

# Janet Cardiff & George Bures Miller

## The Secret Hotel

November 26, 2005 thru January 15, 2006



Kunsthhaus Bregenz

### Press conference:

Thursday, November 24, 2005, 12.00 noon

### Opening:

Friday, November 25, 2005, 8.00 p.m.

Over the past two decades, Janet Cardiff & George Bures Miller (\*1957 in Brussels, Canada; \*1960 in Vegreville, Canada) have developed an impressive series of collaborative pieces, complementing each other's work in an ingenious way. In their art, they combine image, video, and sound, as well as architectural and sculptural installations that take the viewer on a confusing and fascinating journey. Sound and a special binaural recording and playback technology are key components in their installations, producing a highly sensitive and spatial audio and sensory experience. Their work evokes thoughts and associations that become inextricably interwoven with personal experiences, thus creating a constantly changing new fiction.

Janet Cardiff & George Bures Miller's work has been shown at such major international exhibition venues as the PS1, New York, the Musée d'Art Contemporain, Montreal, the Astrop Fearnley Museum, Oslo, the Castello Rivoli in Turin, the Portikus, Frankfurt, and the Whitechapel Art Gallery in London. One of their most well-known works is "The Paradise Institute," which was their award-winning contribution to the Venice Biennial 2001 and is also being shown in Bregenz. For the **Kunsthhaus Bregenz**, Cardiff & Miller have created three new works („Pianorama“, „The Secret Hotel“ and „Opera for a small Room“) which can be seen in part as a direct reference to or an intervention in the architecture designed by Peter Zumthor. In cooperation with the Johanniterkirche in Feldkirch, Janet Cardiff, like Anish Kapoor and Jenny Holzer before them, was also willing to select a work to be installed inside the church. "The Forty-Part Motet" (2001), a re-working of the choral piece "Spem in Alium" by Thomas Tallis, played back through 40 speakers which have been arranged in this historical nave, will give visitors a truly impressive spatial and audio experience.

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Ground Floor

**Pianorama, 2005**

An old fashioned upright piano sits in the middle of the space. There are two small loudspeakers facing the keyboard. A mechanical device called a Playola which plays the piano sits on top of the keys. Out of one loudspeaker comes Janet's voice and out of the other comes George's. These voices are discussing what type of music might be appropriate for what seems to be a film they are planning, but it is never clear what type of film it is or what it is about. Janet's voice describes a scene such as: "She's walking down an alley. The camera follows her with a wide shot then goes to a close shot from behind." The keys being moved by the mechanical solenoids attached above them respond to her voice and play a few chords of ghostly music. The four-handed piano composition continues as Cardiff and Miller go on to describe other scenes from the hypothetical film and the piano responds. The whole effect is eerie.

First Floor

**The Paradise Institute, 2001**

Loan: Castello di Rivoli – Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Turin

Viewers approach a simple plywood pavilion, they mount a set of stairs and enter a lush, dimly-lit interior complete with red carpet and two rows of velvet seats. Once seated, they peer over the balcony onto a miniature replica of a grand old movie theater. Viewers then put on the headphones provided, and the 13-minute projection begins.

The soundtrack of the film creates one level of illusion, while another is produced by the supposed audience. The film is a mix of genres: it is part thriller, part film noir, part sci-fi, and part experimental film. What is more particular about the installation is the personal binaural "surround sound." The sense of isolation one might experience is interrupted by intrusions seemingly coming from inside the theater. A cell phone belonging to a member of the audience rings. A close female friend whispers intimately in your ear, "Did you check the stove before we left?" Fiction and reality become intermingled as absorption in the film is suspended, and other realities flow in.

Second Floor

**The Secret Hotel, 2005**

You enter a room with a low ceiling and notice a set of stairs leading up. This stairwell is made of wood, lined with wallpaper reminiscent of an old American hotel. When you reach the top you arrive at a walkway above the frosted glass ceiling panels. Strange noises like that of an old industrial building mingle around you. As you continue along the walkway above the ceiling you see an opening in the glass. Looking into this opening your vision is thrust down a long shaft to a very small room at the bottom which seems to be far below. Your spatial understanding is confused since you know that you have just been on the floor below and that it is not possible to have a room there. A bed, a chair and a record player are the only things in this small room. From the record player comes the sound of a forgotten record which has got stuck.

Third Floor

**Opera for a Small Room, 2005**

Cardiff & Miller describe this work as follows: “R. Dennehy lived most of his life in Salmon Arm, Canada. A lot is not known about him. One thing we know is that at one time he collected opera records. He was especially infatuated with the great tenors. We know these facts because we bought all of his records (which were signed at the top) at the second hand store in Salmon Arm, British Columbia.

“We are interested in the extreme cultural juxtaposition of opera and the small western town in which R. Dennehy lived/lives. What did he think about while listening to these records recorded in foreign cities half way around the world. Was he a trained singer? Did he want to have a career in opera? Did he lose a lover and find solace in the music? Did he always imagine traveling one day to these faraway opera houses? We imagine that he sings along to the records creating his own opera of displaced time and space.

