

## Press release

### VANESSA BEECROFT

### SOUTH SUDAN

**Opening: Friday September 22 2006, 12.00 pm  
Lia Rumma Gallery, Milan**

VB South Sudan is the latest project by Vanessa Beecroft, which began last year during the artist's journey to Sudan. Compared to the icy expressionless models which we have come to expect from the artist during her work over the last decade, the subjects of these images bear many resemblances to the Christian iconography of the past. Indeed, in some photos, Beecroft is portrayed as a white Madonna, with two small twins – Madit and Mongor - at her breast. The image draws on a repertoire of popular iconography and relates to the direct experience of Beecroft who, during her three visits to the Sudan, spent most of her time in the local orphanage where she breast-fed the black twins. The other photos also display images which belong to a typology with clearly Christian roots: a black pregnant Madonna, a black woman with two children on her lap, a black crucified Christ, a Holy Family made up of a blond Madonna and black Joseph and child. In these works, as in her previous projects, one can detect her unceasing efforts to achieve perfection in the images. The photos all have great formal equilibrium and reflect the constant attention paid to the arrangement of the figures. In the photo showing the woman with the children on her lap, there is a clear chromatic contrast between the bright red of the cloak and the dark skin of the woman and the children. Here too, as in all the artist's other works, colours play an essential role in the arrangement of the scene. Formal equilibrium is achieved through the precisely central position of the chair/throne on which the woman is seated, whereas the poverty of the bare walls presents a stark contrast with the majestic grandeur of the figures. The same obsession with compositional relationships can also be seen in the pregnant woman who occupies almost the entire height of the space of the photo and is placed at the centre. On the one hand, the image of the white Madonna with the two black children can be considered to be emblematic of ethnic supremacy while, on the other hand, due to the act of love she is performing, it can also be construed as the symbol of the universal union between two peoples.

As part of the initiatives promoted by the Milanese galleries belonging to the *START* network, the gallery will remain open on Saturday 23 and Sunday 24 from 12.00 p.m. to 8.00 p.m.

The video documentary of South Sudan project will be projected in the ex-church of San Carpoforo in Piazza Formentini 10, on September the 22<sup>nd</sup>, from 6pm to 10pm, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September from 12pm to 8 pm.

Vanessa Beecroft was born in Genoa in 1969 and currently lives and works in New York. She came to public and critical attention in the early nineties for her group performances which constitute a kind of tableaux vivants. Among the most important exhibitions of her work to have been held in prestigious institutional settings, it is particularly worth mentioning her presence at the Venice Biennial in 2001, the San Paolo Biennial in Brazil in 2002 and her personal exhibitions at the Kunsthalle at Bielefeld in 2004 and the Castello di Rivoli in 2005. Her most recent performances include VB55 at the Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin and VB58 at Miami.