

## Press Release

**Barbara DeGenevieve**

### **Objectifying the Subject: Exploitation, Political (In)Correctness and Ethical Dilemmas**

Gallery 400

Chicago, IL

*An At the Edge: Innovative Art in Chicago* project

February 7–February 20, 2006

Opening reception: February 8, 2006, 5–8pm

Artist talk: February 15, 2006, 4:30 pm

DeGenevieve's project comprises video documentation of the process of asking male homeless panhandlers to model for her nude alongside the resultant photographs. Confronting the ethical issues embedded in the cultural debate about the representation and agency of the disenfranchised, this project engages questions of exploitation, objectification, and the sexualization of the bodies of a segment of the male population who are rarely, if ever, sexualized. DeGenevieve's own sub rosa presumptions about the men are revealed as she attempts to expose the problematics of the arguments that circumscribe discussions on race, sex, and class.

DeGenevieve states:

"I don't make any pretense to create a cross-section of the homeless population in Chicago—there are only five men, all of whom are African American. My intention is to trouble and question issues of race and who is of the appropriate ethnicity to do what to whom. I'm not trying to make a specific statement, but to create a situation in which the viewer is presented with a certain set of questions, some of which will be ethical, others of which will obviously be personal."

DeGenevieve's process is to meet the men and through discussion, determine if they are willing to participate in the project. The compensation is \$100 for the day, shopping for clothing, lunch and dinner, and a hotel room for the night. The hotel room is the location of the shoot. Video documentation takes place throughout the day, as well as during the photo shoot. After the photographs and video documentation of the shoot have been made, the model is interviewed and we discuss his reactions to the experience. The man then signs a model release, and is left to spend the night in the hotel. In the morning, DeGenevieve picks him up, pays him in cash, takes him to breakfast and drops him off wherever he would like to go. She has remained in touch with all but one of the men, whom she cannot find.

Barbara DeGenevieve is a professor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Her photography, video, and performance work has been exhibited widely since 1990. DeGenevieve's visual work and writing has always addressed issues of sexuality and gender. In the current project, she has once again returned to photography (and the male nude) after working exclusively in video since 1998. Most recently, her work

has been shown at such venues as University of Connecticut's Contemporary Art Gallery, Storrs, CT (2004); Roxie Theater, San Francisco (2003); Screening Room, Los Angeles (2001); and Women in the Director's Chair Film and Video Festival, Chicago (2000).

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