

MIGUEL ABREU GALLERY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Exhibition: OLEG TCHERNY
The General Line

Dates: September 7 – October 16, 2011

Reception: Wednesday, September 7, 6– 8 PM

Miguel Abreu Gallery is pleased to announce the opening of Oleg Tcherny's *The General Line* on Wednesday, September 7th, the filmmaker's first solo exhibition at the gallery. The show consists of the simultaneous screening of two video works by Tcherny, the recently completed *L'après-midi près du tombeau de Falconetti* on a monitor in the front room, and the projection of *The General Line* from 2010 behind a curtain in the darkened main gallery.

In 1632, Galileo Galilei publishes his *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems*, which compares the new Copernican system with traditional Ptolemaic cosmology. Some pages of this *Dialogue* are dedicated to a curious discussion of a ship that leaves Venice for Aleppo. One of the speakers, Sagrado, imagines a pen that would leave a visible mark of the entire voyage from Italy towards Syria. What mark, what sign, what line would it leave? Noble Venetians ponder how it could be that everything on board would remain immobile, while at the same time leaving a thousand-yard-long trace. They discover that a true and real motion can be seen from different perspectives, including those from which this very movement would be as if nonexistent. A year later, the dialogue is banned, remaining on the list of forbidden books until 1835.

In 1926, Sergei Eisenstein begins work on his film, *The General Line*, which focuses on collectivization in Soviet Russia. He seeks to show the collision between two worlds: the old world of the helpless slave, who is submitted to unknown forces, and the new world, that of the milk separator, collective motion and the borderless earth. Eisenstein famously names this film "an experiment comprehensible to millions." Interrupted by another project and, later, by Stalin's intervention in 1929, the film is re-edited and shown under the different title, *Old and New*. The milk cooperative is still a dream, but the general line has already changed.

According to Giorgio Agamben, most of European cities today have become either museums or are animated by a false life – except, perhaps, Venice. "The most interesting condition for a city is to have survived its own death, to have become a specter. Perhaps the only way for a city to survive today is this spectral condition."

Once the above occurrences have been recalled, it remains to be said that the two motion pictures on display share a particular procedure of image collectivization that consists in the layering of successive frames over one another, from classical double exposure all the way to the superimposition of every frame in the film into one single image. The horizontal time line here locks in with the vertical axis of frame layers or exposure values, the progressive variation of which becomes a subject of editing. The idea of "vertical montage" goes back to Eisenstein's work on polyphonic construction of a single shot in a film. He evokes the principle of layering simultaneous movements or vectors of action into a complex expression to attain an image that could be best described in terms of the "physiognomy of a movement." The two films unfold, however, at the very border separating stillness from the kinetic, a place that discloses an uncanny depth of the present, its tense, allowing the spectator to experience a change in his or her space-time standpoint.

L'après-midi près du tombeau de Falconetti (10 min.) is a vertical portrait of filmmaker Jean-Marie Straub, while *The General Line* (16 min.) presents a horizontal urbanscape of the city of Venice.

Oleg Tcherny studied visual art with Nan Hoover at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, and from 1997 to 1999 filmmaking in Tokyo and as an assistant to Swiss director Daniel Schmid. He enrolled at Le Fresnoy-Studio National des Arts Contemporains in 2004 where he attended the editing class of Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet. The General Line was selected for the Orizzonti competition at the 67th Venice Film Festival, 2010. Other films and videos include Nauiget, Exposé of a Departure, 2009, La Proiezione è cominciata, 2007, Ephèbes et Courtisanes, 2005, and Doch (with Erwin Michelberger), 2006.

For more information or for visuals, please contact the gallery:

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Gallery hours: Wednesday – Sunday, 11:00 AM to 6:30 PM

Subway: F to East Broadway; B, D to Grand Street; J, M, Z to Delancey / Essex Street