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© Marielis Seyler, *Lamm*, 1994/2013, Ink jet print, 40 x 60 inches



© Bahar Behbahani, *Suspended*, 2007

LOOKS LIKE TORTURE

February 21 – March 30, 2013

Performance art-based exhibition at HERE

Opening Reception + First Performance Thursday, February 21, 2013 5-8:30pm

New York, NY - *Looks Like Torture* is a performance art-based exhibition that examines social behaviors and the complicated and often painful path of self-discovery—filled with bias, misrepresentation, abuse and insecurity.

On view at HERE from Thursday, February 21 through Saturday March 30, 2013, *Looks Like Torture* will present a series of performance art happenings, video, photography and site-specific installations by an internationally renowned selection of artists.

Co-curated by **Nicholas Cohn Art Projects** and **Amy Kisch of AKArt**, the exhibition responds to ongoing ethnic conflicts, discrimination, animal cruelty and environmental neglect. **Performance art presentations will take place on Thursday, February 21 and Mondays, March 4 and 11,** featuring the work of Joshua Seidner, Jaeun Lee and Mitch Miller respectively.

In *Pretender*, **Joshua Seidner** draws from themes of Orientalism and ritual, offering audience members a foot cleaning and massage. This occasionally awkward interaction raises questions of socio-economic status, gender and power in western culture. In *Shooting Party*, **Mitch Miller** also explores issues of space and control, inviting participants to shoot at a target that begins to crumble, and ultimately becomes a sculptural installation. The performance is suggestive of our relationship with the natural world, and how our neglect has resulted in destructive environmental change.

Jaeun Lee's performance, in collaboration with musician Che Chen, also arouses uneasiness in viewers, presenting conflicting and coexisting notions of oppression and entertainment. Chastity devices, double as musical instruments, and bind the performers, dissecting societal norms and redefining what is 'appropriate' engagement. As with Lee's performance, *Suspended*—a single channel video by Iranian-born Bahar Behbahani—portrays a woman bound and hung. The film questions the loss of individual power in a politically and morally restrictive Middle Eastern environment as well as the psychological confinement of a media-saturated Western culture.

Sean Fader's still photography and video document a very personal search for companionship and fulfillment. Apparently uninhibited by social constructs, Fader and his partners explore their—and our—sexualities in the world of online dating. His photographic series *SUP*, captures online communications with his dates—both prior to and following their intimate encounters—with images of partners conjured from their virtual correspondence juxtaposed with the realities he learns them to be. The images culminate with *OPA*, a video of his emotional, physical and psychological release of—and 'torture' by—these dualities.

Jamie Knowles' sculptural wall installation and performance piece accouterment, *Wind Chimes*, similarly addresses how we manipulate and orchestrate identity in a synchronized performance. Unifying imagery from burlesque, the cat walk, sexual subversion—and to a lesser extent, drag—the objects made from metal Chinese therapy balls reinterpret an archaic instrument of imprisonment, the ball and chain, as fashion accessory. Using and referencing recognized objects: the sex toy, meditative aide, and jewelry to layer meaning, Knowles playfully critiques and explores the fashion-commodity as a conflicted communicator of identity. Also vexed by the play between sexual identification as well as gender—and particularly transgender—negotiation, **Aiden Simon's** large-scale photography frames the performative nature of personhood while exploring subjugation and power between subject/object and viewer.

Negar Behbahani explores this on a macrocosmic level, depicting the individual's response to, and envelopment in, the cogs of the status quo. In *Agony; Never Ending*, a series of women are captured in an endless rotation of wheels set upon a predetermined pathway. Loud and unintelligible commands of culture call their—and our—'choice' into question. **Taus Makhacheva** similarly presents this gap between the collective and the personal. Her double-channel video *Let Me Be Part of a Narrative* uses graphic imagery of dog-fighting placed alongside archival footage of wrestling champion Ali Aliev, in an attempt to explore the stereotypes of the region as presented by the media, versus the actual lived experience. At the same time, the work poses important questions about representations of masculinity, as well as the individual and political nature of competition and its circumstances.

Delving further into elements of dominance, power, animal cruelty and violent human behavior seen in Makhacheva's film, **Marielis Seyler** invites viewers to decide what their role in this narrative will be. Placing large format-images of the slaughtered, the feeble and the vulnerable on the ground, her installation measures our response to an invitation to trample, degrade, ignore or protect the subjects—a disturbing metaphor of our treatment of living things, the natural world and each other.

Location:

HERE, 145 Sixth Avenue, New York, NY 10013

(Enter on Dominick Street one block south of Spring)

HERE builds a community that nurtures career artists as they create innovative hybrid live performance in theatre, dance, music, puppetry, media and visual art.

Programming Schedule:

Opening Reception: Thursday, February 21 from 5-8:30pm

Performance Art Presentations:

Thursday, February 21 @ 7pm, Joshua Seidner

Monday, March 4 @ 8:30pm, Jaeun Lee

Monday, March 11 @ 8:30pm, Mitch Miller

Public Hours: Tuesday - Friday 2-7pm

Additional Information: www.ncartprojects.com or www.here.org

Media Contacts:

Nicholas Cohn, Nicholas Cohn Art Projects: 917.923.7982 or info@ncartprojects.com

Amy Kisch, AKArt: 646.580.6626 or info@AKArt.com