solo show in Zurich, brings together Schlingensief's central projects of the last two years as well as his work in experimental film, offering a reflective, comparative approach to his work.

Kaprow City, 2006, first took place on a revolving stage at the Volksbühne in Berlin; actors performed quotidian activities within the set's isolated compartments, and audience members were incorporated into the installation. In its present form the work can no longer be entered, and the work is presented here as an object partially sheathed in plastic wrap; its compartmentalized interior is therefore visible, for the most part, as if beneath a veil. Also on display in Zurich are theater props and videos of the visitors and actors in Berlin (filmed by security cameras), as well as black-and-white films made by Schlingensief. Allan Kaprow, one of Schlingensief's spiritual forefathers, introduced theatrical elements into the visual arts; he declared the viewer a participant who gives meaning to a work, and, in the spatially dispersed *18 Happenings in 6 Parts*, 1959, he required the viewer to make choices. *Kaprow City*'s visual density and simultaneous opacity are, as a tribute to Kaprow, an admission of the impossibility of a universal witness-bearing, and call upon the viewer to play a responsible and productive role. The reconstructed installation is therefore not an entirely frozen visual object; rather, the ruins of its past incarnation have been introduced into another set of circumstances and become a backdrop for new projections.

In *Last Supper*, 2007, Jesus and the twelve apostles appear as orange figures more than twelve feet tall, with Styrofoam heads, facing one another in two rows. Onto the apostles are projected 16-mm films shot in the Amazon during preparations for a production of Wagner's *Flying Dutchman*. The films look washed-out, as if disintegrating as part of an organic

cycle of growth and decay. Cinematic corpses from past exhibitions and the protocols of their suffering are interred in the form of old films and journals in glass vitrines placed between the rows of figures.

Gold Maria, 2007, is an installation whose centerpiece is the gigantic film project *The African Twintowers*, 2004, filmed in Namibia and consisting of 180 hours of raw material. An eighteen-hour edit could be seen in fragments on a screen wall in the exhibition: Remakes of scenes from film classics and elements from Nordic mythology and African shamanism form a bewildering medley that resists any narrative structure or consistent truth. From the eyelike opening of a gilded cube in the center of the space, a forty-minute version is projected onto an exterior wall. With the help of a wheelchair lift, visitors can ride up through this projection; at the same time, they are filmed by a closed-circuit camera connected to a monitor inside the installation, doubly integrating them into the work—thus referring back pointedly to Schlingensief's preoccupation with the dissolving hierarchical boundaries among author, actor, and observer.



View of "Christoph Schlingensief," 2007.

—Valérie Knoll

Translated from German by Oliver E. Dryfuss.