

Press Release

MELANIE MANCHOT

Shave – Videoinstallation and photographs
January 20th– April 14th, 2007

Galerie m Bochum is now showing its first exhibition of works by German photographer and video artist Melanie Manchot. At the center of the show is the video installation “Shave,” complemented by a series of new photographs.

Slowly, the camera orbits around the figure of a seated man, bare chested, who is being shaved by a barber. The facial expressions of the protagonists and the slow ritual of shaving give the act an open and ambivalent feeling. The central image of the video installation SHAVE is projected larger than life on the wall, the depicted body generating an extraordinary presence in the room. A recurrent splashing noise steers the viewer’s gaze back to the center of the room, to the video of a bowl in which the used razor is being continually rinsed in synchrony with the projection. This action takes place on a monitor into which one peers from above, as if into the real bowl.

The removal of body hair has always been associated with a variety of contexts, whether cultural, social, ideological, religious, medical or aesthetic. The neutral stance with which Melanie Manchot captures this act on film, lending it an air of both monumentality and intimacy, opens up fresh perspectives on this everyday ritual. The external transformation prompts us to reflect on what body hair signifies and raises questions about gender and gender identity. The man’s body, which at first summons the impression of the archetypal male, gradually morphs into something more feminine, the color of the skin changing and various marks and traces coming to light. At the same time, the vulnerability and sensitivity of the human body and – as reflected in the facial expressions – the psyche within are revealed, making this art experience almost visceral for the observer.

Melanie Manchot records the shaving process in real time, uncut, differentiating her approach from the typical media treatment, which confronts us with short sequences and abrupt changes in camera angle. The change of perspective in SHAVE takes place on a more subtle level. The circling movement of the camera produces a sculptural perception of the protagonist. The barber as well seems to develop the same sensitivity with regard to his “subject/object,” behaving almost like a sculptor. The artist thus strikingly translates the sculptural point of view into the medium of video.

The seriality of the 9-part photo work “Bowl” takes a different approach to showing us the chronological sequence of the act of shaving. While we can appreciate the works from a purely aesthetic and reflexive viewpoint, they also have the power to provoke in us – similarly to the video installation – irrational reactions and emotions.

Additional photographs show the protagonist in SHAVE, opening up new perspectives on his body. In these portraits the artist specifies the framework within which the man portrayed can himself actively influence how he and his body are depicted.

More information referring this exhibition: www.m-bochum.de/manchot-shave