

Press release

Michael NAJJAR
high altitude

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

Galerie Guy Bärtschi is pleased to propose for the second time the artist **Michael Najjar**, who is presenting his new series « high altitude ».

Michael Najjar, born in 1966 in Landau (Germany), practices a so-called « hybrid photography ». Graduated in photography and new medias from the Bildo Academy of Berlin, he can be considered as a pioneer of digital and photographic manipulation. In 2008 a retrospective consecrated to his work since 1997, « Augmented realities », at The Hague Museum of photography and at the GEM museum for contemporary art (Netherlands), has rendered tribute to his exploration of relationships between photography, video and computers.

Using data processing resources in order to transform his photographic material, Michael Najjar proposes a valuable aesthetic of the image reworked with new technologies. This approach offers to the artist the occasion to reflect on the notion of photography itself. The series « ¡viva Fidel! – a journey into absurdity » (1997) gives to the public the possibility of challenging the authenticity of the photographic witnessing, like in « information and apocalypse » (2003), inspired by 9/11 attacks and the media coverage of this event. Computer manipulation of images is also exploited in order to question the fate of human beings and the transformations in the computer era.

Michael Najjar is particularly interested in change induced to humankind by technologies, human social interaction and his vital environment. The computerized and robotic individuals, living inhuman relationships, constitute a recurrent motif in Najjar's work, as we can see in the series "nexus project part I" (1999-2000), "end of sex as we know it." (2002), "bionic angel" (2006-2008) or even the megalopolises strangely dematerialized in «netropolis» (2003-2006).

The recent series "high altitude", goes again in this direction by proposing the graphic development framework of major stock indices during the last twenty/thirty years. This work illustrates the progressive disappearance in nowadays societies of materiality taken over by virtual information structures and computerized codes that strip human interactions of any physical reality.

The photographic basis of this work has been produced last year, during a three week expedition dedicated to the ascent of Mount Aconcagua in Argentina, the highest point of the American continent with its 6962 meters of altitude. The artist formally reconciles the rocky summits with the charts' peaks representing the evolution of the market indices. The visual analogy between the rough materiality of the mountain and the representation of virtual values is based on the same attractive power coupled with the potential dangerousness they share. Under the perspective of the current economic context, Michael Najjar's work prompts the spectator to measure the effects of the unlimited pile of immaterial values which in the future may require to be reincarnated in the real world.