

Exhibition MARTIN PARR

August – December 2005, February – May 2005

The series JAPONAIS ENDORMIS

Martin Parr is one of the most successful and influential British photographers in recent years, but also one of the most controversial ones.

Mr. Parr started his photography career in the 1970's. In the beginning he mostly took pictures of people in everyday locations and situations in Britain. Parties were, right from the start of his career, a highly fruitful source for his photography, especially buffet situations with people holding cocktail glasses. He would point his camera at little scratches and fissures, spreading over the highly polished surface of our society promising happiness: Dipping toes in a sea where trash has washed up the rocks, for instance, yawning couples who, as it seems, have nothing to tell to each other any more, as can be seen in "bored couples", or masses of tourists looking for unique and mystic experiences. The artist's interest in the system's scratches is rooted in the uneasiness he feels within this system. But even though his revelations bring to light deeply rooted contradictions, he would never become arrogant or didactic in affording insights into people, or certain social classes. His photographic studies are empathetic portraits of a community – in meetings, at work, at tea, at church, in line, at fairs... But they are also social analyses.

In the last ten years though, Mr. Parr more and more used to make use of fragmentation and abstraction. This device would mirror the growth of a gap between the portrayed and the viewer. The series "japonais endormis" is a good example for this.

Mr. Parr's work is merging art and press photography to its extremes. In his series "japonais endormis" a new dimension is opening up: Since the media are not only part of our fast-moving society, but rather pace determining, a slow and reflecting visual language, like the one in this series is not belonging to this media world. Insofar Art is functioning as a lab for a slower and more meditative approach to the world, reflecting upon life, culture, people and their interactions. KF