

# JAMES COHAN GALLERY

## Press Release

### MASK

Opening December 13, 2007 through January 26, 2008

*"The drama proceeds to metamorphoses, demon into priest into seductress into ape into queen into hog, as though we are in some Nietzschean world where behind every mask there are only more masks... What resolution could be possible?"*

-Alphonso Lingis in *Excesses: Eros and Culture*, 1983



JÜRGEN KLAUKE, *Antlitze (detail)*, 1972/2000, 96 pieces, overall 400 x 720 cm (158 x 283.5 in), edition of 3.  
Image courtesy Galerie Hans Meyer, Düsseldorf.

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## MASK

James Cohan Gallery is pleased to announce an upcoming exhibition that explores the many forms and uses of masks throughout history and the influence they lend to contemporary artists. *MASK* will be comprised of a collection of over 40 masks assembled by Joseph G. Gerena Fine Art, dating from 700 BCE through the 20<sup>th</sup> century and representative of all continents and many cultural traditions. These masks will be shown alongside works by 30 contemporary artists, including several specifically commissioned for the exhibition.

Masks conceal, protect and disguise. They give us the courage to speak freely, help us transcend physical limitations, add mystery and power to our rituals, amplify or hide our emotions, frighten, entertain, intimidate, humiliate, and even protect us from noxious gases and flying balls. The simplest covering can have a profound effect on both the wearer and viewer, simultaneously concealing and revealing. As Oscar Wilde summarized, *“Give a man a mask and he’ll tell you the truth.”*

The tradition of masks and masking offers limitless exploration; several contemporary artists have turned to the form to investigate issues of identity, power and provocation at a time when the bounds between real and assumed identities are becoming more indistinct. As political theorist Yaron Ezrahi has expressed, speaking of current world conflicts, *“(Ski) masks are the uniform of the new armies of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the new kind of violence, which no longer distinguishes between war against the stranger and war against the members of your own society. Just as this new war doesn’t have a front, it doesn’t have a face. It doesn’t have boundaries.”*

Newly commissioned works include pieces by **Olaf Bruening, Folkert de Jong, Yun-Fei Ji, Tony Oursler, Alison Elizabeth Taylor** and **William Villalongo**. Other contemporary artists included are: **Matthew Barney, Miriam Berkley, Joseph Beuys, Ulla von Brandenburg, Matthew Buckingham, Nick Cave, Dick Evans, Phyllis Galembo, Caron Geary, Hans Haacke, Trenton Doyle Hancock, Jürgen Klauke, N’dilo Mutima, Ingrid Mwangi and Robert Hutter, Bill Owens, RAMMELLZEE, Markus Schinwald, Andres Serrano, Cindy Sherman, Yinka Shonibare MBE, Jeff Sonhouse, Vibeke Tandberg, Rosemarie Trockel, Richard Tuttle** and **Gillian Wearing**.

We are grateful to **Joseph Gerena**, whose wide-ranging collection so beautifully traces the historical root system of masks and masking. This exhibition was curated by **Elyse Goldberg** and **Ginger Cofield** and comes accompanied by a brochure with essays by **Eleanor Heartney** and **Joseph Gerena**.

For further information please contact Jane Cohan at 212-714-9500 or [jane@jamescohan.com](mailto:jane@jamescohan.com). For images of included works, please visit [www.jamescohan.com](http://www.jamescohan.com).