“So we made a small room for the opera of his life. There are 24 antique loud speakers out of which come various songs, sounds and arias, and occasional pop tunes. There are almost two thousand records stacked around the room and 8 record players which seem to play all at once, sometimes sampling



**Kunsthhaus Bregenz**

lines, speeding up and slowing down just as a contemporary DJ would do. A man's shadow, moving to the rhythm of the music is back-projected onto a screen in the center of the array of turntables as if he is the DJ. His voice is the only thing projected outside of the space of the room on an outdoor broadcast speaker. He has a microphone in front of him. He is playing a series of records, talking and singing to himself. Maybe he sings to his collection of voices or perhaps to a particular woman, you can't be sure. The music mixes from poignant arias to a cacophony of voices and rhythms. Perhaps he is inventing a relationship with all of these voices and characters creating an aria for his own life.

"The audience cannot enter into the room but only look through dusty windows, holes in the walls, and cracks in doorways to see and hear his world. Through the use of lighting the piece shifts in feeling from a nostalgic setting of an old attic room to that of a night club or theater stage. Colored lights sequence around the room, coming on and off, fading up and down or pulse to emphasize the mood and beat of the music."



Kunsthhaus Bregenz

## **Johanniterkirche Feldkirch Janet Cardiff The Forty-Part Motet, 2001**

**November 25, 2005 – January 15, 2006**

**Opening: November 25, 2005, 5 p.m.**

“The Forty-Part Motet” will be presented in a historical church setting in conjunction with the ongoing cooperation between the Kunsthhaus Bregenz and the Johanniterkirche Feldkirch. The installation plays back a re-working of Thomas Tallis’ 16<sup>th</sup> century polyphonic composition “Spem in Alium,” in which each voice of the 40-person Salisbury Cathedral Choir was recorded separately. The visitor’s listening experience changes depending on location and movement through the exhibition space. Cardiff & Miller have strategically positioned the 40 speakers within the church nave in such a way as to allow the individual voices and the entire choir to emphasize the “sculptural” quality of the piece.

“The Forty-Part Motet” (2001) by Janet Cardiff

A re-working of “Spem in Alium nunquam habui” (1575) by Thomas Tallis

“The Forty-Part Motet” by Janet Cardiff was originally produced by Field Art Projects with the Arts Council of England, the Salisbury Festival, BALTIC Gateshead, The New Art Gallery Walsall, and the NOW Festival Nottingham.

Sung by the Salisbury Cathedral Choir

Recording and post-production by SoundMoves

Edited by George Bures Miller

Produced by Field Art Projects

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Tue – Fr: 10 a.m. – 12 noon, 1– 6 p.m.; Thur: 10 a.m. – 12 noon, 1– 9 p.m.;

Sat: 9 a.m.–4 p.m.; Sun: 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

# **KUB-Billboards**

## **Christoph Lissy**

### **Beethoven. Eine Erfüllung.**

### **Bildhauerei 1-6**

**November 7, 2005 thru January 15, 2006**

Born in Vorarlberg in 1957, the artist Christoph Lissy, who is known above all for his steel sculptures, has for the past several years focused intensively on the theoretical groundwork of sculpture. His "Skizzenblätter," large-format (20 7/8 x 41 3/8 inches) sketch leaves, confront us with the artist's ideas, which he has written in black ink. Lissy furnishes these texts in part with illustrations that he works over with shellac and over paints. From his vast work series, he has selected six leaves from the "Beethoven" series for the KUB Billboards. The combination of distinctive, almost calligraphic writing and associative images has a strong impact on viewers, even if the content of the texts remains incomprehensible for passers-by. Thus, this oversized bulletin board in the public space is deciphered as an image rather than text.

## **KUB-Publication**

### **Janet Cardiff & George Bures Miller**

### **The Secret Hotel**

This exhibition catalogue presents the five works shown in Bregenz “Paradise Institute” and “The Forty-Part Motet,” the latter of which was re-installed at the Johanniterkirche in Feldkirch, plus the three works prepared especially for the Kunsthhaus Bregenz. An essay by the art critic and art historian Jörg Heiser (“frieze”) ties together the developmental process of the major recent works by the Canadian artist pair and their projects created especially for the Kunsthhaus. A short essay by Matthias Lilienthal, Artistic Director of the Hebbel Theater, Berlin, addresses the staged aspect of the works. The core of the publication consists of a series of opulently presented installation photographs; a DVD documents the special aspects of the audio and video works.

#### **Janet Cardiff & George Bures Miller**

#### **The Secret Hotel**

German/English

Edited by Eckhard Schneider.

Essays by Jörg Heiser, Matthias Lilienthal, 23,5 x 28,5 cm,  
approx. 60 color illustrations.

Price: approx. 49.50 Euros

Due to be published: January 2006

## **KUB-Edition**

### **Janet Cardiff & George Bures Miller**

#### **The Caravan Camp**

“In Canada we live on a small farm bordering a river. During the summer months, the water in the river recedes until at the end of August you can clearly see the underwater reeds at the river’s edge. Across from our beach is a small caravan camp. In this photo, we liked how the reflection seemed more real than the reality making the weeds float in the sky.”(Janet Cardiff & George Bures Miller,2005)

#### **Janet Cardiff & George Bures Miller**

##### **The Caravan Camp, 2005**

Color photograph mounted on Plexiglas.

Limited edition, 40 numbered and signed copies, 50 x 34 cm

Special price during the exhibition: 500 Euro, incl. 10%VAT, plus forwarding expenses. Purchase price after the exhibition: 600 Euro, incl. 10% VAT, plus forwarding expenses

Publisher: Kunsthaus Bregenz



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**A-6900 Bregenz**

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**Tuesday – Sunday 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.**

**Thursday 10 a.m. – 9 p.m.**