

Press Release**Interesting Times – New works by Alke Schmidt**

Private View: Tuesday 27 September 2005, 6.30 – 9.30 PM

Exhibition: 28 September to 2 October 12 noon - 6 PM

Alke Schmidt creates striking, often seductively beautiful objects to convey challenging themes. At the heart of her practice is a passionate desire to expose the erosion of fundamental values of human society – justice, human rights, and respect for the environment.

She uses a variety of media and techniques to create the multi-layered works in this exhibition, including painting, transfer prints, digitally created images, textiles, embroidery, photography and animation. Sumptuous colours and a love of texture and pattern are manifest throughout. This is attractive stuff. But nothing is quite what it seems. Gorgeous wall hangings on Chinese brocade turn out to show deadly germs and the site of Japan's most hideous war crimes during WWII. A glittery, luscious rave scene is, in fact, mostly made out of the rubbish that such events generate. And her photographs of DJs suggest something darker at work than just people playing records.

The 'spectres' of the Iraq war – in particular the refusal of the US administration to respect the basic human rights of its adversaries – loom large in this exhibition, not least in the short but poignant animation that bears this title. In addition, there are several works with historical subjects, including the story of an American journalist persecuted under McCarthy for reporting the alleged use of germ warfare by the US during the Korean war. Historical parallels are important in her work; the juxtaposition, in this exhibition, of the various current and historical themes is deliberate, and thought provoking. Are we, as one of her photographs suggests, just spectators?

But even when her subject matter is sombre, she maintains a refreshingly light touch. In this show, her humour shows particularly when she visualizes a couple of the more lurid quotes of members of the US government. Thus, Guantanamo Bay becomes a tropical resort, palm trees and all, courtesy of Dick Cheney.

Alke Schmidt was born and grew up in Germany, and has been living in London since 1993. She graduated with an MA in Fine Art from London Guildhall University in 2002 and has been exhibiting in numerous group shows in England since 1999. Her work is in private collections in the UK, Germany, Switzerland, Spain and Australia. This is her second solo show at the Salon des Arts.