

# press information

March 2009

**Maria Eichhorn**

## **Filmic Encyclopedia of Sexual Practices**

March 10 – 28, 2009

Galerie Eva Presenhuber is pleased to present a solo exhibition by German artist Maria Eichhorn. On view will be short films from her “Encyclopedia of Sexual Practices” (1999/2005/2008) as well as a work called “Prohibited Imports” (2003).

In 1999, Maria Eichhorn began shooting short films with a set running length of 2 minutes and 40 seconds that show close-ups of sexual activities. Every film is named after the practice that it features. Together, they form the “Filmic Encyclopedia of Sexual Practices”, today counting eleven films – four of which have been produced specially for this exhibition.

The scenes, which were shot on 16 mm film, show sexual activities such as “anal coitus”, “cunnilingus”, or “masturbation”. Two cases, however, simply focus on the eyes or the mouth of a person involved, rather than portraying the act explicitly. This is reminiscent of the surrealists’ depiction of the unconscious and of dreamlike states of being, while, at the same time, contradicting the common idea of sexual intercourse. The eyes and the mouth play a central part as sensual organs. By calling this group of works an “encyclopedia”, the artist evokes objectivity and analysis, characterized by a total absence of emotion, which is achieved by excluding facial expressions and gestures. This presents a stark contrast to similar works, such as Andy Warhol’s “Blow Job” dating from 1963.

The encyclopedic effect is further emphasized by the fact that the films are shown in an illuminated room and that their titles are listed on the wall. The choice of sexual acts between a man and a woman, between two men, as well as between two women is devoid of any judgment. While regular porn movies intend to arouse the viewer’s desires and make him identify himself with the actors, Maria Eichhorn concentrates on the distance between the viewer and what he sees.

In order to watch a film, the viewer needs to select one when entering the exhibition room; through his personal preferences, he becomes part of the project.

In addition to this series of short films, we will be presenting a work that, in a certain way, deals with sexuality and its perception, too. “Prohibited Imports” (2003) consists of a glass showcase that contains books on sexuality, AIDS, gender-related topics, art, and censorship. Between 2000 und 2002, Maria Eichhorn sent books to Japan, one of which was censored by the customs authority of the Narita airport in Tokyo: Mapplethorpe’s monograph. All male sexual organs were meticulously removed with a sandpaper pen, with the layer of colors and, sometimes, the surface of paper being abraded. What is interesting is that against a dark background, the bright, white blanks lead to a visual intensification of what was meant to be made invisible. In the showcase on view, the censored pages will be displayed next to the original pictures for comparative purposes.

