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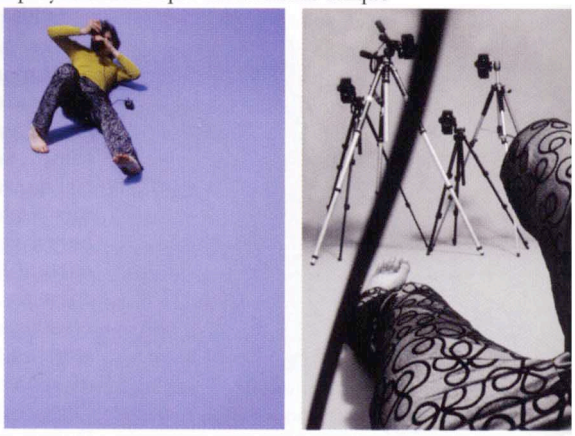
Barbara Probst

MURRAY GUY

On January 7, 2000, at 10:37 PM, Munich- and New York–based photographer Barbara Probst first employed a technique that remains unique among contemporary artists. Using a remote-control device, she simultaneously triggered the shutters of twelve cameras strategically positioned around a New York City rooftop, and the resultant set of poster-size prints—in which Probst, her cameras and tripods, and the noirish urban scene all figure equally as subjects—anchored her last solo show at Murray Guy in 2004. The *Rashomon*-like multiplicity of perspectives synthetically prolongs the cameras' "decisive moment," and this clash of temporal registers was the exhibition's most salient quality. For this show, consisting of eleven photographs constituting four artworks, Probst added emotional nuance and referential complexity to that first multipart "exposure."



Barbara Probst, *Exposure #37: N.Y.C. 249 W 34th Street, 11.07.05., 1:13 p.m.* (detail), 2005, two color photographs, each 74½ x 49½".

Exposure #36: Studio Munich, 09.26.05., 2:34 p.m., a five-part work that alternates black-and-white and color prints, unsettles one's sense not only of time but also of space. Viewing the photographs sequentially, one initially assumes that the young woman in a red sweater, her hands held up near the right side of her head, is standing outside, in or near a park. The second image, shot from behind the woman, exposes the artifice implied by inclusion of the word "studio" in the title: Here one sees, behind a camera on a tripod, the contours of a room with floor-to-ceiling windows. The third frame peels back yet another layer of the construction, revealing the greenery in the background of the first picture to be no more than a studio backdrop. The fourth shot plunges one back into a conceivably "realistic" space (the grain of the photograph merges seamlessly with that of the backdrop), once again giving the impression that the woman is outside, this time on a street in New York's Chinatown. The final photograph is a close-up of the woman's face.

But of course one doesn't view these images consecutively. Instead, the successive revelations encourage the eye to ping-pong between the prints, picking out details overlooked on first pass. One gradually assembles a mental model of the depicted scene, pairing each camera with the images it has captured. But there remains an estranging detail, noticeable only because of the enlargements' imposing size: The presence of a young boy lying on the studio floor, his head and an arm visible in the bottom-right corner of the third print. This returns one to the background of the first print: The park scene is naggingly familiar because it was lifted from Michelangelo Antonioni's *Blowup* (1966). (*Exposure #37: N.Y.C. 249 W 34th Street, 11.07.05, 1:13 p.m.*, with its fashionably dressed, supine protagonist ogled by a plethora of lenses, evokes the studio scenes in that film, but to different effect.) Probst's deconstruction of the photograph's veracity—which, in these multipanel works, evokes cinematic precedents in both atmosphere and presentation—literally encompasses a fragment of a classic film on the same subject.

The other photographs in the show, all diptychs, hint at the complexities, temporal and otherwise, lodged in *Exposure #36*. These photographs evoke Christopher Williams's photographic deconstructions and Eadweard Muybridge's time-lapse studies. But Probst's fruitful investigation of photography's characteristics (and the operations of human memory) distinguishes her from both precursors and peers.

—*Brian Sholis*