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## ROGER BALLEEN

**Opening Saturday 21st March 2009 at 6 p.m. to 5th May**

Galleria Massimo Minini is delighted to present their first Roger Ballen exhibition in Italy.

The exhibition will feature twenty photographs taken from the Phaidon Press books entitled *Shadow Chamber, 2004* and ten from his latest book *Boarding House, 2009*.

Ballen's pictures are journeys, day dreams – striking and seductive images that feature varying levels of detail. Reference to black humour and an entirely personal sense of space straddle the line between photography and art, placing Ballen's work halfway between a firm social statement and in-depth psychological analysis.

In *Shadow Chamber* there is a unique approach, a construction of the work that straddles a line between what might be considered fact or fiction. The mysterious rooms or chambers in these photographs are disturbing and strange, comic and tragic, logical yet impossible at the same time. The walls in the images are covered with scribbled drawings, stains and dangling wires, the floors are strewn with bizarre props. The humans and animals in Ballen's photographs appear isolated, estranged and lost, yet strangely empowered at the same time. The resulting images are surreal allegories of the human condition.

*Boarding House* blurs the boundaries between documentary photography and art forms such as painting, theatre and sculpture. The pictures are sophisticated and increasingly emphasize the drawn and sculptured elements. The human figure is absent and the structure of the pictures is immediate. The photographs are populated by objects required for basic existence; they are decorated with evocative drawings, traversed by the unexpected appearance of animals. The space remains altered and the artist succeeds in creating a sense of alienation, of breakdown – a launch pad allowing the imagination to wander around from one photograph to the next. The works on display instantly become a part of the mind; the spatiality of our interior state is reflected in the images.

The book *Boarding House* contains an introduction by David Travis (the former chief Curator of Photography at the Art Institute in Chicago) who interrelates Ballen's work and career within a wide context and with reference to his previous books. The artist will be present at his opening at the gallery on Saturday March 21<sup>st</sup>, to sign copies of his book and to speak about his latest project.

Roger Ballen was born in New York in 1950 and has lived and worked in South Africa since 1982. In the last few years he has held over fifty exhibitions around the world. His work is on display in numerous museums and in public and private collections.

The gallery is open Monday to Friday from 10.30 a.m. to 7.30 p.m. and on Saturday from 3.30 to 7.30 p.m.

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