

PRESS RELEASE

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AMERICA DISAPPEARS ONLY THE SMILE REMAINS

Lothar Hempel at Anton Kern Gallery

April 7 - May 15, 1999

Opening on April 7th, Anton Kern Gallery will present an exhibition by German artist Lothar Hempel. This is the artist's second solo show in New York.

America Disappears Only the Smile Remains marks the closure of the artist's trilogy which started early this year with *A Beach Full of Glass* in Cologne, followed by *KAPUTT and the Consequences* in London. While the first two shows focused on the beginning and middle of storytelling, this last part deals with both the meaning and making of a happy ending.

Hempel uses the conventional structure of the trilogy to reveal that in a contained group of related works, an open series of multiple, fragmentary plots can emerge, indefinitely. In a scenery made out of painted plywood, photos, drawings and film, the artist combines explicit references to popular culture with personal, penetrating memorabilia. This introspective set offers a fecund terrain to explore the function of narrative in the politics of representation, a means of moving beyond formalist categories of "open" and "closed" endings, as well as mythic categories of fate and romance.

Along narrative's fractured line, two films on monitors display the same yet slightly altered story. By distancing the viewer from an absorbing, dramatic experience and disrupting generic expectations, these minimal shifts interfere with any preconditioned ending, making each story linger as a mere proposition, an episode among myriads. Ultimately, Hempel's paradox of an open-ended trilogy revisits the ideology of cultural codes, and proposes the dream of a post-Hollywood happy end, with a smile.

The exhibition will run through May 15, 1999.

The gallery is open Tuesday to Saturday, 10 am - 6 pm.

For further information, please contact Caroline Schneider or Mary More at (212) 965 - 1706.

May 20 - June 26: Michael Joo.