

For immediate release

November 16, 2005

Raoef Mamedov
November 19 - December 24, 2005
Reception: Saturday, December 17, 5 - 7pm

Silverstein Photography is pleased to present the first US exhibition of Russian artist/film director Raoef Mamedov.

Moscow-based Mamedov utilizes the process of film direction by collaborating with a painter, photographer, computer technician, and actors to produce extrasensory photographs. Though the scenes viewed in the final works are complex with multiple players, each actor is separately photographed with Mamedov directing the actors' emotions and providing the vision for the subsequent digitization and computer placement. Adding a strange conceptual twist, his "actors" range from institutionalized mental patients to individuals with Down Syndrome enabling him to utilize the true abilities of the actors' minds as an art medium that heighten the pieces' cultural connections and meanings.

Mamedov tackles the Bible and foundations of Christianity with straight adaptations of historical masterpieces by Nicolai Ge, Leonardo da Vinci, and Jan van Eyck. The featured works depict scenes from the New Testament played by actors with Down Syndrome. In portraying biblical characters, elements of the actors' real-time fragmented state of mind and their tendency to think in quotations highlights the humanism of those portrayed personalities. Mamedov relates the state of his actors' minds to Satori, a Zen Buddhist notion meaning sudden enlightenment or a flash of sudden awareness. This notion of a flash of consciousness elevates the visual impact of the art as an essentially pure communication of the acted message.

The main gallery includes an eight-panel piece based on Adam and Eve's expulsion from Paradise that represents Mamedov's personal views on Creation. The "actors" performing in this work are lifelong residents of a psychiatric home where Mamedov worked as an attendant from 1976 - 1980 after he left the Russian army. It was here at the institution that he realized the patients' tragic incapacity for real emotional contact.

Mamedov's aesthetic expression is a strange hybrid of science fiction fantasy and filmic realism. The schizophrenic patients he's cast have no control over the difference between the conscious and subconscious, and therefore in the artist's mind are closer to the "beginning of the history of humankind".