

PRESS RELEASE

CHRISTOPH BÜCHEL

11 October 2006 – 18 March, 2007, Hauser & Wirth Coppermill

Opening: Tuesday 10 October, 6 – 10 pm

A major exhibition by Swiss artist Christoph Büchel will be the second exhibition at Hauser & Wirth Coppermill in London's East End. Büchel works in a variety of media, including film, printed materials, sculpture and textiles, though he is perhaps best known for his conceptual projects and large-scale installation pieces. Büchel often appropriates mass media sources such as the Internet, printed political pamphlets and everyday household objects. His work is informed by an explicit political awareness, often telling of new forms of propaganda in an era of mediated war.

Büchel's complex installations force his audience to participate in scenarios that are physically demanding and psychologically unsettling. Cramped tunnels, claustrophobic chambers and frequent dead-ends induce feelings of panic and paranoia. He explores the unstable relationship between security and internment, placing visitors in the brutally contradictory roles of victim and voyeur. Gallery visitors to Büchel's 2005 installation 'Hole' at the Kunsthalle Basel were forced through small rooms connected by constricted passageways and steep ladders. Inside these fraught spaces, the chilling sight of a suicide caught on surveillance camera was juxtaposed with a psychotherapist's consulting room and the remnants of a bombed out Swiss bus. The frozen rooms that form the basis of such works as 'The House of Friction (Pumpwork Heimat)' (2002) offer spaces of oppressive cold, where preservation borders on the brink of obsolescence. Experiencing such charged spaces is usually a solitary task, though this private experience becomes the means by which collective tensions and traumas might be unearthed.

For the 2005 Venice Biennale, Büchel collaborated with Gianni Motti on the 'Guantanamo Initiative': the artists campaigned to lease the site of Guantanamo Bay from the Cuban government, on the grounds that the US occupation of the territory is unlawful. A collection of paperwork documents their efforts. Other conceptual acts have more forcefully demonstrated the element of institutional critique that is present throughout his oeuvre. 'Invite Yourself' (2002) consisted of Büchel auctioning his place at Manifesta on the Internet auction-site e-bay. 'Capital Affair' (also 2002), another collaboration with Motti, promised the entire exhibition budget to the gallery visitor who could find a cheque hidden within the exhibition space of the Helmhaus in Zurich. Büchel repeatedly manipulates and exploits the perceived power of the social and legal contract, subverting the relationship between artist and audience while insisting on a more active political role for both.

Christoph Büchel (born Basel 1966) studied at the University of Art and Design, Basel, from 1986-89, at Cooper Union School of Art, New York in 1989-90, and at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf from 1992-1997. In 2000-2001, he was awarded a scholarship at PS1, New York. Recent solo exhibitions have included: 'Shelter' at Haus der Kunst, Munich (2002); 'Private Territories' at the Swiss Institute, New York (2004); 'Close Quarters' at Kunstverein Freiburg (2004); and 'Hole' at Kunsthalle Basel (2005). In 2005, he collaborated with Gianni Motti at the Venice Biennale. Christoph Büchel lives and works in Basel.

For further information and artwork material, please contact

HAUSER & WIRTH LONDON Phone +44 (0)20 7287 2300, london@hauserwirth.com,
or Laura Elgar at Idea Generation Phone +44 (0)20 7428 4949,
laura@ideageneration.co.uk

GALLERY HOURS Thursday to Sunday 12 – 7pm