

**LEO KOENIG INC.**

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For Immediate Release:

**Aidas Bareikis**

"La Charme de la Vie"

April 29 through May 31, 2003

Opening reception April 29, 2003, 6-8 pm.

Leo Koenig Inc. is pleased to announce the opening of "La Charme De La Vie," an installation by Aidas Bareikis. For "La Charme De La Vie," Bareikis recalls a painting of the same name by Watteau. Employing the painting's theatrically serene imagery as memetic anchor, Bareikis catapults the viewer into a space-time continuum at warp speed, putting Watteau's scene through the g-forces of gravity. In Bareikis' hands, the view is inverted, exposing the inherent decadence of Watteau's "fete galante." On one side, the bucolic landscape, lovely women, innocent girls, a man tuning a lute while to the right a dog lays on the ground with a servant, head bowed, nearby. What emerges is the brutality of the journey to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Columns have fallen, vessels are compressed, gasses expand, individuals are melded and disfigured. The more delicate the artifice, the more exaggerated the devastation. The sensitive rococo palette has been charred beyond recognition.

Bareikis generally creates environments that resonate as exquisite catastrophes, ebullient nightmares. Working with items bought at 99 cent stores, flea markets and yard sales, he looks for objects that "look weird but betray a certain cruel exploitation in their purpose or in the way they were manufactured." Iridescent tchotchkes compete with cartoon figures, Halloween masks are festooned with temporary tattoos, at times giving one the feeling that they are experiencing some adolescent-goth-science-experiment gone mad. Bareikis continuously seeks out and arranges objects that appear to potentiate energy, invested with a nascent force of their own. As a result, these objects seem to be mutating and replicating by their own volition, becoming more baroque with each transformation. The resulting installation gives the impression not of a carefully arranged spectacle, but one of beautifully germinating abnormality, dormant chaos.

This feeling of latent chaos however, belies the fastidiousness of Bareikis' construction. Each object is not only selected, but altered in a way that in most cases, leaves its method of alteration mysterious. This enigmatic transformation suggests a spontaneous change from *within* that is a result of an applied external variant. The viewer becomes a witness to a mesmerizing arrangement of looming implications. Chemical reactions, bio-engineering and genetic modification bubble up from the surface of relentless consumerism, blatant exploitation and the numbing exchange of kitsch for culture. And still, the whole expresses not so much a nihilistic view, as one of a curiously effervescent entropy. Bareikis manages to create installations that are at once formless and modular, chaotic yet rigorous, confrontational and introspective, heroic while revealing a fragile elegance.

This is Aidas Bareikis third solo exhibition at Leo Koenig Inc. Aidas Bareikis was born in Vilnius, Lithuania in 1967 and graduated from the Vilnius Art Academy in 1993. He came to America the same year and completed the MFA program from Hunter College in 1997. He was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship and has been the recipient of a Soros Foundation Grant. Bareikis has most recently had a solo exhibition at Zacheta Center for Contemporary Art, Warsaw, Poland. He also recently had a solo exhibition entitled "Glad to Hear From You," at the Contemporary Art Center in Vilnius. In addition he has participated in shows such as "Generation Z," and "Greater New York" at PS1/MOMA "Crossing the Line" at the Queens Museum. Aidas Bareikis lives and works in New York City. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 10-6 pm. For more information or visuals, please contact Elizabeth Balogh or Kai Heinze at the gallery.