



Berlin, 17th April 2009

Dear Colleagues,

We are happy to invite you to the opening of the following exhibition:

CYNTHIA GIRARD

Tous les oiseaux sont ici

2nd – 17th May 2009

Wed – Sun, 2 – 7 pm, Studio 2
(closed on 1st May)

Opening: Thursday, 30th April 2009, from 7 pm
together with the exhibition by **Sarah Ryan**

CYNTHIA GIRARD's painting consciously avoids notions such as professionalism and academically schooled virtuosity. Her pictures and installations are narratives about painting itself, in which she concerns herself with questions of representation and with overcoming the conflict between abstraction and figuration, between purely formal and narrative depictions.

By appropriating elements of Minimal, Hard-Edge, Op-Art or Neo-Expressionism in her works and blending them with influences from folk art, applied art, children's book illustration and Outsider-Art, Girard questions the customary hierarchies of contemporary art. Her paintings and sculptures often function like components of a stage, which integrates the viewers and extends the painterly composition into a spatial experience.

Tous les oiseaux sont ici, for example, resembles an imaginary stage play. The gigantic painting of a stylised prison wall divides the space into two zones. In the black and white area of the foreground, an oversized, apparently archaic mask made of black cardboard and portraits of Girard's literary role models Elfriede Jelinek and Emily Dickinson adopt the function of

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'warders' or helpers, fetching the viewer into the image and making it easier for him/her to gain access. In Girard's work, the metaphorical door to the interpretation of an artwork takes on a real form. One is thus able to enter the second part of the exhibition through an entrance let into the prison image – passing into a cell dominated by colours.

Besides brightly-coloured egg-shaped sculptures made with papier maché and a discarded paper snake costume, here one finds small-format gouache works, in which birds populate abstract architectonic structures – although it remains unclear whether they are inhabitants or prisoners.

In *Tous les oiseaux sont ici*, Girard conveys various dialectical meanings through the motif of the prison: it is a metaphor of the restrictive delineations of pictorial space, of a voluntarily chosen place of retreat to experience visions, of the position of a social outsider, or it is emblematic of conventional perception, from which the aim is to escape.

CYNTHIA GIRARD was born in Montréal, Canada, in 1969; she lives and works in Montréal and Berlin. She studied art at the Université du Québec, Montréal (BA) and at Goldsmiths College, University of London (MA).

Exhibitions include: *La secte de la souris volante*, Oboro, Montréal (2007); *Rien ne se perd, rien ne se crée, tout se transforme*, La Triennale québécoise du Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, Montréal (2008); *Cynthia's Revels*, September Berlin (2009).

Cynthia Girard is currently a guest at Künstlerhaus Bethanien on a fellowship from the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec and the Ministère des Relations internationales du Québec.

At approximately **8 pm** on the **opening evening**, **Cynthia Girard** will slip into a paper snake costume and recite her own poems as part of a **Poetry-Performance** in the exhibition:

*I am a snake
a bird
a legless wanderer in colorful scales
undulating my way through
like a drunken paintbrush*

(Cynthia Girard)

The press office of Künstlerhaus Bethanien is happy to provide further information and picture material on request.

Best regards,
Künstlerhaus Bethanien