

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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PRESS RELEASE

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456 NORTH CAMDEN DRIVE
BEVERLY HILLS CA 90210
GALLERY HOURS:

T. 310.271.9400
F. 310.271.9420
Tue – Sat 10:00am– 5:30pm



RICHARD PHILLIPS

Saturday, April 21 – Saturday, May 26, 2007

Opening reception for the artist: Saturday, April 21st, from 6 to 8 pm

"My aim is to use art to contest the validity, sanctity, and acceptance of images as conveyors of meaning stripped of consequence – propaganda, in other words."

--Richard Phillips

Gagosian Gallery is pleased to present a series of new paintings by Richard Phillips. This is his first exhibition with the gallery.

Over the last decade, Phillips has developed a striking signature style that derives its tension from his selective use of popular images that he subjects to the technical, value-laden refinements of academic painting. For Phillips, critique is as much an intrinsic material in the conception and staging of his paintings as the canvas and paint with which they are made. His deft and selective scrambling and conflating of subject and genre continues to provide challenging comment on the condition and reach of painting in our time: Is it a vital medium or a redundant object of nostalgic connoisseurship? How do current art practices relate to painting's history? And is painting central or peripheral to them? As a self-conscious American painter weaned on postmodern appropriation strategies, Phillips is acutely interested in the continually evolving discourse on the many lives and deaths of painting and how this combines, throughout history, with the complex politics of making and reading images.

For this untitled series of imposing and provocative oil paintings, he has culled twelve images from vintage magazines, internet news media, and digital reproductions of historical works of art then amplified them through dramatic shifts in scale and frame. According to Phillips, these depictions of art, politics, morals, sex, celebrities, fashion, ideology, power, advertising, beauty, violence, ecstasy, and war can be instrumentalized by various agendas that distort truth, obfuscate reality, and wield power over individuals. His objective is to crystallize these processes and machinations by fixing them in the distended space of contemporary painting.

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Phillips breaks down the narrative arc of his creative process into the following stages: the acceptance of the media image; the collapse of conventional meaning; the vacuum; the panic; the sense of complicity. Thus ever more complex readings or *misreadings* of the original images occur. For example, in *L.R.A.*, the frank stare of a twelve-year old Ugandan boy soldier conveys the paradox of the physical and psychological exploitation at work; *Tom Cruise*, based on a twelve-year old's drawing of the superstar, illustrates the unbridgeable gap between the child's hopeful rendering of his idol and the idol's own media power; *Chastity* disturbs and tantalizes with a close-up of a fetishist chastity belt locked onto a female body; in *Death in June* and *Awake into Myth*, alluring young women clearly link idealized beauty with the darker, more sinister forces of power and propaganda. *Vanitas*, in which the original figures of an intimate sixteenth century painting have been enlarged to monumental scale, speaks back to these contemporary images through the popular culture of another time with its iconography of human transience and demise. This current body of work is perhaps Phillip's most overt exploration of the deathly ambivalence at the core of much contemporary image-making.

Born in Massachusetts in 1962, Richard Phillips lives and works in New York. He has exhibited his work in many individual and group exhibitions in the U.S. and Europe, including an important survey exhibition and catalogue at Le Consortium, Dijon in 2004, and is represented in important public and private collections such as the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, UBS Paine Webber Art Collection, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

Please contact the gallery for more information.