



Francis Alÿs: Still from *Rehearsal 1*, 1999-2004. In collaboration with Rafael Ortega. Photo: David Zwirner

# Gallery Gazing

By Annie Suh

## Francis Alÿs: Politics of Rehearsal

In its versatility, art is a powerful mechanism for both the artist and the observer. It can deliver a potent message, arouse a response or simply exude beauty. In the course of interpreting and finding meaning in the form, design, concept, and even in the process of the work, our minds become engaged and we become inspired.

This month, visit the Hammer Museum for the first large-scale museum exhibition in the United States to explore the works of Mexico City-based Francis Alÿs. In his exhibit entitled *Politics of Rehearsal*, Belgian-born Alÿs takes the concept of rehearsal and turns it into a thought-provoking art form using paintings, drawings, performances, films, video installations, animations and photography.

Alÿs describes his art as “an understanding of time, a different use of time, rendered in rehearsal.”

*Politics of Rehearsal* not only focuses on concepts of rehearsal and repetition, but also on failure and success, storytelling and performance. Living in Mexico City for almost 20 years has influenced Alÿs's practice to explore how the idea of rehearsal reflects “the imposition of a certain concept of modernity onto Mexican and Latin American cultures.” His own tendency to avoid definite conclusions parallels the various ways that Mexico City resists Western modernity.

One of his works, *Paradox of Praxis 1*, includes him pushing a big block of ice for nine hours through the streets of Mexico City until it completely melts. To many, this may seem purposeless and meaningless, but it is the process that paradoxically signifies itself as Alÿs's art product. His fascination with prolonged, repeated action that produces no real result is shown through his nine hours of labor, recorded in a video lasting only five minutes.

In another work entitled *Rehearsal 1*, a red Volkswagen attempts to reach the top of a steep hill in Tijuana, while at the same time, there is a soundtrack of a band rehearsing a new song. While the musicians are playing, the car struggles to go up the hill, but when the musicians lose track and stop, the car stops. And while the musicians are tuning their instrument or talking, the car rolls back down the hill. This goes on continuously for 29 minutes.

In discussing his work, Alÿs has said, "The stubborn repetition effect hints at a story which is constantly delayed, and where the attempt to formulate the story takes the lead over the story itself. It is a story of struggle rather than one of achievement, an allegory in process rather than a quest for synthesis."

Even in his own work, Alÿs's "refusal of closure" is also depicted in his working method, as noted by Russell Fergusson, the adjunct curator of Hammer Museum who organized this exhibition. Alÿs leaves paintings, drawings and sculptures in the studio for years, goes back to it, puts it back down, or uses the work as starting points for new work. "Each delay in letting them leave his hands increases the potential for them to be reconfigured in some newly productive way."

*Politics of Rehearsal* will be displayed until February 10, 2008.

### Terry Haggerty

Also exhibited at the Hammer Museum are Terry Haggerty's geometric hard edge wall paintings that "express the formalist vocabulary of abstraction in a new way." It is expressed partly by breaking the linear formation at the edges or center of composition in his paintings, creating a three-dimensional effect.

Born in London, Haggerty studied at the Southend School of Art and the Cheltenham School of Art in England. His displayed work is part of the Hammer Projects, which are a series of exhibitions that focus primarily on the work of emerging artists. His artwork is precise and meticulous, while creating an optical illusion by the bending of lines through the brushstroke.

His drawings are associated with the interior design and Op Art of the 1960s, also following the tradition of painters Bridget Riley and Frank Stella. The difference is that he takes the genre and expands it into a "site-specific architectural space."

Terry Haggerty's work can be seen at the Hammer Lobby until January 8, 2008.

*Hammer Museum/10899 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles*



Terry Haggerty's new wall installation. Untitled, 2007 (detail). Acrylic on canvas.  
Photos: Joshua White

