

For Immediate Release: December 20, 2007

Diana Thater: *Here is a text about the world...*

January 10 - February 9, 2008

Opening Reception: Thursday, January 10, 2008, 6-8pm



*Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer
The Second Coming - W.B. Yeats (1865-1939)*

Opening on January 10, 2008, David Zwirner is pleased to present an exhibition of new work by Los Angeles-based artist Diana Thater.

For her fifth solo exhibition at the gallery, Diana Thater has created two room-size installations that examine the intangible and dimensionless relationship between humans and the natural world through the ancient art of falconry. Emerging with the birth of civilizations - with origins in the Middle East and Central Asia, hunting with trained birds of prey flourished in the courts of medieval Western Europe and Great Britain, carrying with it enormous cultural and social capital. Divorced from its symbolic articulation of social and political power, the practice survives today among a small yet dedicated population of falconers. Committed to working within local environments, Thater invited fifteen California falconers to a stone amphitheater in the Santa Monica Mountains, where she documented the diverse and personal bonds between the falconers and their individual birds. Filming from above, the crane-operated camera surveys the arena while the avian participants remain grounded. Along with this footage, Thater will project large-scale still images of the sun and moon. Just as expectations of movement are reversed with the flying camera and stationary birds, Thater defies color conventions by tinting the sun blue and the moon gold.

In previous works, Thater focused her lens on wolves, zebras, horses, bees, dolphins, and tigers, never with the intent to arouse sympathy or empathy, but instead to propose observation as a kind of understanding. Through these installations, the artist investigates the distinctions between untouched and manipulated nature, and simultaneously asserts that contemplating animal subjects facilitates an unprejudiced examination of subjectivity itself and the boundaries, or *boundlessness* of all consciousnesses. Fully aware of her process as interference, Thater dramatizes the experience of being inside a work of art and problematizes the idea of "otherness" and the historical, unbridgeable separation of culture from nature.

Play the opening like a book, the middle game like a magician, and the endgame like a machine.
- Rudolf Spielmann (1883-1942)

For this exhibition, Thater has also created nine new monitor works focusing on the game of chess, known as "The Royal Game." Depicting black-and-white boards and games played by disembodied hands, the artist presents a mixture of scripted and impromptu matches, simultaneously investigating ideas of history, rationality, reproduction, and time. Filmed competitors play two historical games – *The Immortal Game* of 1851 and Garry Kasparov's brilliant 2003 victory over his computer opponent, Deep Junior. Thater also enacts the fictitious game played by Alice and the Red Queen in *Through the Looking Glass*, continuing her long-standing fascination with the seemingly absurd, but ultimately reasonable worlds of Lewis Carroll's Alice. Additionally, Thater commissioned a Senior Master to write a "portrait" game, which is played for the camera once with black and white pieces and again with all black pieces; the result is a complex representation not of a particular person but of the game as a subjectivity – *a coming into being*. This all black game gives the exhibition its title: *Here is a text about the world*. Alternately regarded as a "game of innocence" and a "game of war," chess functions as an extended metaphor for life, an exaggerated consciousness where each player must not only consider the consequences of his or her present move, but also the future possibilities subsequently allowed. Depending on a viewer's familiarity with the rules of the game, the works may operate as intricate narratives or conversely as abstract series of images, allowing for layered interpretations and diverse modes of viewing, and emblemizing Thater's stated belief that film and video are not by definition narrative media, and that abstraction can, and does, exist in representational moving images.

Chess and falconry are linked by their shared medieval aesthetic, historical origins in the East, and appropriated traditions in the West. Thater's simultaneous investigation of both becomes a meditation on the politics of human-to-human and human-to-animal relationships. Best known for manipulating architectural space through forced interaction with projected images and tinted light, Thater's site-specific, site-related, and autonomous works explore the essential temporal qualities of video, while literally expanding it into space. For the monitor pieces, time is invested with the eye and mind as thought; for the installations, it is invested with the body as movement through space. Noting that technology is no impediment to transcendent thought or experience, Thater emphasizes the artifice of filmic production, thereby forcing viewers to consider the medium's capacity to construct perception and thus form the way we think about the world through its image.

Addendum: In memoriam of Bobby Fischer, who died on January 17, 2008, Diana Thater has created three new monitor pieces, representing major moments in Fischer's life. Thater presents Fischer's stunning triumph at age thirteen over Donald Byrne, his spectacular victory over Russian World Champion Boris Spassky in 1972, and the daring reprise match against Spassky twenty years later in Yugoslavia. Shot sequentially throughout the day – at morning, midday, and dusk - the works capture varying light intensities, thus aesthetically and metaphorically dramatizing the trajectory of Fischer's legendary career.

In 2007 Diana Thater curated the group exhibition, *...drawing, stretching and fainting in coils...*, as part of FESTSPIEL+ 2007 in Munich, Germany. The artist's recent one-person exhibitions include *Off with their heads!*, OSRAM Art Projects / Seven Screens, Munich, Germany (2007); *Diana Thater. Keep the Faith. A Survey Exhibition.*, Kunsthalle Bremen, Bremen, Germany and Museum für Gegenwartskunst Siegen, Siegen, Germany (2004); and *knots + surfaces*, DIA Center for the Arts, New York, NY (2001); among many others. Some recent group exhibitions include *California Video*, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA; *Soundwaves: The Art of Sampling*, Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, La Jolla, CA; *Imaging + Imagining California Modern*, Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, CA (all 2007); *Projections: Beyond Cinematic Space*, Nationalgalerie im Hamburger Bahnhof Staatliche Museen, Berlin, Germany; *Ecotopia: The Second ICP Triennial of Photography and Video*, International Center of Photography, New York, NY; and the *Whitney Biennial 2006: Day for Night*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY (all 2006).