

# MEYER\*KAINER

## BERNADETTE CORPORATION – *STONE SOUP*

Meyer Kainer presents *Stone Soup*, an exhibition of new work by Bernadette Corporation.

From the Wikipedia entry for “Stone Soup”:

“Some travelers come to a village, carrying nothing more than an empty cooking pot. The villagers are unwilling to share any of their food with them. The travelers fill the pot with water, drop a large stone in it, and place it over a fire. One of the villagers becomes curious and asks what they are doing. The travelers answer that they are making "stone soup", which tastes wonderful, although it still needs a little bit of garnish to improve the flavor. The villager does not mind parting with just a little bit of carrot to help them out, so it gets added to the soup. More and more villagers walk by, each adding another ingredient. Finally, a delicious pot of soup is enjoyed by all.”

For its first exhibition in Vienna, BC created a photo shoot with photographer Alex Antitch in the style of a typical ad campaign for luxury jewelry. Wearing nothing but diamond, gold and silver jewelry loaned from Judith Ripka, the model was posed against a seamless backdrop, on a chair, and on a moving blanket in a photo studio set-up. These images were subsequently processed in a variety of ways: some were professionally or amateurishly (by BC) retouched to perfect the body image and made into poster-sized prints and large-scale vinyl banners; others were formatted as “model cards” (standard industry promotional cards announcing the model’s name, body measurements, and physical qualities).

Interrupting and embellishing this smooth, campaign-like transmission and repetition of BC’s nudes are the lowly images of scanned potato prints. *Stone Soup* is an image program within which artistic activity is split between the control and management of digital information and the regressive, repetitive stamping of potatoes. The nude is both rich (high tech, expensive, glamorous) and poor (processed, digitized, abstracted, worked like a potato field).

Videos on flat screen TV monitors present a sequence of “Happy Slap” videos in which young people film each other slapping or kicking unsuspecting members of the public, or each other. In the early 2000s, British teens texted these mini-films to their friends, extending teen violence into the realm of the social image and its shared, networked, communication. The “happy slap” phenomenon presents a street-level, potato-like type of engagement with the mediated body.

Just like the association between retouching and the imprint of a potato, one can make associations between the flow and democratization of the social reality TV image (Happy Slaps) in the hands of the public and the ever-strengthening influence of the fashion image in everyday life. After Spinoza (“We still don’t know what our bodies can do?”), a post-ethical question for these times: “What can be done to a body?” It’s as if we’re speaking about the body from a peripheral position and a fundamental immateriality. Here, the body is something to be modified (violently, idealistically, cybernetically) in terms of an image.

**OPENING: TUE 5 APRIL, 7 PM**

**DURATION: APR 6 - MAY 7, 2011**