

gravy.



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PUBLIC/PRIVATE

Photography by Chris Peters

April 7th - 29th



EVENTS

Opening Reception: Friday, April 7th, 6-10 pm

Artist Talk and Closing: Saturday, April 29th.

Presentation 1-2 PM. Closing 1-6 pm

Open Hours: Saturdays in April, 1-5 pm

Gravy Studio & Gallery is proud to present *Public / Private*, an exhibition of artist [Chris Peters](#)' most recent body of work, in which he constructs large scale, site-specific camera obscuras in rooms of abandoned buildings, and then photographs these installations. The powerful images not only function as documents of abandoned space juxtaposed against a

broader urban fabric, but also suggest a reading of these spaces that contradicts traditional narratives of urban decay.

A precursor to more complex photographic equipment, a camera obscura is a simple optical device that requires only a dark chamber—in Peters' case, an entire room—and a small hole in one side of the chamber. Because light travels in straight lines, an inverted image of whatever is outside the dark chamber will be projected onto the wall opposite the hole. The size and placement of this hole determines the quality and appearance of the picture; a smaller hole produces a sharp but dim image, while a larger opening yields a bright picture that is less focused.

Peters' use of the camera obscura as a tool is integral to his conceptual project. After blacking out every window, opening and crack in his chosen room, Peters drills a hole into the outside wall, its size and placement dependent on the artist's desired photographic outcome. Once this camera obscura is constructed, Peters photographs the resulting projection within the room. In the process of converting these abandoned spaces into black boxes and then cameras, the artist deconstructs and reimagines the figurative and literal boundaries separating interior and exterior space. The walls that designate private space, that physically separate outdoors from in, are rendered ineffective when Peters projects the outside world onto them. No longer do the walls separate this indoor space from what surrounds it; instead, exterior and interior collapse onto one another and cannot be so easily delineated.

Imposing the inverted projections of the outdoors onto empty interiors literalises the relational dialectics that govern urban space—a relationship that is complex and mutually affecting. As a rich theoretical site for discussions of the political and social implications of its organization, the urban city readily lends itself to an investigation of how public and private—accessible and inaccessible—spaces transect and affect one another. By layering public sites onto private, Peters calls into question a rigid understanding of public and private space as intrinsically separate and mutually exclusive. Instead, the photographs Peters produces from his conversion of these sites perform as documents of private and public (interior and exterior) spaces that are deeply connected, spatially as well as conceptually.

Peters' interest in urban landscapes and particularly the lost and abandoned spaces within those environments began in the early 1990s with his involvement in graffiti culture. His encounters with decay as a graffiti writer within the broader cityscape laid the groundwork for his current projects. By presenting documents of spaces modified to be neither exclusively private nor public, and by the nature of his process, Peters inserts these “forgotten”, decaying sites back into the urban fabric that surrounds them. His direct layering of a broader exterior onto an interior of disarray firmly aligns the spaces as

interconnected. Though often considered valueless or undesirable in the context of a healthy urban site, these abandoned buildings and rooms Peters presents are resituated as intrinsic to and in dialogue with a broader urban context.

Chris Peters was born in Shorewood, Wisconsin in 1978. He holds a BFA in Photography and Video and an MFA in Community Art from the Maryland Institute College of Art.

Gravy Studio & Gallery is a collaborative photography workspace and gallery located on 2nd Street in Northern Liberties. Our goal is to serve as a multi-functional space that promotes the work of local photographers. Opening receptions are held on the First Friday of every month and additional open hours vary.