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ROTHSTAUFFENBERG

3 May – 7 June 2008

At the start of Gallery Weekend 2008, Esther Schipper presents two new works by RothStauffenberg. From two sides of the eaves, five figures look down on the visitors in the gallery's light well. The faceless figures were created especially for the location. The title *UNTITLED CHARACTERS* refers both to the frequent use by artists of the title "Untitled", and to computer culture: undefined figures in computer games or as-yet-unnamed roles in scriptwriting programs are called "untitled character" - still awaiting their name and their story.

The narrowness of the light well directs the viewer's gaze upwards. With this perspective, RothStauffenberg refer to Wolfgang Tillmans's work *himmelblau* (2005). The scene puts the viewer in a situation where s/he finds him/herself at the bottom, at the vertical end of the space. At the same time, there is a voyeuristic effect: if someone stands staring up at something long enough, others will follow suit. The figures' masks and hoods seem to hide something, creating an identity that remains mutable and indeterminate. Reality blends with fiction.

In 2007, the two artists made the film *The Kingdom of Mozambique*, a masked ball which they gave for the inhabitants of the *Grande Hotel* in Beira, Mozambique. Since the beginning of the civil war in the 1970s, this hotel, once the largest in Africa, has been home to 3000 squatters.

Through the murky glass of a window in the door next to the gallery, the viewer sees a wall on which are written, in black paint, words from the old battle anthem of the African National Congress, in Zulu: *Letha Umshini Wami*, "bring me my machine gun". Supporters of ANC chairman and presidential candidate Jacob Zuma have been singing it again of late. The machine gun pointing to the right, an AK 47, is presented, together with the text, out of context, as a museum piece.

The book "Based on a True Story" on the work of RothStauffenberg, including an interview with the legendary North Korean film director Shin Jun-chul, will be published in autumn 2008 by Edition Patrick Frey.

For further information or image material, please contact Nina Köller: koeller@estherschipper.com