

BEN BROWN FINE ARTS

MATTHIAS SCHALLER IN HONG KONG

For Immediate Release

Running from February 28 – March 26, 2010

Opening February 27 from 6 – 8pm

Ben Brown Fine Arts announces a solo exhibition by the important German photographer Matthias Schaller. The exhibition will open in Hong Kong at Ben Brown Fine Arts ifc mall gallery space on February 28, 2010 (Preview by invitation Saturday, February 27 from 6 - 8 pm), and will close on March 26, 2010.

Matthias Schaller's striking compositions in the three series presented in this exhibition explore changing boundaries, national definitions and consequent atmospheric tensions. Subdued colors hint towards socio-political anxieties and bittersweet paradoxes of time.

Fratelli d'Italia literally translates to "Brothers of Italy". This series is most powerful when seen as an installation. Exhibited here as a segment of 150 photographs of Italian opera house ceilings inspired by the stages in Goethe's Italian journey from Trento to Agrigento. This project was conceptually based on the analogy between political ideology and architecture. Schaller invites the audience to think critically about Italian identity using an aesthetic relevant to a time when the unity of Italy was being called into question.

In a common theme of exploration and nationalism, Schaller focuses on the architectural phenomenon of the *Controfacciata* (counter-facade). From 2004 – 2007 Schaller captured the faded grandeur of long first floor halls nestled amongst Venetian palaces along the city's remarkable canals. *Controfacciata* symbolizes the poignant dilemma facing Venetians, as the outside world begins to envelop the inside. Taken from a direct elevated perspective, the photographs distilled imagery are devoid of human presence, but reflect a strong sense of how each delicate room has been cared for over the centuries.

In contrast to Schaller's romantic visions of somber grey interiors and luminous operatic ceilings, *Disportraits* larger than life paneled works of electric close-up portraits featuring cosmonauts, point to the metaphor of space exploration and humanity's unwavering desire to conquer the unknown and to boldly state their presence. The "cosmonauts" juxtapose his previous work in which there is a marked absence of people. Like empty vessels, the cosmonauts' ambiguity leaves the audience to consider Schaller's apparent intention to guard any individual identity.

Matthias Schaller - Biography

Matthias Schaller was born in Dillingen/Donau, Germany in 1965 and now lives and works in Venice, Italy and New York City, USA. He holds a master's degree in Cultural Anthropology from Hamburg University. His photography is very much a creative extension to his socio-political interests. Amongst a number of successful solo exhibitions are "Studio Gursky", Goethe-Institut, New York City, "Werkbildnis", Biennale di Architettura, Venezia, Italy, and "Matthias Schaller 2000 – 2005", Art Basel, Miami.

Matthias Schaller works digitally to construct his "portraits without the sitter". The artist approaches photography with a poetic understanding and an academic platform from which he positions his subjects. The results are bold, compelling and beautiful.

This exhibition will be held at the Ben Brown Fine Arts **ifc** space:

Shop 2049, Podium Level 2, ifc Mall, 8 Finance Street, Central, Hong Kong

The artist, Matthias Schaller will be in Hong Kong for the opening and is available for interviews.

For further details and interview queries please contact:

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