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OIL STICK WORK

JOHN GERRARD

Simon Preston is pleased to present John Gerrard's first solo exhibition in New York titled *Oil Stick Work* which opens to the public on Saturday, January 10 and runs until Sunday, March 8 2009.

The show's eponymous work titled '*Oil Stick Work (Angelo Martinez/Richfield, Kansas)*', is a virtual sculpture that depicts a solitary aluminum corn silo on the austere landscape of the American Great Plains. At daybreak, in real time, Angelo Martinez, a Mexican-American builder, arrives at the silo and carefully creates a black square on the exterior of the structure with an oil stick crayon. Within thirty years, working a six-day week from dawn to dusk, the building will be entirely coated, transformed into a dark object on the landscape. In 2038 the Martinez character will complete his task and leave the scene.

A second work, titled '*Grow Finish Unit (near Elkhart, Kansas) 2008*' is an intricately detailed virtual representation of a large pig production facility in the same region. Its appearance documents a horrifyingly functional agricultural reality and illustrates both a contemporary denial of animal dignity and the reduction of contract between farmer and farmed to a purely technical, almost contactless process. A viewer-controlled camera permits oversight by the work's audience. Circling the scene at their command, it unflinchingly surveys vast lakes of excrement sparkling in the sun while squat computer-controlled silos relentlessly pump nitrogen-derived corn feed. The *Finish* of the title is represented by a 6-8 month orbit of exchange in the work – a fleet of trucks will arrive at some designed but unscripted point to silently remove and replace the occupants. As in life, a blazing sun relentlessly circles in a 12-month orbit of its own.

Experiencing the work in the gallery affords only a small glimpse into its unprecedented use of time as medium. In addition, the audience is required to question the relationship between their own technologically mediated surveillance of the site with that which controls the lives of the animals within and – by extension – the ethics of their own consumption and relationship with technology.

The artist's choice of medium in this work, that of the virtual, is potently and insightfully applied. *Grow Finish Unit* represents an existing virtual state – the automated husbandry of farm animals, themselves largely sustained by petroleum – re-fabricated by the most ubiquitous of contemporary tools, the computer, which now defines and provides the medium for so much of what we conceive to be real. Meanwhile, the work's assured application of a wider system of aesthetic reference – painterly attention to detail, economy of expression and use of art historical precedents – serve to amplify and complement its deeply unsettling qualities.

The third work in the show, a photograph titled '*Figure Blocking Sun (Cesar), 2008*', depicts a man perfectly silhouetted against the sun. Head on to the viewer, the subject's face is blanked and stripped of features. Without markers of expression, his relation to consciousness and all social reference points are removed, leaving an elemental composition of earth, sky, sun and the human figure. A recurring preoccupation with elemental enframement marks a point of continuity between this new work and Gerrard's output of recent years.

John Gerrard lives and works between Vienna and Dublin. He received his BFA from the School of Fine Art and Drawing at Oxford University and an MFA from the School of the Art Institute in Chicago. His work was recently included in *Equal, That Is, To The Real Itself*, curated by Linda Norden, at the Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, 2007. *Oil Stick Work (Angelo Martinez/Richfield, Kansas)* will be presented as part of an independent project by the RHA, Dublin at the Venice Biennial in June 2009.

Simon Preston Gallery would like to thank Ernst Hilger / hilger contemporary, Vienna, Austria for their generous support of this exhibition.

The gallery is located at 301 Broome Street between Forsyth and Eldridge Streets. Gallery hours are Wednesday through Sunday from 11am to 6m. The nearest subway stops are Grand Street on the B/D lines and Delancey Street on the F/J/M/Z lines. For more information please contact office@simonprestongallery.com or call the gallery on 212- 431-1105.