

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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PRESS RELEASE

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

456 NORTH CAMDEN DRIVE

BEVERLY HILLS CA 90210

GALLERY HOURS:

T. 310.271.9400

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Tue – Sat 10:00am – 5:30pm



JULIAN SCHNABEL: *Christ's Last Day*

Thursday, February 21 – Saturday, March 22, 2008

Opening reception: Thursday, February 21st, from 6 to 8 pm

Art is not leisure; art is a utilitarian thing that people can use to find a way into their interior life.

So many people thought that Marcel Duchamp was anti-painting but the fact was that this gave birth to all sorts of different things, whether they are called paintings or not. He created a hybrid that was more specific to our needs as contemporary people.

--Julian Schnabel

Gagosian Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of recent paintings by Julian Schnabel.

Schnabel's mythic, often controversial career is rooted in his ability to morph and change using a vast alchemy of sources and materials composed and distributed across surface and support in defiance of the very notions of moderation, rationality, and order. His baroque attitude is embodied in audaciously scaled paintings that, over the course of time, have combined oil painting and collage techniques; classical pictorial elements inspired by historical art and neo-expressionist features; abstraction and figuration. Tackling appropriately big themes such as sexuality, obsession, suffering, redemption, death, and belief, he has employed a diversity of found materials including broken plates, diverse textiles such as Kabuki theater backdrops, tarpaulins, and velvet; a plethora of images, names, and fragments of language; as well as thickly applied paint, viscous resin, and digital reproduction.

And yet despite the bravura, a certain sense of vulnerability, even tenderness, pervades the heft of Schnabel's work. Nowhere is this more evident than in his latest paintings, derived from hospital x-rays dating from the early twentieth century. In a gesture that is at once Romantic and skeptical, consistent with his lifelong approach to content, materials, and the representation of time, Schnabel has transformed these aged scientific documents into epic yet ethereal figures where the full traces of passage and use (scratches, spots, stains) are fixed in depthless reproduction. Fragments of a giant skeleton--pelvis, femur, cervical spine, and so on-- appear as little more than skeins of smoke or dust looming on the sheer surfaces of the vertical supports. Resisting any impulse to further elaborate these anthropomorphic markings, Schnabel probes the ineffable mysteries of the body *from the inside* with a newfound restraint and austerity, and in doing so, underscores the basic, common, and ineluctable fact of human frailty.

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Schnabel came across the x-rays last year in an uninhabited house in Berck-sur-Mer on the Normandy coast, where he had just finished directing his latest feature film, *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*, based on the memoir by Jean-Dominique Bauby. This film – with its themes of transcendence and the relationship between art, life, and death, as well as its lush, experimental style so evidently predicated by a complex artistic sensibility—testifies to the startling vision that a painter can bring to everyday life while reinforcing the central and primary importance of painting itself.

Julian Schnabel was born in New York in 1951 and studied at the University of Texas (1969-73) and the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program (1973-74). He lives in New York and San Sebastian, Spain. His first major exhibition was at the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, in 1975. Since then, his work has been shown all over the world including Inverleith House (2003); Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt and Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid (both 2004); Mostra d'Oltramare, Naples (2005); Schloss Derneburg, Germany, Tabacalera Donostia, San Sebastian, and The Beijing World Art Museum, China (all 2007). His work is included in major international museums and private collections, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art; the Museum of Modern Art; the Whitney Museum of American Art; the Museum of Contemporary Art and the Broad Art Foundation, Los Angeles; Reina Sofia, Madrid, and the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. Over the last decade, Schnabel has also directed three major award-winning feature films, *Basquiat* (1996); *Before Night Falls* (1999); and *Le Scaphandre et le Papillon (The Diving Bell and the Butterfly)* (2007); as well as a feature-length documentary, *Berlin* (2007).

For more information please contact the gallery.