

Hyde Park **ARTCENTER**

**Gallery 2**

September 27, 2009 - January 10, 2010

# Friedhard Kiekeben *Loop*

## Related Events:

All events are free and open to the public.

## Exhibition Reception

Sunday, September 27, 3 - 5 pm

## Art Thing

Tuesday, November 3, 6 - 7 pm

The artist will speak informally about his work and answer questions from the audience.



*Untitled* (detail), 2009, Digital photo etching, 11.5 x 18.5 inches

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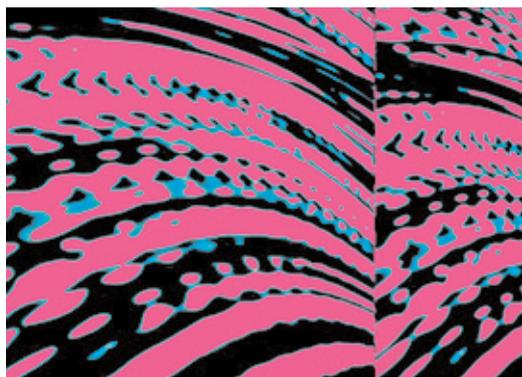
## Hyde Park **ARTCENTER**

5020 South Cornell Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60615 773.324.5520 [www.hydeparkart.org](http://www.hydeparkart.org)

The Hyde Park Art Center is a not-for-profit organization that presents innovative exhibitions, primarily work by Chicago-area artists, and educational programs in the visual arts for children and adults of diverse backgrounds. The Center is funded in part by the Alphawood Foundation; The Chicago Community Trust; a City Arts III grant from the City of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and the Illinois Arts Council; The Lloyd A. Fry Foundation; The Leo S. Guthman Fund; The Irving Harris Foundation; The Illinois Arts Council, a state agency; The Joyce Foundation; JPMorgan Chase Foundation; The Mayer & Morris Kaplan Family Foundation; The MacArthur Foundation; The MacArthur Fund for Arts and Culture at Prince; The Orbit Fund; Polk Bros. Foundation; The Clinton Family Fund; The Sara Lee Foundation; South East Chicago Commission; The Wallace Foundation; and the generosity of its members and friends.

Friedhard Kiekeben's *Loop* is a visual tour-de-force that encapsulates the artist's interest in disrupting space, creating dizzying optical effects, and risking formal and technical innovation. This 68-foot long wall installation plays with our perception of space and scale through the repetition of abstract patterns and the use bold, vibrant colors. A related series of smaller prints made by using non-toxic etching techniques hangs opposite the vinyl piece, continuing these formal explorations on a more personable scale.

Whether executed in the institutional spaces of art galleries or in the public sphere, Kiekeben's body of work subverts notions of traditional, one-point linear perspective, creating optical effects that are both spatially disorienting and visually compelling. Kiekeben cites Sol LeWitt and Minimalist artists from the 60s as major sources of inspiration, but in works like *Loop*, he explodes the rectilinear minimalist grid by digitally warping and twisting images to form a panoramic, flowing pattern. He chooses bright, artificial, neon colors to heighten these optical effects. Kiekeben uses Frank Stella's term "maximalism" to describe the overall (and, in the end, very anti-Minimalist) aesthetic effect of his prints.



*Loop* (detail), 2009, Digital wall freeze printed on 10 vinyl panels, 52 x 685 inches.

Understanding Kiekeben's creative process is, perhaps, key to a deeper understanding of some of the theoretical issues implicit in his work. Kiekeben began making digital print installations in the mid-1990s, first experimenting with silkscreen techniques, and then moving on to the vinyl-printing techniques used in *Loop*. For these immersive wall installations, the artist starts by making digital mock-ups of the space, experimenting with form, color and scale to determine what works best in that specific location. For *Loop*, images were digitally manipulated, printed on ten individual segments of vinyl and then assembled on the wall like wall-paper.

Although he creates his imagery in the virtual realm, the physicality of these prints is paramount to the artist. In Kiekeben's words, his work is like a negotiation between post modern interests in "simulation, hybridization, code and information" and "a

growing desire to reconnect with things that are physical, messy, and real." As opposed to projecting ephemeral, digital images on a screen, Kiekeben uses printed or etched surfaces in order to emphasize the materiality of his works. This concern with physicality is also at play in the immersive, all-consuming nature of the large vinyl piece, while the smaller set of etchings (measuring 11.5 by 18.5 inches each) "emphasize this physicality on a more intimate scale," says the artist.



Installation view: *Loop*, 2009, Digital wall freeze printed on 10 vinyl panels, 52 x 685 inches.

Kiekeben's innovative techniques also speak to issues of originality and reproduction. The artist states that his work "embraces aesthetic and technological innovation, whilst being rooted in the philosophy of reproduction which is fundamental to printmaking." Kiekeben's use of both traditional printmaking techniques and the computer (that ultimate tool of reproduction) thus underscores a host of complex issues relating to the definition (and perceived value) of originality; the authenticity of the mechanically reproduced artwork; and the role of the artist's hand in creation. If an artwork is infinitely reproducible, how does that affect its value? If the artist's hand never actually touched the surface of the image, does that impact our appreciation of the work? Though these questions are not new, Kiekeben's work engages them in innovative and intriguing ways.

#### About the Artist:

Friedhard Kiekeben trained at the Royal College of Art, London and in Frankfurt, Germany. After fifteen years living in the UK, he is now based in Chicago where he is a professor of printmaking at Columbia College. His works often include site-specific installations and are exhibited internationally in private and public galleries and museums. He has co-published books on innovative printmaking methods including *The Contemporary Printmaker* (Write Cross Press, 2003). More on Kiekeben's artistic and educational practice can be found on [www.NontoxicPrint.com](http://www.NontoxicPrint.com).