

# Daimler Art Collection

Photography, Video, Mixed Media III

Daimler Contemporary, Berlin

September 29, 2006 – January 8, 2007

Renate Wiehager

In the early 1990s the Daimler Art Collection began to broaden its focus, which had been on painting, to include photography, video and object art. The current exhibition, the third of its kind in Berlin since 2001, reflects the continuation of this orientation.

Sylvie Fleury is represented by six new films commissioned by the Art Department and Daimler France and produced in 2005 for the Mercedes-Benz Brand Center in Paris. Known for her artistic positioning between the worlds of fashion, lifestyle and art, Fleury re-stages the myth of the Mercedes-Benz brand from unusual viewpoints: in showrooms, workshops and on test tracks, classic Mercedes-Benz cars become players in the game between the sexes. The film choreography places female models in luxurious, elegant or trendy, skimpy outfits in an environment occupied by male stereotypes: gentle hands wax and polish the car bodywork (*Swiss Polish Meditation*, 2005), Mercedes-Benz gullwings float up and down on lifting platforms like futuristic angels (*Cosmic Atelier*, 2005).

Young Indian artist Shilpa Gupta presents an interactive video animation that explores the phenomenon of fashion as style, expression and personal protest. Young women in military

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fatigues move about in response to computer-programmed commands that can be controlled by viewers in the video installation. Though the poses of the figures are reminiscent of military drill, the video's music and language articulate a message about resisting uniformity and standardization. Here the military clothing, freed from its original purpose, clearly expresses a new style of appearance adopted by the young generation of Indians to dissociate themselves from the commercialization of the world in which they live.

The works by Guy Tillim, winner of the Mercedes-Benz Award 2004, are impressive examples from a new series of photographs taken in Malawi, Mozambique. Tillim's works are complemented by a video work by Berni Searle, another artist living and working in South Africa. In his photographs, Tillim portrays everyday life in the small village of Petros in Malawi. With his analytical yet emphatically penetrating gaze, he sees through the clichés surrounding poverty and Aids and reveals how they affect individual fates. Berni Searle explores the situation in South Africa after the end of apartheid in a very specific, highly personal way.

With Justin Ponmany and Pamela Singh, the exhibition again turns to India's exceedingly vibrant art scene. Singh's many years as a photojournalist took her to several continents and her photographic eye, trained in trouble spots around the world, is now guiding her in her artistic work. The series of *Jaipur Self-Portraits*, 2003, show the artist herself superimposed on Hindu social scenes still based on the caste system, demonstrating a belonging but one that is beyond social precepts. Justin Ponmany, on the other hand, continues the tradition of abstract-geometric Indian art including the influence of artistic ornament, in his paintings.

Ina Weber, Bernhard Kahrman and Heimo Zobernig complete the exhibition's thematic circle: all three artists take European modernism and postmodernism as the basis and departure point for their work. With *Nest of Tables*, 2006, Ina Weber makes reference to the formalistic glass and wood furniture designed by Josef Albers during his Bauhaus years and now being rediscovered. Bernhard Kahrman's *uncertain memories*, 2006, portray his investigations into time and space: instead of offering an insight into past moments, the indistinct, floating images of his video work convey a loss of "event", depriving us of our ability to participate in concrete memories. The themes of Heimo Zobernig's film and video works, hitherto rarely exhibited and comprising some fifty titles produced since 1983, are contemporary figures from the art context, his private milieu and important cultural and art

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historical texts. Heimo Zobernig's films are in video portrait style and mostly show the artist himself in various roles and disguises, and in interview situations with a variety of interlocutors. The artistic treatment casts doubt on the credibility of the film portrait format as a *per se* authentic document about people and places. Placed in sequence, the videos are not only documentary but also a fiction and a commentary.

(Press release for the exhibition 'Photography, Video, Mixed Media III')

**Daimler Contemporary**  
**Haus Huth Alte Potsdamer Str. 5 10785 Berlin**  
**daily 11 am - 6 pm**

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