

Press release

CLEGG & GUTTMANN ***Themes and elements of a new neapolitan "studiolo"***

Opening Sunday November 18, 2007, 11.30 a.m.
Galleria Lia Rumma, Naples

Michael Clegg and Martin Guttmann come back to Naples with a new work related to Italian culture and art, commissioned especially for the gallery after the installation "Falsa Prospettiva" presented at the Milan gallery (February 2001) and the solo exhibition in Naples in 1987.

The title of this new project is *Themes and elements of a new neapolitan "studiolo"*.

In the early Renaissance, the aristocratic palace was redesigned to allow a division between the public and private wings. A public sitting room, accessible to visitors, was placed near the entrance, separated from a suite of private rooms located in the back. The "studiolo" was the most private of all spaces; apart from being used as a library, a reading room, a music room and a cabinet of curiosities - the site of collection of naturalia, artificialia, memorabilia - it had a more specific function - the studiolo was designed as a cognitive laboratory of sorts, a "total environment" dedicated to the improvement of the memory and imagination.

The different elements of the studiolo - library, music room, collections of objects and of artworks - were all subordinated to that objective, namely, they were treated as aids to cognitive and intellectual development. They were presumed to be related to each other by a neo-platonic theory of the human soul that assigned to each its own special role; each part of the studiolo was dedicated to improve an aspect of the cognitive and intellectual capacities of the mind.

The aim of the present project of Clegg & Guttmann is to reevaluate the studiolo and suggest ways of transforming it into a contemporary form that combines a variety of functions, where the art objects are not treated merely as collectibles but as aspects of an environment dedicated to cognitive and philosophical contemplation. The installation of Clegg & Guttmann was conceived as a direct descendent of the Renaissance studiolo. It is supposed to carry to the present the original preoccupation with memory and imagination. In the contemporary context the problematic can be somewhat different. The attitudes towards memory and imagination have undergone various transformations as was the educational theory that aims to improve them. But the idea of embedding art in a "room for thoughts" or, better still, "room of thought" seems as attractive and suggestive today as it was in the early Renaissance; the work of art should not be treated only as decorative object but as a part of a comprehensive design that promotes a life of learning and contemplation. The installation contains five separate environments, each organised as a separate cognitive exercise that concerns an aspect of the system of remembering and imagining. The different exercises involve both analytic and synthetic operations - the decomposition of experience to its elements and the construction of new wholes by combining the elements differently. They are concerned with reading, drawing, playing music, etc. Clegg and Guttmann imagine the new neapolitan studiolo "as an environment where the different aspects of the life of the educated mind will be reflected upon, improved and extended beyond their current possibilities".

Michael Clegg and Martin Guttmann, Israelis by birth but Americans by adoption, were both born in 1957 and have been students of Joseph Kosuth. They collaborate with Lia Rumma gallery since 1987.

Various institutions have recently housed solo and group exhibitions of Clegg & Guttmann: Deutsche Guggenheim, Berlin; Museum Morsbroich, Leverkusen (2007); Cornerhouse, Manchester; Kunstverein, Braunschweig; Secession, Vienna; Bozener Kapuzinergarten, Museion, Bolzano (2006); Denkmalprojekt im öffentlichen Raum, Rosa Luxemburg Platz, Berlin; Sigmund-Freud-Museum, Vienna; Akademie der Künste, Vienna; Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2004); Deste Foundation Centre for Contemporary Art, Athens (2003).

The artists will be present at the gallery for the inauguration.