

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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PRESS RELEASE

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

6-24 BRITANNIA STREET

LONDON WC1X 9JD

GYLLERY HOURS:

SUMMER HOURS:

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Tue – Sat: 10:00am– 6:00pm

Mon – Fri: 10:00am – 6:00pm

MARK GROTJAHN

Saturday, 30 May – Friday, 31 July 2009

Opening reception for the artist: Saturday, May 30th from 6 to 8pm

I have an idea as to what sort of face is going to happen when I do a "face painting", but I don't exactly know what color it will take, or how many eyes it's going to have, whereas the "butterfly paintings" are fairly planned out. They're still intuitive, but I generally know where they're going. It's a different kind of freedom...

--Mark Grotjahn

Gagosian Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of new paintings by Mark Grotjahn. This is his first exhibition with the London gallery.

In Grotjahn's first "butterfly paintings," clusters of vibrant, gradated triangular forms were anchored to vertical tangents, vehicles by which to treat problems in classical perspective such as dual and multiple vanishing points. As he continues to mine this hieratic motif -- which over the last decade has yielded extensive permutations that invoke narratives central to modernist painting, from the utopian vision of Russian Constructivism to the hallucinatory images of Op Art -- the allusions to the natural world have ceded to more specific aesthetic issues such as the monochrome, the serial image, and the sublime. Increasingly, he has restricted his use of color, moving through phases of blue and black, and now to red and yellow. In the new paintings he has closely subdivided the "rays", making the chromatic distinctions ever more nuanced. With *Untitled (Red Butterfly I Yellow P MARK GROTJAHN 07-08 751)* Grotjahn revels in a highly controlled mastery of shade while continuing to embrace contingency. From the upper right hand side of the painting, moving clockwise, the palette shifts from a darker red to an intense vermillion, contrasting with the acid yellow undercoat, which he deliberately reveals in the block-lettered signature.

(Continue to page 2)

As Grotjahn continues to refine the butterfly paintings so does he, conversely, appear to find release in the raw energy of the "face paintings." Roughly painted on cardboard, with sections often cut away to reveal painted canvas beneath, they compel with their strident tones, scratchy textures, and cartoonish faces that loom from the surface. Inspired by Picasso's primitivist explorations, they resemble tribal masks and other ritualistic totems. In *Untitled (Red Face 773)*, an abstract face in yellow, grey, white, and pale green is traced in linear dashes and concentric whorls, its glowering eyes incised from the vivid red background.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue with an essay by Robert Storr, Dean of the Yale School of Art.

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. Recent solo exhibitions include Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2005); Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2006); and Kunstmuseum Thun, Switzerland (2007). Selected public collections include 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 more information, please contact the gallery at +44.20.7841.9960 or london@gagosian.com.