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THE WHY OF LIFE

April 9 to May 17 2008

Gregory and Cyril Chapuisat, Carsten Höller, Sean Landers, Kelly Nipper, Lisa Oppenheim, Roman Signer // Curated by Gianni Jetzer

Despite the enormous amount of information today, the reason for our existence remains enigmatic. The amount of secrets is bone crushing compared to what we know as sure as fate. The group-show "The Why of Life" brings together works from international artists concerned with the spirits of life and their extinction.

The exhibition recalls the leitmotif of Materialism and Causality, and how these principles relate to one another. The "billiard ball" hypothesis, a product of Newtonian physics, argues that once the initial conditions of the universe have been established the rest of history follows inevitably.

Intentionally positioning itself as melancholic towards life, the exhibition offers a deterministic attitude. "The Why of Life" contrasts the assurance that self-will and performance yield success. Most artworks in the show reflect universal questions in a micro-scale. They circle around the bigness of small things and stress the nothingness of human existence.

"Circle, Circle" an installation by **Kelly Nipper**, is a small booth in which hangs an ice-cube mobile. A square drum underneath the mobile magnifies the melting of each ice cube medallion. The dissolution of matter, solid to liquid, resonates throughout the gallery.

In her installation, "18 of 100 Photographs That Changed The World," **Lisa Oppenheim** uses source images from the famous book compiled by the editors of LIFE magazine. The artist generates the star constellation of these photographs by entering their time, place, and date into a computer program. The resulting star fields transcend into universal patterns for human tragedies. Geographic order structures the hanging, the star fields create a world map.

The large-scale installation "Untitled" by **Cyril and Gregory Chapuisat** is a solitary object somehow catapulted into the gallery. Containing a secret interior, the object is both transmitter of messages and obstructor of space. Its enigmatic presence alludes to the mysterious monolith in Stanley Kubrick's *2001 - A Space Odyssey*.

The "Suicide Plant" by **Carsten Höller** gets punished for its will to grow. As soon as it reaches a certain height, it electrocutes itself. This surreal test case elevates the plant to an organism with its own will.

In his paintings, **Sean Landers** echoes the polar opposites of tormented self-doubt and endless self-aggrandizement. In the large-scale canvas *Fiat Lux*, he formulates hundreds of statements in relation to the simple but crucial questions regarding life. The *Huffer* paintings, portraits painted after mug shots of men arrested for stealing and huffing spray paint, offer another perspective. Both clownish and tragic, in a nirvana state of mind, they seem to know a lot about life.

"Candle" by **Roman Signer** is a simple apparatus consisting of a board, an air pump, and a candle. The artist offers an impertinent decision: to extinguish the flame by stepping on the pump.

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