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PRESS RELEASE

Rita McBride – *Mae West and the Middle Managers*

30 April to 5 June 2004

We are pleased to be able to present new work by Rita McBride (b. 1960 in Des Moines, Iowa), who lives in New York and Cologne. Alongside sculptures from the newest series, the *Middle Managers*, the artist is showing the project *Mae West*, planned for the Effnerplatz in Munich. Together with the Annemarie Verna Galerie, Mai 36 Galerie has represented the artist since 1999.

With her proposal for the Effnerplatz, which forms part of the large tunnel construction project „central ringroad east“ in Munich, Rita McBride is quite literally pushing her work forward into new dimensions: a project realised in 2001 for a public space, *Salford Arena*, situated next to Manchester United's training ground, appears almost modest in comparison with the dimensions of *Mae West*. Rita McBride's proposal for a 52 metre high sculpture is designed to create a counterpoint to the silhouette of the tower blocks to the east of the square that is buffeted by traffic and under which the Isar ringroad will in the future disappear in a tunnel. In this way she is creating a connection, comprehensible from the point of view of scale, between the tower blocks and the residential buildings around the square, as well as the English Garden on the other side of the River Isar. On the basis of the topographical situation on the side of the Isar the sculpture, made from crossing bars and forming a hyperbolic parabolic curve, will be visible from a distance from this side. From far away it will be experienced as a memorable sign marking the silhouette of the bank of the Isar. The monumentality of the project is tempered however by the filigree lattice structure of the apparently turning geometric figure and this allows the greatest possible degree of permeability and openness. While the passing traffic flows along underneath the work to be placed on the roof of the tunnel, the tram will pass through the sculpture. With *Mae West* the traffic and the movement in urban space will experience a subtle staging. Far removed from a theatrical gesture this has on the basis of the work's simplicity and elegance such a naturalness that it is believed it will transform the square, previously dominated by traffic, and its heterogeneous surroundings into an urban site in which the dynamic of urban life is not only accentuated but also intensified symbolically. McBride's artistic thought, on the boundary between sculpture, architecture and design and penetrating the relationship between form, meaning and function, undergoes here an impressive manifestation. Central to the artist's process is the question concerning the manner in which abstract forms and structures are attributed meaning and new areas of the imagination are opened.

She investigates what contribution a consciously aesthetic creation as opposed to a merely pragmatically functional design makes to the generation of meaning and how meaning is displaced by the act of representation. Only apparently does this present a mere repetition even in its simplest form, imitation in a model with a scale of 1:1. *Middle Managers* thus appear externally to be only slightly distinguished from their references, the electrotechnical distributor boxes that belong to the inconspicuous, hardly noticed but unavoidable objects in the urban realm. Nevertheless the imperceptible precision of form in the repetition as well as its removal from its original context presents a break with reality. The model contains iconic qualities that in consideration of the meaninglessness and at best functional relevance of its references undergo an ironic turn. The relationship between specifically aesthetic and everyday experiences are subjected by Rita McBride to a critical examination. The mysterious opacity of *Middle Managers* thus stands in contrast to its undemanding appearance that almost makes it disappear as an artwork. [Text: Iris Wien]

The opening is on 29 April from 6pm to 8pm. Rita McBride will be in Zurich from 27 to 30 April. You are warmly invited to a personal interview with the artist during this period. We are also happy to send you appropriate visual material on request.

We look forward to welcoming you to the gallery and thank you for your interest.

Mai 36 Galerie
Victor Gisler