

Press Release

Per BARCLAY
Canon

Exhibition from 14th January to 12th March 2010
Opening on 14th January 2010 from 6pm in the presence of the artist

Guy Bärtschi Gallery is happy to welcome for the second time the Norwegian artist **Per Barclay**, who will be presenting his latest photographic works. Born in 1955 in Oslo, Per Barclay lives and works in Turin. The artist who holds a degree in art history is an accomplished sculptor and a photographer. In this new exhibition, he will combine and confront two separate series, "Adolf Gun" which the artist has produced over the last few months and "Maria", which was shot in 2007 but has never been presented in its entirety before.

"Adolf Gun" belongs to the "Chambres d'huile" ("Oil Rooms") series which Per Barclay has been working on since 1989. The artist's practice is to photograph closed spaces, of which the ground surface has been covered with a layer of liquid, usually waste oil, but sometimes water, wine, blood, or milk. This intervention creates a mirror reflection of the space, which is perceived in a whole new dimension. "Chambres d'huile" reveals hidden details and allows the coming together of elements that would otherwise not meet; the result is a surprising revelation. The series plays on formal aspects such as symmetry and chromatic modulation, but is not limited to this aesthetic dimension. In his work, Per Barclay tends always to push back the limits of logic. By disrupting the gaze and creating a new indefinable a-temporal space, he offers the viewer an original perceptual field engaging a reflection on our relationship with representation. The direct dialogue between image and space, which operates in Per Barclay's work, precludes any possibility of narration in the photography. This rejection of the narrative dimension makes way for an independent image, which is not free of a certain form of latent violence. In photographing a cannon situated above the well of an old bunker in Norway, Per Barclay makes explicit reference to the Second World War. The *Adolf Guns* are German naval cannons designed in 1934 by the engineers Krupp. Several of these weapons were installed in Norway during the German occupation. Installed to defend the coasts as from 1942, like in Harstadt, these guns protected the harbor of Narvik and the surrounding fjords which were rich in iron and petroleum, two essential resources that Germany had to import. In order to strengthen the threatening symbolic of the *Adolf Gun* and to refer to its historical function, Per Barclay has chosen to use his favourite substance: waste oil.

The series "Maria" is part of Per Barclay's study of ballerinas. Through this thematic the artist exploits a tension system upon which lays the majority of its work. Photographing dancers primarily involves a study of the tension of the body and induces the paradox of movement frozen by the still picture. In this series which stages a dancer who works with the Belgian artist and director Jan Fabre, the contrast between the vulnerability of the skin and the almost hostile mineral environment chosen by Per Barclay join the ironic game between the ballerina's emblematic white tutu and the violent tension of her body and the black paint which stains her hands.

The confrontation of the two series represents the meeting of the threatening virile force evoked by the phallic form of canons and the delicate feminine grace, yet also tinted with a form of violence suggested by some intriguing or even worrying elements: a fan burnt in the middle, through which stares a frowning gaze, or a body partly painted black sometimes reduced to only two hands gripping on with its nails.