

JAN BARACZ

REALITY CINEMA/LIVE VIDEO

SEPTEMBER 27 - DECEMBER 13, 2008



Art in General
79 Walker Street
New York NY 10013
212.219.0473
www.artingeneral.org
Tuesday – Saturday 12-6 PM



Jan Baracz is a New York-based sculptor and installation artist who hails from Poland. His work tests the minimal conditions of attention necessary for an art experience to separate itself from familiar objects and quotidian experiences. In this vein, in a previous work titled *Thirst* (1999), Baracz filled a single parking space in the then-lively SoHo New York art gallery district with three thousand gallons of water in jugs housed in a massive chain link fence. The work intimates a mysterious official function; *Thirst* is a public works project gone private that amplifies questions of property, containment, and open access to community resources.

In Baracz's *Überkatze* (1996), he sculpted and cast in bronze an edition of six life-size house cats whose expressions encapsulate the species' haughtiest characteristics, features that are nonetheless anthropomorphic projections. In the title's reference to the Nietzschean *übermensch*, or "superman," the cats become emblems of amorality and power; their placement on tall pedestals abets their seemingly arrogant superiority. His 2002 work *Life is Short*, first shown at Sculpture Center in New York and later installed at the art fair in Basel in 2006, is a forty-foot long functional rope swing. The audience, after waiting in what was frequently a long queue, became part of a spectacle of childish glee in which participants' bodies tracked a high-velocity, nearly 80 foot diameter arc in space.

For his project *Reality Cinema/Live Video*, Baracz transforms the Art in General storefront gallery into a free and intimate cinematic screening room. Live video feeds, culled from several cameras recording the streets outside the gallery, are mixed and projected to create an ongoing "movie." While the content of the film is the action on the street, a soundtrack of prerecorded dialogue and music composed by Toshio Kajiwara can be heard in conjunction with the movie, (at times accompanied by a live audio collage of improvised soundscapes during scheduled performance events). The work allows for new and unexpected interpretations of the mutable occurrences of everyday urban street life.

Baracz takes up the conventions of cinema (the spatial arrangement of audience with respect to the screen, for example), and probes the history of its once exclusively collective reception. Employing curiosity and voyeurism, *Reality Cinema/Live Video* tests viewers' tendencies, on the one hand, to see most all spaces in the city as sites of commercial and economic exchange, and, on the other, to project narrative on any filmed event.

--Eva Díaz, Curator