



JENKINS JOHNSON GALLERY

## Chris Raecker *A Midnight Carnival*

April 2 – May 30, 2009

### Jenkins Johnson Gallery

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Hours: Tuesday-Saturday 10-6



*Time to Go*, 2007, pigment ink-jet print, 40"x60", edition of 5; 12" x 18", edition of 18

Jenkins Johnson Gallery is pleased to announce the opening of *Chris Raecker: A Midnight Carnival* in New York, Thursday, April 2<sup>nd</sup> with a reception for the artist from 6 - 8pm. The exhibition will continue through Saturday May, 30<sup>th</sup> and marks Raecker's first solo exhibition in New York City.

*This series deconstructs the carnival into a dark and painterly three part harmony:  
Man, a world of his inventions, and an ever-watchful Father Sky.  
I think art also has a melody. Sometimes, that melody can help us complete a song,  
as when evoking lyrics from a dream; forgotten. —Chris Raecker*

This series of Chris Raecker's black and white photographs focus on the strange and wonderful world of the American carnival, specifically those of Raecker's native Midwest. Using post-modern street photography as a starting point, Raecker creates the story of the carnival with three main characters: man/child, machine, and sky; he captures these subjects during all times of the day, digitally manipulating the images to cast a midnight tone. The final image that results is a hauntingly otherworldly scene in which the subjects are isolated, the mood punctuated by a surreal quality that resonates with the viewer long after leaving the image.

Raecker's compositions pair larger than life skies with silhouettes of gargantuan roller coasters that leave a spiraling impression against the looming clouds. He depicts children riding the coaster at the peak of their journeys; at any second they could be catapulted into the air, over the clouds into some other place. Arms stretched overhead, fingers spread out attempting to touch the sky, hair standing at its end; these images are filled with excitement and mystery. The engulfing skies make the viewer wonder as to where these rides make their final destination, a feeling heightened by Raecker's selective cropping of the images; while his photographs are completely spontaneous, the final image that we see has been purposefully limited to heighten Raecker's desired tone. For example, *Disk* illustrates a young girl being swung around on a carnival ride, hands and feet reaching out in sheer thrill, and while we see this when we place the piece into its context, at first glance the ride is lost and all we see is a young child being flung through the air; her hands are not outstretched with glee, but rather grasping for a helping hand, someone to catch and save her. By controlling what strikes us first within his images, Raecker turns our thoughts to the unearthly and somewhat eerie potential of these photographs.

While Raecker's images leave us with a haunted feeling, they also recall familiar scenes and experiences from childhood as well; *Time to Go*, with its expansive skyscape, nostalgically brings us back to unwillingly leaving the carnival after a long day of thrills. The carnival fades into the background over the hill, and we retreat from the world of careless amusement. Raecker's images have the uncanny ability to call both fondness and wariness to mind, to make us both yearning and hesitant at the same time: a rich emotional rollercoaster to compliment the carnival's visual landscape, in Raecker's words, a subject "ripe for unraveling."

This will be Chris Raecker's first solo exhibition in New York, following his successful debut solo exhibition at Jenkins Johnson Gallery, San Francisco last year. His work has been included in group exhibitions nationally.