

BARBARA PROBST

Barbara Probst
Murray Guy, New York
15 September – 29 October

Since 2000, Barbara Probst has used a carefully orchestrated array of cameras, simultaneously triggering their shutter releases by radio control to capture a single photographic instant from a multiplicity of perspectives. Presented as multipart works (from diptychs to as many as a dozen panels), each *Exposure* is numbered and the precise location and time of its creation diligently catalogued in the extended title. Each piece spatially expands and temporally extends the mythical instant of photographic exposure, evoking a phenomenological response as we are forced to enter into and chart this recalibrated space-time. The results are both unexpected and

profoundly unsettling, as Probst's latest solo at Murray Guy demonstrates.

Probst's most simple works, diptychs and triptychs where the perspective shifts primarily in one plane between frames, take on conventional genres such as studio portraiture and landscape photography, revealing much about the mechanics of the gaze and how it shapes our interaction with, and interpretation of, such images. *Exposure #70: Munich Studio, 05.10.09, 3:03 p.m.* (2009), a diptych portrait of a pair of girls, a child and a young adult, each looking squarely into the camera in only one of the images, reveals that eye contact is our most common entry point into portraiture as a genre. The focus of *Exposure #84: N.Y.C., Central Park, Great Lawn, 11.19.10, 5:40 p.m.* (2010) is a pair of figures, seen from some distance. One, with an arm raised, points something out to the other. In the first perspective, the subject of their attention is included in the frame; in the other, where the perspective is rotated 90 degrees, the figure points outside the frame. The photograph's tenor shifts with the point of view, morphing from a self-evident almost documentary image to one that is more receptive to narrative projections.

The more complex pieces, where three or more frames are presented sequentially, resemble storyboards. In *Exposure #77: N.Y.C., Collister & Hubert Street, 06.22.10, 6:41 p.m.* (2010), Probst mixes up far shots and extreme close-ups, colour and black-and-white images, and various unconventional angles to exaggerate disjunctions between frames. The series shatters a single instant into multiple irreconcilable facets, adding existential weight to an otherwise incidental encounter between three people on a street. The first image of *Exposure #88: Munich, Nederlingerstrasse 68, 04.06.11, 2:20 p.m.* (2011) shows a young girl standing in a forest, looking upwards, a hand clasped suggestively at her throat. The sequence pivots through a black-and-white close-up of her eye – following the trajectory of our gaze – to an overhead shot. Showing her standing in a bare white studio surrounded by photographic paraphernalia, her lush setting a mere printed backdrop, the final image provides communion through eye contact but also reveals the infidelity of the apparatus.

Probst's project deconstructs photography's truth claims from within, gaining critical strength precisely from the indexical link traditionally assigned to the medium. It is because these works are photographic, supposed transcriptions of reality, that their simultaneous multiplicity is so deeply troubling. They remind us that while each moment is infinitely photographable, every photograph is partial; and, finally, reality always resists the frames of representation.

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