

STEPHEN WIRTZ GALLERY

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PAUL SHAMBROOM

Selections from the series "Security" and "Meetings"

Exhibition dates: January 10-February 2, 2008

Opening reception for the artist Thursday, January 10, 5:30-7:30 PM

Stephen Wirtz Gallery announces concurrent exhibitions of large-scale photographic works on canvas by Paul Shambroom. Presented will be selections from two series: *Security* (2004-present) and *Meetings* (1999-2003). Inspired by the grandeur of historical painting, Shambroom's stunning theatrical presentations of imagery from hidden power systems in American culture examine the complex relationship between the U.S. government and its citizens.

Security presents full-scale portraits of personnel in protective equipment engaged in training exercises at government facilities. Enacted for the purpose of preparing first responders in the event of terrorist attack, these exercises take place in meticulously fabricated environments—such as "Disaster City" in Texas or "Terror Town" in New Mexico—to imbue them with a vital sense of realism. Although photographed in the natural landscape, the workers in their hazmat suits appear heroic and otherworldly, set against artifice imposed by lighting, mannered poses, and digital manipulation of tones and colors. This yields visually rich and surreal images that Shambroom uses to examine issues of fear, safety and liberty in post-9/11 America.

Meetings chronicles Shambroom's visits to sparsely attended small-town council meetings throughout the U.S. Shambroom photographs each gathering with a consistent point of view: the ordinary citizens who lead these meetings presented in the format of a historical panoramic portrait, like actors on stage. In often intimate and seemingly unofficial settings, people and places of American government on its most accessible level are depicted with a haunting stillness that opens questions about governance and the power of the individual.

Paul Shambroom is a photographer who explores American power and culture. His work is in the collections of many major American museums and has been exhibited internationally. His photographs have been published in two monographs: *Face to Face with the Bomb: Nuclear Reality After the Cold War* (2003), and *Meetings* (2004). He has received fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation and the Creative Capital Foundation, among others. His current project, *Security*, documents official U.S. government preparedness and training in the aftermath of 9/11. A survey exhibition (with full catalog) of Shambroom's major projects will travel to museums throughout the U.S. in 2008-2009. *Paul Shambroom: Picturing Power*, the catalog from his upcoming traveling survey exhibition, will be distributed by D.A.P. :Paul was born in Teaneck, NJ and lives in Minneapolis.

Stephen Wirtz Gallery is located at 49 Geary St., 3rd Fl., San Francisco, CA 94108, (415) 433-6879. Gallery hours are Tuesday-Friday, 9:30-5:30, Saturday 10:30-5:30.

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