

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

February 26, 2008

PRESS RELEASE

GAGOSIAN GALLERY
980 MADISON AVENUE
NEW YORK NY 10021
GALLERY HOURS:

T. 212.744.2313
F. 212.772.7962
Tue - Sat 10:00am - 6:00pm



MARK GROTJAHN: *Dancing Black Butterflies*

Tuesday, February 26 – Saturday, March 11, 2008

Opening reception for the artist: Tuesday, February 26th, from 6 to 8 pm

Gagosian Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of Mark Grotjahn's *Untitled (Dancing Black Butterflies)*, a drawing in nine parts. Originally shown in the Kunstmuseum Thun, Switzerland, this is the first exhibition of this drawing in the United States.

Living in Los Angeles in the mid 1990s, Grotjahn began working on a stream of densely worked pencil drawings, followed by oil paintings, which focused on perspective investigations such as dual and multiple vanishing points, techniques used since the Renaissance to create the illusion of depth and volume on a two-dimensional surface. Grotjahn's formalist compositions of complex, skewed angles and radiant, tonal color allude to the multiple narratives coursing through the history of modernist painting, from the utopian vision of Russian constructivism to the hallucinatory images of Op art. The extreme elegance of the works is tempered by processual scuffs and markings that introduce a sense of contingency into the otherwise highly controlled compositions.

While at first glance Grotjahn's oeuvre seems bound to purely aesthetic issues in modernist discourse, references to nature and movement are plentiful. His butterfly motif, one of several recurring connections to the natural world, along with flowers and water, has yielded extensive possibilities in both drawing and painting. Nature and culture merge in the *Butterfly* drawings, where groupings of vibrant, multicolored triangles are anchored to gently sloping, vertical lines. Resembling abstract butterfly wings, the works call to mind the butterfly effect, introduced by a mathematician and meteorologist in the 1960s, and maintains that the subtlest movement of a butterfly's wings could eventually cause a tornado to appear – a ready analogy, perhaps, to Grotjahn's quietly provocative experiments within the history of abstraction.

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To this end, *Untitled (Dancing Black Butterflies)* pursues the butterfly motif to its ultimate formal and historical conclusion, the rainbow-hued "wings" pared back to elementary black. These sequential drawings follow the subtle shifts in movement of forms, suggesting a performative aspect to his work.

Mark Grotjahn was born in 1968 in Pasadena, CA, and currently lives in Los Angeles. He received his MFA from the University of California, Berkeley, and his BFA from the University of Colorado, Boulder. Recent solo exhibitions include the Kunstmuseum Thun, Switzerland (2007); the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2006); and the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2005). Group exhibitions include *Painting in Tongues*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; the 2006 Whitney Biennial and the 54th Carnegie International, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh. His work is in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; and the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.

For further information please contact the gallery.