

## Santiago Sierra

### TEAM

83 Grand Street

September 9–October 23

Santiago Sierra has staked out a territory of brutal logic in which the myriad and persistent injustices of global capitalism are distilled into the rawest of images and acts. His 2008 film *Los Penetrados* (The Penetrated), shown here with two groups of stills, is perhaps the most striking example yet of the artist's uncompromising politicized extension of "classic" Conceptualism's ritualized, deadpan schematic. In the forty-five-minute video, various combinations of men and women, black and white, are positioned on ten blankets laid out in a large, mirrored room. We then watch as they engage in anal sex in eight different permutations, white men with white women, black men with white men, and so on. There is no sound or color, and the participants' faces are obscured.



**Santiago Sierra, *Los Penetrados* (The Penetrated), 2008**, still from a black-and-white video, 45 minutes.

Shot on Día de la Raza, or the Day of the Race, a Spanish holiday commemorating Columbus's discovery of the Americas, the metaphoric implications of *Los Penetrados* begin with the conquest of the Americas by the Spanish but expand to encompass a universal narrative of dominance and submission. The work's grim, mechanical direction and styling make it well nigh impossible to consider the work's central act as anything but one of violence and control; those moments of apparent tenderness that do creep in feel like aberrations. The number of performers varies slightly from scene to scene, reflecting differing social attitudes in Spain to the various kinds of couples, but the act—along with the questions it prompts about ethnicity and sexuality, labor and exploitation—remains the same throughout.

— Michael Wilson