

For Immediate Release

JOACHIM KOESTER  
*Morning of the Magicians*

Greene Naftali Gallery  
November 22 – December 23, 2005

Greene Naftali Gallery is pleased to present our third solo exhibition with Danish artist Joachim Koester. The exhibition will include two recent series of photographs— “The Kant Walks” and “Morning of the Magicians”— as well as the film installation *Message From Andrée*, which was first shown at the Venice Biennale this past summer. This exhibition continues Koester’s investigation of historical narrative in photography and film installation. Drawing on a diverse variety of sources, the works are unified by a shared speculative approach to the geographical, intellectual and mystical.

In the fall of 2003, Koester visited Immanuel Kant’s hometown of Kaliningrad, formerly known as Königsberg, to trace the route of the philosopher’s daily walk and use this as a script for a series of photographs. However, research was complicated by the city’s tumultuous past. Heavily damaged during World War II, then in 1945 conquered by the Soviet Union, the city was subject to a policy of erasure that functioned until 1991 to suppress its German past. Koester says, “paradoxically, I found that the concealment of the city’s history, made it appear even more distinct, exactly because the past was not compartmentalized as such, but seemed to turn up as ‘blind spots’. By overlaying maps of both cities and using details provided by Kant scholars, Koester was able to retrace Kant’s routes and photograph the area.

For the photographic series “Morning of the Magicians,” Koester traveled to Cefalù, Sicily in search of the villa that once served as a communal home for the infamous occultist Aleister Crowley and his group of devotees. Koester found the long abandoned building in a dilapidated state, buried in bushes, with a hole in the roof and all but one window boarded shut. Inside, the walls were covered with graffiti, leaving Crowley’s drug-heavy and sexually explicit frescos visible only through several layers of peeling paint. For Koester, the building functioned as one of the few monuments in what is largely an invisible history.

The film *Message From Andrée* is based on photographs by Nils Strindberg, one of three explorers who died in a failed attempt to reach the North Pole by balloon in the summer of 1897. The photographs, which were found thirty-three years later, have been central in attempts to reconstruct the chronology of events. Several of the photographs depict scenes after the landing and the subsequent struggle. However, the majority are almost abstract, filled with black stains, scratches and streaks of light. While most historians studying the expedition ignore this layer of visual noise, Koester has chosen to make it his central focus. Functioning on the borderline between narrative and non-narrative, the film explores the edge of the unknown. The title refers to all the unanswered questions that seems resonate with the history of the Andrée expedition.

What I do is to create a setting for working in the borderline between language and non-language, between narrative and non-narrative. I want to work on the edge of what could be called the unknown, because if language is what we can grasp with language, the unknown is at the boundary of language.

Joachim Koester currently lives and works in Copenhagen and Brooklyn. He has shown extensively in Europe including exhibitions at Galerie Jan Mot, Brussels and Galleri Nicolai Wallner, Copenhagen. Koester will be traveling to India in December as the first artist in the residency program organized by Calcutta Art Research.

For further information please visit our website at [www.greenenaftaligallery.com](http://www.greenenaftaligallery.com)

