

## **Press information**

### **Boris Mikhailov *In the Street***

April 24-June 17, 2004

Opening: 24. April, 6-8 p.m.

Opening hours: Tuesday-Saturday, 11 a.m.-6 p.m.

Following the first series he produced in the West, "TV-Mania", which was exhibited in the spaces of Galerie Barbara Weiss in 2002, the Ukrainian photographer Boris Mikhailov (born in 1938 in Kharkov) now presents photos shot in Berlin over the past years titled "In the Street".

In framed, large-format street scenes Mikhailov, who has been living and working in Berlin since his DAAD stipend (1996), shows everyday life in West Berlin: persons and situations one can observe on a daily basis in the streets and squares of Berlin. The focus is on women and men of his own generation: pensioners, people who are neither rich nor poor, who are in a good mood today and in a bad mood tomorrow. The backdrop of the photos is the real social and urban context of the protagonists to which they appear inevitably connected and against which they can hardly stand out: well-known and less known, often dirty and run down shopping streets and squares in West Berlin neighbourhoods, worn-down formerly "modern" architectures, and the flourishing culture of snack stands. A group of four photographs, for instance, depicts pensioner couples walking down the street or standing at a snack stand. Mikhailov precisely observes the outer appearance and the relationship between the partners: sometimes they walk next to each other on their own, at other times they can be clearly made out as couples due to bodily contact; some couples fit to each other optically, while others differ considerably. In another set of photos, Mikhailov depicts people relaxing: two women eating cake at stand-up tables by the side of the street, children playing by an inner-city water basin, or three young men having fun there... What all photos have in common is the documentary, report-like approach. The pictures can be read like a visual diary showing private joys, normality, and non-events.

As opposed to Mikhailov's most well-known series from 1997-1998, "Case History", meanwhile shown throughout Europe, in which the artist depicts posing homeless people bearing the marks of post-Soviet society in his hometown Kharkov, the Berlin photos were shot in passing. Mikhailov stresses the spontaneity and casualness of his photos by refraining from close-ups, by partially cutting off heads in the pictures, or by showing people from behind. Unlike "Case History", Mikhailov does not capture the homeless and socially excluded population of Berlin here, but rather the average Berliner as well as the ordinary tourist he encounters in the street.

For Boris Mikhailov the Berlin photographs serve not only to explore his environment, but above all to ascertain his own position – as an artist and a citizen – in a large Western city.

Current exhibitions of the artist:

*Social Creatures. How Body becomes Art*, Sprengel Museum Hannover, until June 13, 2004; *Fotografia Verbal: Ilya Kabakov, Boris Mikhailov*, Museu Serralves, Porto (solo), April 30-July 4, 2004; *Manifesta 5*, San Sebastian, June 11 - September 30, 2004