

PHG: Renzo Martens' "Episode III: Enjoy Poverty"

By RSKINNER | Published: MARCH 24, 2011



Image credit: Renzo Martens, still from *Episode III: Enjoy Poverty*, 2009, film, 90 min. Courtesy the artist.

SATURDAY APRIL 2, 2011 AT 7:30 PM EXHIBITION TOUR AND RECEPTION

Introduction to the exhibition, *Models For Taking Part* with the curator, Juan A. Gaitán, followed by a Reception at 8:00pm

MONDAY APRIL 4, 2011 AT 7:00 PM FILM SCREENING

Screening followed by a Public discussion with:

Ken Lum, artist
Isabelle Pauwels, media artist
Nettie Wild, filmmaker
moderated by Juan A. Gaitán

Location details:

The Dyavad Mowafaghian Cinema
Third floor, SFU Woodward, 149 West Hastings Street, Vancouver

Supported by SFU Woodward

In conjunction with the exhibition, [Models for Taking Part](#) at Presentation House Gallery

This provocative and controversial film raises questions about media coverage of poverty and what the poor get in return. The filmmaker critically investigates how poverty is represented and exploited as an industry by foregrounding the contradictions of humanitarianism, photojournalism, as well as "concerned" contemporary art. Filmed in the Upper Congo, the disturbing footage examines the ethics and economics of producing images of human suffering, and questions the very premises of documentary filmmaking.

Dutch artist Renzo Martens is working on a series of films that try to mediate their own complicity with dominant visual regimes. His works have recently been shown at Tate Modern, London, Kunsthaus Graz, La Vireina, Barcelona, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam and the 6th Berlin Biennale. Episode I of this series was shot in a refugee camp in Chechnya in 2002.

[Visit Presentation House Gallery's website for further details.](#)

The *Tank Magazine* article "Atrocity Exhibition" discusses Martens' film in great detail within a context of artistic activism. Writes Jonathan Griffin:

"Slavoj Žižek's book *Violence*, published a year before Martens made his film, uses the Congo as a prime example of an underreported crisis situation that is virtually ignored in the global media. His plea is for us to divert our attention from "subjective violence" – that is, violence performed by an identifiable perpetrator – to the objective forms of "systemic violence" and "symbolic violence," which quietly reinforce themselves just as the "left-liberal humanitarian discourse on violence" attempts to erode the former. The same thing to do, says Žižek, is precisely nothing; we should wait and see, and in the meantime, "learn, learn and learn." Jacques Rancière too has repeatedly argued that art is helpless in effecting political change, primarily because the political significance of an artwork is so unstable and dependent on the temporal conditions of its reception. Martens' ostentatious refusal to interfere, unlike the critical (but equally hands-off) position taken by Hirschhorn, refuses to let us off the hook."

[Read the full article at Tank.](#)

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