

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**MICHAEL SCHMELLING** | ATLANTA: HIP-HOP AND THE SOUTH

February 11 – March 19, 2011

*Opening reception:**Friday, February 11, 2011**6:00 - 8:00 p.m.*

ClampArt is proud to announce “Atlanta: Hip-Hop and The South,” an exhibition of photographs by artist, Michael Schmelling. This is the artist’s first solo show at the gallery.

From 2007 to 2009, Michael Schmelling made several extended trips to Atlanta to document the city’s renowned hip-hop scene. Few cities can boast a reputation like Atlanta’s—home to innumerable music legends, including OutKast, T.I., Lil Jon, and TLC. Putting things into historical perspective, former *New York Times* music critic, Kelefa Sanneh, describes how Atlanta eclipsed New York City as hip-hop’s capital: “By default—the place where you could hear the next hit first, the place where kids and grown folks alike still seemed excited about hip-hop, the place where you could get the best mixtapes.”

Schmelling uses this fertile center of popular culture as the backdrop for his most recent series of photographs. From off-the-map teen clubs, to bedroom studios, to Northside mansions, Schmelling traversed the eclectic world of Atlanta hip-hop, documenting the scene from the ground up. The resulting photographs evoke the spirit and singularity of the city’s hip-hop scene, capturing everything from cars and hot dogs to pay phones and gold chains, to up-and-coming rappers to strippers and multi-platinum artists. Each character and each piece are part of a larger narrative that explores music, technology, economics, and American popular culture.

Julian Cox, former Curator of Photography at Atlanta’s High Museum of Art and now the Founding Curator of Photography for the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco and Chief Curator of the de Young Museum remarks: “Schmelling’s take on the Atlanta scene is fresh and dynamic. Most surprising to me is his ability to connect with such a wide range of subjects. He’s as comfortable photographing the dingy corners of a cinder block dancehall as he is the glistening faces of the teenage revelers who are the lifeblood of this pulsating, ever shifting scene. While undeniably documentary in nature, Schmelling’s work here is a mash-up of styles that deftly matches the mutable nature of his subject matter. The accompanying book is one of the best I have seen in years.”



Schmelling has spent the past twelve years working on a series of extended photo projects, many of which have become books: *Shut Up Truth* (J+L Books, 2002), *The Wilco Book* (Picturebox, 2004), *The Week Of No Computer* (TV Books, 2008), and *The Plan* (J+L Books, 2010). This exhibition coincides with the release of Schmelling's monograph of the same title from Chronicle Books. In *Atlanta*, Schmelling approaches the mainstream subject of hip-hop with a thoughtfully oblique perspective. This approach to documentary photography runs throughout much of his work—projects that are rich in detail, but also full of unexpected cues, diversions, and second takes.

For more information and images please contact Brian Paul Clamp, Director, or see [www.clampart.com](http://www.clampart.com). Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Image: © Michael Schmelling, "Girl/Mirror," 2008, Digital C-print, 15 x 10 inches (Edition of 5).