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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Jean-Pierre Khazem

First Ladies

Terrazzo Gallery

3 November – 17 December 2005

Sperone Westwater is pleased to announce “First Ladies,” an exhibition of photographs by Jean-Pierre Khazem, on view in our Terrazzo Gallery.

At first glance, each of the five photographs on view appears to be of a First Lady from the recent past—Barbara Bush, Nancy Reagan, Rosylnn Carter, Betty Ford, and Pat Nixon. Khazem combines the real and the unreal by photographing human models wearing masks, fabricated in silicone complete with anatomically correct eyes and hair. According to Jeff Rian, “the combination of a near-real stare and a real body makes [Khazem’s subjects] both curiously Other and absolutely familiar.” This is particularly true for this series, for these women are immediately recognizable and upon seeing their likenesses one automatically calls to mind numerous connotations of their President husbands and America’s past. However, these staged portraits are disconcerting as they are part artificial, part live and consequently, the female icons appear startlingly otherworldly with their vacant stares and plastic expressions. Playing with notions of artifice and reality, Khazem creates historical moments that never took place and captures them on film, thereby blurring the distinction between truth and fiction.

Born in Paris in 1968, Khazem has integrated photography, video work and performance art into fascinating multi-layered works for many years. For “Pause,” a performance piece that took place in Stockholm in 2002, five nude models wearing identical masks wandered aimlessly around an abstract, partly mirrored space. Photographs of this work were exhibited at the Centre National de la Photographie, Paris in 2003. His “Mona Lisa Live,” a performance piece in which a nude model wearing a lifelike mask of Da Vinci’s famous female stands on a pedestal in a pool of light, debuted at Deitch Projects in the spring of 2003 and was on view at the first Prague Biennial (Summer 2003) and at the Rubell Family Collection in Miami (December 2003). This is the artist’s first exhibition at Sperone Westwater. Khazem currently lives and works in Paris.

An opening reception, with the artist in attendance, will take place on 3 November, from 6-8 pm. For more information, as well as photographic images, please contact Molly Epstein at Sperone Westwater at 212-999-7337. Also, please find further documentation on our website: www.speronewestwater.com.