

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Joachim Koester *Body Electric*

January 13 – February 14, 2015

Greene Naftali is pleased to announce its fifth solo exhibition of recent work by Danish artist Joachim Koester.

Known for his research-based projects that confound documentary with fiction, Koester investigates a broad range of subjects including psycho-geographical sites, occult phenomena, and the bodily movements and performance as contextualized by ritualized or game-like structures. Consistent throughout these themes is an underlying interest in reconstructing and exploring historical narratives and parsing out their various psychologies.

The exhibition opens with *Some Boarded Up Houses* (2009-2014), a series of silver gelatin prints depicting foreclosed homes across the United States. In this work, Koester recalls the conceptualist strategies of Bernd and Hilla Becher. However unlike the Bechers' depictions of industrial era buildings, Koester's photographs are typologies of psychologically charged spaces, haunted by the economic and social turmoil of the new global economy.

The main gallery features the New York debut of *The Place of Dead Roads* (2013), a video that follows four androgynous cowboys as they enact a choreographed duel. Staged in a subterranean maze, each subject motions at their invisible opponents with actions characteristic of the Western genre—drawing their guns, shooting, and shifting their bodies to survey their surroundings. Instead of being driven by story, their actions seem motivated by hidden messages transmitted from a world deep within their bodies, a notion that evokes Wilhelm Reich's idea that "every muscular contraction contains the history and meaning of its origin."

Accompanying this video is *Variations of Incomplete Open Cubes* (2011), a 16mm film that zooms in on a set of hands as they perform the 122 iterations of open cubes, originally mapped out by Sol Lewitt in his 1974 project of the same title. Here, the body acts as a kind of translator, both of conceptualist strategies and of the body and its limits.

*Of Spirits and Empty Spaces* (2012) narrates a séance led by spiritualist John Murray Spear in upstate New York. In 1861, Spear and his small group of participants set out to invent a new kind of sewing machine through a trance dance. At that time, Elias Howe had already developed a successful and widely distributed sewing machine, however strong patents made it too expensive for most people to afford. Spear was convinced that the drawings for the new sewing machine already existed in an immaterial form, in the spirit realm, and that he had found the key to access them. In the workshop where the séances took place, the participants were each assigned 'roles.' They would enter trance and become fully automated parts of the machine, each enacting the essential movements, and together forming a model for its actions as a working whole.

Also on view is *Body Electric* (2014), a silent film comprised of close up shots of a 16mm projector and its various parts. The film's title and its editing are indicative of Koester's interest in the resemblances between the body, sewing machines, and the cinematic apparatus.

Joachim Koester lives and works in Copenhagen and New York. Recent solo exhibitions include Camera Austria, Graz (2014); Centre d'art Contemporain, Geneva (2014); Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2013); SMAK, Ghent, Belgium (2012); MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, Massachusetts (2012); Institut d'Art Contemporain, Villeurbanne/Rhone- Alps, France (2011); Kestnergesellschaft, Hanover (2010); and Museo Tamayo Arte Contemporaneo, Mexico City (2010). He was also featured in the Sao Paulo Biennale, Brazil (2010); the 52<sup>nd</sup> Biennale di Venezia, Venice (2005); and Documenta X, Kassel, Germany (1997). In 2013, he was the winner of the Camera Austria Award for Contemporary Photography, City of Graz, Austria.

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