

YANCEY RICHARDSON GALLERY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Kahn/Selesnick

Eisbergfreistadt
May 22- July 3, 2008

Project Gallery: *Solitary Ice* Diane Cook, Lynn Davis, Sebastiao Salgado
Reception for the artists: Thursday, May 22, 6-8 p.m.

They are as much cultural historians – perhaps ‘connoisseurs’ would be a better word or even ‘curators’ – as they are visual artists. Mark Feeney, Boston Globe

The Yancey Richardson Gallery is pleased to announce the opening of *Eisbergfreistadt*, an exhibition of new photographs, paintings and objects by the collaborative team Kahn/Selesnick that explores the limits of documentary truth and historical verity in the most politically engaged work the pair has yet to exhibit.

In their third show with the gallery, the artists chronicle the creation and dissolution of an imaginary utopian principality, Eisbergfreistadt (Iceberg Free State), in a moment of impending economic and ecological disaster. Inspired by a speculative "actual incident" occurring in 1923 during the German Weimar Republic, when a mammoth iceberg runs aground in the Baltic port of Lubeck, *Eisbergfreistadt* explores the relationship between the economy and the environment in a climate of hyperinflation and global warming.

In their signature style, Kahn and Selesnick intertwine fact and fiction within a revisionist history where elaborately staged narrative tableaux and invented cultural artifacts comprise the empirical evidence of past events. Multiple camera shots of the artists as different characters are taken in real locations and are seamlessly montaged to create photographic panoramas resembling the Autochrome reproductions in early National Geographic magazines while documentary-style black and white photographs of 1930s Lubeck suggest the historical snapshots of the day. Kahn/Selesnick's paintings on paper of oversized banknotes are inspired by the utopian designs of the graphic artist and bank note designer Wenzel Hablik.

In addition to photographs and works on paper, the exhibition will include "memorabilia" from the failed city-state of Eisbergfreistadt. such as a deck of water-colored souvenir playing cards and invitations to the "Eisberg Ball" of 1923; clothing made from Notgeld, an emergency currency printed on a variety of materials to replace coins in inflationary times; and, a peddler's cart piled high with real and forged banknotes of incredible denominations. Implicating real art historical figures and events in fictitious scenarios, Kahn/Selesnick blend fact and fiction in the way the best lies do, pointing to the instability of historical accounts and the question of truth in documentary photography.

The artists Nicholas Kahn and Richard Selesnick have collaborated for more than twenty years on projects including *Scotlandfuturebog*, 2000; *City of Salt*, 2001; and *Apollo Prophecies*, 2004, all published in subsequent books by Aperture Press. The work of Kahn/Selesnick is held in the collections of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Brooklyn Museum of Art, Houston Museum of Fine Arts, Addison Gallery of American Art, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Fogg Museum of Art, and the National Portrait Gallery. In 2006, they were the recipients of a NASA commission to create work about Mars which was subsequently exhibited at the Smithsonian Museum of American Art.

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