

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**CHRIS HANSON & HENDRIKA SONNENBERG**

May 22 – July 11, 2008

Opening reception: Thursday, May 22nd, 6 – 8 pm

Friedrich Petzel Gallery is pleased to present a solo exhibition of new work by Chris Hanson & Hendrika Sonnenberg.

In 1968 the Soviet Union, unable to tolerate reforms, such as freedom of speech, that were being granted within its satellite state of Czechoslovakia, invaded Prague. Prague's inhabitants had little military prowess to resist, and so one of the many inspired ideas the residents came up with was to paint over all of its street signs and destroy all municipal maps within hours of the invasion. The Soviet tanks wandered aimlessly for days.

There is a kind of doxic order to street signs that interests Chris Hanson & Hendrika Sonnenberg: the way signs stand within a city, generally unquestioned, followed by a city's inhabitants in the belief that to maintain some kind of order within public spaces is beneficial to a democratic society. But for Hanson & Sonnenberg, it is not the order that is of interest but the disorder, not the agreement but the fight. What if all the street signs were painted over? Would we wander directionless? Would chaos ensue? Is order always advantageous to society, or, as the art historian Rosalyn Deutsche contends, is a democratic public sector predicated on the existence of conflict and instability?

For this exhibition, the artists have constructed over thirty buckets from discarded New York municipal street signs, bringing to bear the question of the function of both a city sign and a bucket simultaneously. Each bucket is comprised of a myriad component signs (for example, "Yield," "One Way," "No Parking") bolted together in a seemingly rudimentary and provisional fashion. It is as though these buckets are attempting to be useful (most sincerely- for what else is a quotidian object like a bucket to aspire to?) but fail (most blatantly: there are gaping holes in each bucket, not one would hold water). In most cases, the very street signs that make up these buckets have been relieved of their former purposes by the bending, sanding, and painting over by the artists. These are buckets bereft of use made out of metal signs that no longer indicate direction. A kind of absurd, doubled over futility.

Hanson & Sonnenberg explore this futility on a formal level situated somewhere between Donald Judd's approach to art making and those criteria set forth by the Italian Futurists in the early 20th Century. Smithson identified the surface and structure of Judd's works as existing "simultaneously in a suspended condition," while in 1912 the Futurist Umberto Boccioni insisted that sculpture portray dynamism by extending itself into space, entering its surrounding environment. Like Boccioni's "Development of a Bottle in Space," Hanson & Sonnenberg's works exist precisely between a tension and a balance, synthesizing a kind of form in motion.

Chris Hanson & Hendrika Sonnenberg's life-size sculpture of a zamboni made entirely of polystyrene is currently on view through June 8th in the exhibition "Arena: The Art of Hockey," curated by Roy Cronin, at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia in Halifax. They have exhibited widely, including at the Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE), P.S. 1/MoMA, White Columns and the Public Art Fund. They live and work in New York.

The exhibition will open on Thursday, May 22nd with at reception from 6 – 8 PM, and will remain on view through July 11, 2008. For more information, please contact the gallery at 212 680 9467 or info@petzel.com. Friedrich Petzel Gallery is located at 535 West 22nd Street New York, NY 10011.