

rupert goldsworthy gallery

PRESS RELEASE EXHIBITION OPENING

rupert goldsworthy gallery is pleased to present a solo exhibition of new work by Berlin-based artist **Gabriele Stellbaum**. The show runs from September 5th to October 10th 2009. There will be an opening reception for the artist on Saturday Sept 5th from 6-10pm.

For her new video installation piece, **Gabriele Stellbaum** re-figures the gallery's main space into a film set. Cigar-brown wooden panels cover the walls, while two office desks with swivel chairs invite the visitor to sit down and watch a video projection that fills the space.

Stellbaum's piece draws from American author Herman Melville's 1853 story *Bartleby the Scrivener - A Tale of Wall Street*. In **Stellbaum's** version of this famous work, the protagonist Bartleby is cast as a female office worker: pallid, neat, pitifully respectable, incurably forlorn—an ever-present clerk, an insignificant figure who drives her employer into frustration and capitulation with her calm but resolute refusal to comply. The story is presented from the perspective of Bartleby's employer, a figure never shown in the video.

Whenever Bartleby is asked to do anything, she simply and politely replies "I would prefer not to" and then continues with the work she is doing. This behavior continues until the day Bartleby finally quits doing any work at all and just remains sitting at her desk. This policy of refusal drives her employer out of the premises while Bartleby *prefers* not to quit her job.

Stellbaum focuses the action on Bartleby's refusal and on the employer's increasing inability to resolve the situation.

Media theorist Arjun Appadurai writes of the contemporary workplace:

"the imagination has become an organized field of social practices, a form of work (in the sense of both labor and culturally organized practice), and a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility. This unleashing of the imagination links the play of pastiche (in some settings) to the terror and coercion of states and their competitors."

Stellbaum's "Bartleby" is no modern anti-hero. She acts up passively, but with a provocative non-compliance that structures the situation and locks the action. Bartleby's protest speaks of the current *finanscape*, and how individual strategies of imaginative non-compliance within the corridors of Office World can lead to the refiguring of global cultural processes.

For further information about this exhibition, please contact the gallery via telephone or email, or check our website www.rupertgoldsworthy.com.

The following exhibition at the gallery will be a group show.

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Stills from "Bartleby" by Gabriele Stellbaum, 2009. Courtesy of rupert goldsworthy gallery.

