



## SEAN LANDERS

April 27- June 9, 2007

An appetite for risk lies at the core of Sean Landers' work. Whether in his use of private experiences as public subject matter or his refusal to rely on a single medium or style, Landers has always challenged himself to make works that expose the process of creation and destabilize viewers' expectations. Over the past two decades Landers' videos, photographs, paintings, drawings, and audio works, all in one way or another self-portraits, have depicted a seemingly limitless range of characters in styles ranging from cinema verité to polished bronze. The artist finds that these twin strategies of personal material and formal multiplicity allow him to infiltrate his viewers' consciousness with raw truths about contemporary society, and the art world in particular, frankly and fearlessly.

This exhibition, composed entirely of text-based paintings, grew out of Landers' innate drive to explore the boundaries of his artistic terrain. By focusing on the format for which he is perhaps the most well-known, Landers exposes questions about how an artist can possess a certain territory while simultaneously remaining rigorously innovative. This is the essential challenge of any veteran artist: to make use of experience and control such that each aspect of the known opens into new realms of depth and complexity. In this exhibition he openly engages with the subject of mastery, knowingly and typically bringing his work right to the edge of convention in order to question it.

One of the most striking features of the works in this exhibition is their seductive beauty and their embrace of the artist's very real joy in painting. There are moments in these works where the die-hard Landers fan can clearly read the train of thought, but more often than not the artist has allowed himself the freedom that comes with experience and has pushed the works beyond legibility into an area that approaches abstraction. While Landers's writing continues to evolve in nuance and poignancy, it is the visual impact of these works that is immediately apparent. Delicately rendered in a light palette, the paintings are literally and physically built up over layers of ruthlessly honest dialogue. The weightless quality of the individual letters, appearing as if they are floating off each other, gradually submerges the viewer into the meaningful narrative which underlies each work.

This narrative subtext becomes literal, for example, in *Whitewashed*, where Landers writes a subjective history of the abject as an under-painting. Landers places the novelists Knut Hamsun and Fyodor Dostoyevsky at the beginning of a lineage of which he is one descendant. These authors' humanization of the anti-hero and their use of elegant language to articulate the raw private experience of an individual's relationship to society have parallels throughout Landers' oeuvre and particularly in this body of work.

Landers' paintings remind us why we come to art in the first place: artists channel fundamental mysteries of experience that can be conveyed by aesthetic means but that are also beyond them. The encounter is beautiful, provocative and sometimes painful, but it is essentially human.

Sean Landers was born in Palmer, Massachusetts, in 1962. He received a BFA from the Philadelphia College of Art in 1984 and an MFA from Yale University School of Art in 1986. In the past year he had one-person shows at Taka Ishii Gallery, Tokyo, and greengrassi, London. In addition he participated in many group shows including: "Defamation of Character" at the P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center; "From Damien Hirst's Murderme Collection: In the Darkest Hour There Will Be Light," at the Serpentine Gallery, London; and "Happiness" in the 4th Berlin Biennial for Contemporary Art. A comprehensive catalogue of his work was published in conjunction with his solo exhibition at Zurich Kunsthalle in 2004.

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