

LEO KOENIG INC.

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JULIKA RUDELIUS

Rituals of Capitalism

July 11 – September 8, 2012

545 West 23rd Street

Leo Koenig Inc. is delighted to present a solo exhibition of multi-channel videos and photographs by Julika Rudelius. Over the course of the exhibition, the gallery will screen *Rituals* (2012) and *Rites of Passage* (2008) in both spaces to contextualize the artist's conflation of factual and fictional narratives at the intersection of class, gender, money, power, and media.

In 2010, while completing a residency in Guangzhou, China, Rudelius began filming her most recent work *Rituals*. Searching for a way to understand China without being able to speak the language, the artist looked for common ground, which ultimately appeared in the form of actions and gestures derived from the overarching global phenomenon of capitalism. Screened as a dual projection, the viewer first encounters young, androgynous men who pose seductively amidst traffic. The discrepancy between the poses and the surrounding scenery reveals the artificiality of the gesture itself and the commercialized eroticism therein, simultaneously questioning the role of the young boys. The camera looks at the young men while peers and bystanders do the same, complicating the gaze and creating several layers of voyeurism. Gradually, the camera and its director prove to be the ultimate seducer as the young men in the film subject themselves to becoming naive performers, proud of their position as the viewer's subject but unaware of the implications of their participation. The gestures and stylistic choices of each of the men feel generic and recognizable internationally as global marketing is proliferated by soap operas, advertising and other forms of popular culture.

The boys innocently embrace these global gestures while a magician and singers appear as anachronisms of capitalism. A magician, playing the baseline of capitalism, turns one RMB into a hundred RMB: a tiny fortune. As part of the century-old tradition of the dream of getting rich quick, poor men shower insignificant bills and coins on working class women in a cheap imitation of having power and disposable wealth -- a shower of nothingness.

While conducting research for the film, Rudelius was drawn to the flamboyant hairstyles worn by young men in working class neighborhoods. These ornate haircuts appeared out of place in sweatshops and among manual laborers. What appeared to be intense expressions of individuality were actually replicas of hairstyles adorned by popular celebrities. Rudelius's installation juxtaposes photographs of these seemingly wild hairstyles with faux fur samples and printed fur. The photographs of local marketplace displays feature real furs that have been covered with faux animal patterns to emulate out-of-reach luxury items. Set side-by-side, framed photographs of flashy haircuts and faux fur samples constitute a collage – the aspirational stylings of lowbrow luxury.

Julika Rudelius is a video and performance artist that has exhibited internationally. Ms. Rudelius's work has been featured at the Tate Modern, the Stedelijk Museum, the ZKM, the Brooklyn Museum, and MoCA North Miami. In 2009, she participated in the International Center of Photography Triennial, the International Incheon Women Artists' Biennial and the Heartland Exhibition at the Smart Museum. She has mounted solo exhibitions at the Swiss Institute of Contemporary Art, the Centre Culturel Suisse, the Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam and at the Frans Hals Museum. Rudelius studied photography at the Rietveld Academy, Amsterdam, and completed residencies at the Rijksakademie van beeldenden kunsten as well as the International Studio and Curatorial Program in New York. She currently lives and works in Brooklyn and Amsterdam.

For more information, please contact Stephanie Schumann at stephanie@leokoenig.com or 212.334.9255. Summer hours are Monday through Friday, 11 am to 6 pm

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In her film *Rites of Passage*, Rudelius leads us down the secret paths to political power into the private lairs where the next generation of cultural elites will receive instruction in credibility, persuasion and charisma. The young men depicted in *Rites of Passage* are hand-selected from ivy-league universities to be groomed by superiors who constantly test the attitude, poise and rhetorical capabilities of young initiates. Over time, the film's spoken lines become interchangeable, forcing the viewer to focus rather on the men's seemingly choreographed movements and touches. Inflection, long silences and gazes underscore the play of submission while the men's faces radiate with nervous tension and brooding expectations that border on the erotic. *Rites of Passage* is about politics only in part. It is equally concerned with the behavior that is prescribed and maintained within a particular environment in which one's actions derive their meaning through ritualistic observation.

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