

Victoria Miro Gallery

Press Release

ALEX HARTLEY
“Viewer”

29 October to 21 November 1997
Private view Wednesday 29 October 6-8pm

Alex Hartley presents a major new work, *Viewer*. A gargantuan fully functioning slide viewer, based on an early sixties design, takes over the gallery space whilst oversized slides lean casually against the wall.

The 35mm slide is recognised in the art world as the most common form of currency in a constant exchange between artists, curators, collectors, critics and dealers. Recognition in the art world means submitting to a system and a certain apparatus. A prerequisite of participation in such a system for the artist is the possession of a selection of slides and inevitably, the photographic slide becomes a substitute for the real thing. In Hartley's new work, the slide takes on an epic scale - indeed it literally is the artwork.

Further developing his investigation of the architectural impositions of the gallery space, the image projected through the lens of the viewer is of a pristine, white, modernist room - the neutral space which again typically represents a kind of cultural given for the artist. The stark physical presence of the slide viewer, which in itself has an architectural quality, contrasts with the dream like illusion it contains - an impossible three dimensional space.

In his earlier work, Hartley used images of actual gallery spaces in wall sculptures where the spaces were contained in heavy glass boxes. The hermetically sealed galleries described both the real and the systematic life of the art object and its presentation. In *Viewer*, Hartley again explores the relationship between the art object and the spectator. The subject of the work is the means of presentation and Hartley's technical mastery ensures a dynamic object for ever referencing its own presentational context.

Alex Hartley's work can currently be seen in *Sensation. Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection*, at the Royal Academy of Arts in London and in *Private Face - Urban Space*, organised by the Hellenic Art Galleries Association, at Gasworks in Athens. He will also be exhibiting in *Close Echoes* at the Municipal Gallery of Prague and at Kunsthalle Krems, Austria early in 1998.

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