

PRESS RELEASE

December 7, 2011, Paradise, California

Peter Sabat, Canadian visual artist and filmmaker, is pleased to present "California Elegies I," the first installment of a project in painting and film that is being developed over the next few years, and "Smoke (after Piranesi)," which open on Wednesday December 7, 2011 as an online exhibition at www.petersabat.com.

"The starting point for me was the film "Greed" (1924) by Erich von Stroheim, or what actually exists of it, since the director's original version and the film's negative were destroyed. Considered a lost masterpiece, I viewed a restored reconstruction of the film at the 2000 Berlin Film Festival, and the memory of that screening was the beginning of this project. Gold prospecting has played an important role in California's history: from the original Gold Rush of 1848 and the emigration that followed, to the physical and psychological transformations of the landscape, to its emergence in culture (Frank Norris' "McTeague," Stroheim's "Greed"). Often considered a barometer of human misery, gold is a story in today's world having reached a peak value, with new prospecting and mining booming, transforming dirt into gold. Another influence for me were the writings "Assembling California" by John McPhee which investigate a geologic history of the landscape.

"California Elegies I" is the first of three parts. It uses material from "Greed" as the beginning for new sounds and images to follow. Watercolor shares with celluloid a transparency but also a time sensitivity, recording the traces of its history. In subsequent works, oil and (digital) film will also be used to trace a personal history through this material.

"Smoke (after Piranesi)" is a series of works based on the etchings of Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-1778) which were exploring the various methods of ornamenting chimneypieces and all other parts of buildings taken from Egyptian, Etruscan, and Grecian architecture."

Peter Sabat has exhibited his paintings and films throughout Canada, the United States and Europe. He studied painting and film at the Ontario College of Art and Design in Toronto. Between 1997-2004, Sabat resided in Berlin, Germany, collaborating with artists and composers on films, operas, and art projects. His films with composer Walter Zimmermann have been presented at the International Film Festival Rotterdam, the Kunstmuseum Bonn, KNM Berlin's HouseMusik, and the Goethe-Institut. Other projects have been produced in association with composers Wolfgang von Schweinitz, Thomas Meadowcroft and Marc Sabat. His works have also been shown at the MaerzMusik festival and the Deutsche Kinemathek in Berlin, the Bayerische Staatsoper in Munich, the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, and the Art Institute of Chicago. "AUTOMAT," a video/music collaboration with brother Marc Sabat, was featured at Carnegie Hall, New York, as part of the "Berlin in Lights" festival in 2007. In 2010, he presented a new series of paintings, "Vague Longings I-II," as an online exhibition. His latest film is "A Place On Earth" (2011).

For additional information about the works please contact the artist at www.petersabat.com.