
Lutz Bacher

'Olympiad'

Rupert Goldsworthy Gallery

453 West 17th Street

Chelsea

Through May 16

Lutz Bacher is a conceptual artist best known for her paintings replicating Alberto Vargas's cheesecake pinups from *Playboy*. The appropriations, which she commissioned from a commercial artist, were deadpan. What, they seem to ask, happens to images made for male consumption when a woman takes charge? Do they become same-sex erotica? Affectionate homages? Critical sendups, and if so, of whom or what?

In her recent 36-minute video "Olympiad," Ms. Bacher takes a similarly opaque approach to another ambiguous female icon, the filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl. The video consists of Ms. Bacher's silent camcorder walking tour of the enormous and now all-but-deserted 1936 Olympic stadium in Berlin, where Ms. Riefenstahl made her film of the same name during the Nazi era. At an unhurried pace, Ms. Bacher enters the stadium, systematically scans its public spaces and leaves.

The record of her visit is complicated by a technical accident. The tape she used turned out to be faulty; it repeatedly jammed in the camera, giving the video a jagged, sputtering rhythm, as if it were being chopped up by static, resulting in odd illusionistic effects. At one point the empty stadium field seems to fill with a blur of rushing crowds.

Ms. Bacher decided to let the damaged video stand, a smart idea. The interference it created ends up producing a ghostly protest to her ambivalent gesture of witness and pilgrimage.

HOLLAND COTTER