

MAI 36 GALERIE

PRESS RELEASE

Zurich, August 2009

GENERAL IDEA – Works 1987 - 1994

Opening: Thursday, August 27, 2009, 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Exhibition: August 28 to September 26, 2009

Opening hours: Tues-Fri 11 a.m. to 6.30 p.m., Sat 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

We have pleasure in presenting works by the GENERAL IDEA Canadian artists group founded in 1969 by AA Bronson, Felix Partz and Jorge Zontal.

The exhibition is a reconstruction of the show INFE©TED, which was held in our gallery in Dufourstrasse, Zurich in 1994. AA Bronson is currently working as the sole survivor of the collective – Felix Partz and Jorge Zontal died in 1994 of the result of AIDS – under his own name; he is also director of the artist's publishing house and bookstore Printed Matter, Inc. in New York.

General Idea sweeps through the formal repertoire of recent art history and enters into a critical, contradictory and ironic discussion. The trio was primarily interested in classical modern art, which they infected with the General Idea bacillus. They also diligently appropriated popular traditional visual worlds and pop-cultural media, commented on the art cliché idea and the world of media, reflected on the structure of the art trade on the example of conceptual works of art, and worked on the current concepts of art. Their work covers a wide range of media and includes installations, objects, performances, photographs, works on canvas, videos and drawings, as well as multiples, magazines, postcards and posters. The aesthetics oscillate between banal to kitschy forms from the everyday world and the appropriation of works of art and styles as examples of individual artistic metaphors. In 1974, the group founded the Art Metropole art company in Toronto, which is still active in producing and selling multiples, videos and books by artists. All this made General Idea's name internationally known in connection with its AIDS activism in the 1980s and 90s.

A series of works on the theme of AIDS entitled *Infe©tions*, created by Felix Partz shortly before his death, is currently on show in the premises of Mai 36 Galerie. In formal terms, this consists of reformulated imitations of works by Piet Mondrian, Marcel Duchamp, Gerrit Rietveld and Robert Indiana. Partz disseminated the "De Stijlsche" primary colours dogma in *Infe©ted Mondrian*, 1994, by painting over yellow with green. He took this gesture even further in a series of genuine Rietveld chairs. *Infe©ted Coeurs Volants* and *Infe©ted Pharmacie* refer to Duchamp, and the medicinal capsules which frequently appear in General Idea's later work are biographically motivated. The set of self-portraits by the group of artists, who portrayed themselves as doctors, babies and poodles in constantly changing versions since 1982, still make a refreshing impression. These figures were General Idea's answer to the "Neue Figuration". The fact that they sometimes took the affected, over bred poodle as their trademark is thoroughly characteristic of their artistic strategy of paradox. The background for the paintings and objects is the "AIDS-wallpaper", which refers back to Robert Indiana's "LOVE" cult picture from 1966.

With these works, General Idea refers to a topical aesthetic discourse, for references to classical modern art are well in fashion, and the idea of the mutual penetration of art and life is once again regarded as a feasible vision. Is it not reasonable, and also comforting in our crisis-racked times, to think back to the utopias of the classical avant-garde? [Text: Dominique von Burg]

The preview takes place in connection with the Season Opening The Zurich Galleries **on Thursday, 27 August 2009 from 5 to 8 p.m. AA Bronson will be present on Saturday, 29 August.** We shall be pleased to provide you with relevant picture material on request (office@mai36.com).

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