

## Christian Jankowski

(Gottingen, Germany, 1968)

In Christian Jankowski's film *16mm Mystery*, 2004, the camera follows the actions of a man for about five minutes. During this time the protagonist, played by Jankowski, walks along the streets of Los Angeles, enters a building, goes up the stairs, and arrives at the parking area located on the roof level. He is carrying a 16-millimeter projector and a screen. After he installs his equipment, the man starts to project a film. Although the content of the film remains an object of mystery, since the framing only allows a view of the back of the screen, precisely at the moment when the projection begins, one of the surrounding skyscrapers collapses. At this point the man puts away his equipment and leaves. The inspiration for *16mm Mystery* is Jankowski's reflection on Baroque painting and on the theme of the "painting within a painting," which often occurs in that art. Similarly, the artist focuses his film on another film. Moreover, taking its cue from a specific type of paintings — those that refer to miracles carried out by sacred images — the artist amplifies to an almost absurd degree the concept of the "spectacular" effects that art can produce on reality. While leaving his work open to interpretation, the artist seems to suggest a relationship between the projection of the film outside and the explosion of the sky-scraper, almost as if the latter were the metaphorical image of a spectator who literally explodes following a visual overload. Going back to the relation between the cinematographic means and its ability to astonish and amaze the viewer, he originally shot the film in 35-millimeter format and collaborated with the brothers Greg and Colin Strause, renowned special effects professionals, whose names are linked to the success of films such as *The Day After Tomorrow* and *Titanic*. Leaving them free to choose the special effect to be used, the artist thus sets in motion a reaction, so that the work also reflects their cinematographic fantasies. This collaboration is part of a specific strategy on Jankowski's part, on the basis of which the work, depending on the subject, is the result of a process of dialogue and exchange of professional and creative abilities, with specialists from various sectors. Television preachers, magicians, actors, but also gallerists, collectors, children, and moviegoers are only some of the types of people who Jankowski has involved thus far in the creation of his works. Interested in analyzing the relationship between art and society, reality and fiction, and spectacularization and mass media, the artist utilizes photography, video, film and whatever technique he deems appropriate for each project. (MB)