

Memory and Obsession

24 January – 24 February 2007

Preview Tuesday 23 January 2007, 6-8pm

Stephen Friedman Gallery is pleased to present *Memory and Obsession*, a group exhibition featuring selected work by artists **Tara Donovan, Tom Friedman, Robert Gober** and **Mark Manders**.

Memory and Obsession brings together new and important works by four leading international artists who make sculpture and drawing. By looking at their individual approaches to making art, the exhibition reveals a shared tendency towards the obsessive and a collective interest in personal histories.

In their treatment of memory and history, both Robert Gober and Mark Manders create poignant and psychological spaces in which fragments of personal histories are re-visited. Manders's sculptures and drawings of surreal semi-abstract objects are not functional but reproduce familiarity and allude to childhood experiences. They introduce us to a parallel world of memory and imagination, another plane of reality in which the artist's peculiar observations and narratives rule over practicality.

Robert Gober's hand-made sculptures and drawings are strongly infused with the psychological workings and memory of the artist. In his work, we encounter dysfunctional sinks, prone body parts and religious icons. These suggest the repressed or unconscious desires and fears experienced in childhood, devotional worship and sexuality. Included in the exhibition is the important sculpture *Untitled* (1987) – a hand-woven wicker dog bed that creates the illusion of homely comfort but on closer observation reveals an awkward forlornness. Naïve images of deer and huntsmen are painted onto the fabric of the bed's cushion and illustrate a world of oppositions where the hunter and the hunted, good and evil, innocence and violence are all encountered.

Tara Donovan and Tom Friedman both share an obsession with detail in their work. Tara Donovan makes highly elaborate and intricate sculptures and drawings engineered from and inspired by mass-produced materials such as pins, paper plates, pencils and plastic buttons. Although her works are made from disposable objects encountered every day, her treatment of these items is highly complex and results in extraordinarily beautiful and minimalist forms.

Tom Friedman is well known for his inventive and labour intensive approach and similarly makes objects from throwaway, easily obtainable materials. He transforms common objects into ephemeral, subtle and often amusing sculptures by highlighting singular aspects of their materiality. In the exhibition, an important early work *Soap* (1990) typifies Friedman's complex use of materials manifested in a surprisingly simple and unique form. Here, pubic hair is carefully embedded into a bar of household soap, forming a perfectly arranged spiral of concentric circles. Evoking both feelings of revulsion and beauty, *Soap* has a powerful bodily quality that recalls the presence and memory of human emotions.

Forthcoming exhibition: **Thomas Hirschhorn**, 9 March – 7 April 2007

Gallery hours are: Tuesday to Friday, 10am-6pm and Saturday 11am-5pm
For further details please contact Hanne Tonger-Erk on +44 20 7494 1434