

GREGOR SCHNEIDER
Fotografie und Skulptur

01 September – 02 October 2010
69 South Audley St London W1

Gregor Schneider's first solo exhibition at a London gallery for thirteen years presents key photography and sculpture from the last decade. Gregor Schneider came to international prominence with *Haus u r/Totes Haus u r* in Rheydt (now a province of Mönchengladbach), a suburban German house which he has continually reconfigured and duplicated since 1985, in an ongoing project amounting to a 'total work of art' or *gesamtkunstwerk*. Using machines, Schneider shifts walls, ceilings and entire rooms, to create an onion-like layering of shifting spaces whose original arrangement is progressively effaced. The artist has built rooms within rooms that precisely replicate one another; and parts of the house have also been doubled on a 1:1 scale and transposed into different locations.



From the start of the project, Schneider has methodically photographed each room of *Haus u r*, and has also produced a series of photographs of the dark interstices between the rooms.

Since Schneider's earliest museum exhibitions in Museum Haus Lange (1994) and Kunsthalle Bern (1996), he has exhibited photographs as independent artworks, commenting that "The photographs and videos are essences, freezing everything." This exhibition focuses on both his photographs and sculptures as "essences" of his art. The photographs relate to projects including *CUBE HAMBURG* (2007) a monumental black cube reminiscent of Mecca's Kaaba outside the Hamburger Kunsthalle, as part of the museum's 'Homage to Malevich' exhibition in celebration of that artist's 1915 work *Black Square*. Schneider's original unrealised proposal for an equivalent cube in St Mark's Square, Venice, is also documented. *END* (2008), an architectural intervention at the Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach, Germany, consisted of a vast black portal receding into a blind passageway.

In a blacked-out room downstairs, visitors will encounter a tableau of spot-lit sculptures of human bodies. These half-concealed, supine figures form an enigmatic group of 'family members' – Hannelore Reuen, N.Schmidt, 'the son' – and suggest the aftermath of some violent crime, as well as calling to mind Duchamp's celebrated installation *Etant Donnés* (1946-66). At first glance, it is unclear whether we have been presented with models or real human bodies, an ambiguity that pervades much of Schneider's work: for instance, *N.Schmidt, Kabinett für aktuelle Kunst Bremerhaven* (2001; now part of the collection of the Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt) consists of a room in which a pair of legs protrudes morbidly from behind a wall.

Like Schneider's rooms, these sculptures are repetitions of existing 'constructs'. N.Schmidt is a replica of a character originally presented as a 'living sculpture' by the artist. *HANNELORE REUEN. ALTE HAUSSCHLAMPE* (2001) is a mannequin cast from the artist's body, and reincarnates the character of Hannelore Reuen whom he first created at the Foksal Gallery, Warsaw (2000) and afterwards in *GARAGE* at the Hamburger Kunsthalle (2003) – a replica of a garage from his childhood. Also on display are throwaway items deriving from Schneider's *WUNDERKAMMER* project (1989) and from the passageways and 'interspaces' of *Haus u r/Totes Haus u r*. The pitch black environment recalls the blind tunnel of *END* and Schneider's 2006 work *BLACK DEAD END* at the Fondazione Morra Greco in Naples, a four hundred metre unlit passageway that engulfed visitors. The darkness arrests our sense of space and volume, working both to disorientate and to induce a sense of isolation. As the critic Anita Shah has revealingly observed of the experience evoked by Schneider's exhibitions: "our shadow is part of our own personal unconscious and is made up of repressed emotional processes which are felt to be negative and dark as soon as they penetrate their way into consciousness. Encountering oneself thus means, in the first instance, the inescapable, painful encounter with our own shadow."

Since 2003 Gregor Schneider has moved increasingly outside the private topos of the house – a shift reflected in a number of the photographs on display. His works have focused increasingly on social topics, for example his open-air reconstruction of a street at the Hamburger Kunsthalle (2003), a street in Hamburg notorious for child prostitution and the site of the infamous Al-Quds Mosque, often visited by the assassins of 9-11.

Gregor Schneider (b. 1969, Rheydt) has exhibited internationally since his first exhibition in 1985, at the age of sixteen, at Galerie Kontrast, Mönchengladbach. In 2010, as part of the inauguration of the Treffpunkt Düren at the Leopold-Hoesch-Museum, Düren, Germany, the artist was presented with this award and created a new, expansive and site-specific installation, *Marienstraße*. In 2008, Gregor Schneider was awarded the prestigious Peill Prize by the Günther Peill Foundation, and in 2001 he was awarded the Golden Lion at the Venice Biennale for *Totes Haus u r*.

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 Opening hours Tuesday – Saturday 10 – 6pm