

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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PRESS RELEASE

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

6-24 BRITANNIA STREET

LONDON WC1X 9JD

GALLERY HOURS:

T. 020.7841.9960

F. 020.7841.9961

Tue – Sat: 10:00am– 6:00pm



MARK TANSEY

Thursday, 10 December 2009 – Saturday, 23 January 2010

Opening reception for the artist: Thursday, December 10th from 6 to 8pm

What a work of art is about unfolds in the eye-mind-hand-material process and is carried on in the viewer's reading. It's more a process of questioning and performing than capturing.

--Mark Tansey

Gagosian Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of new paintings by Mark Tansey. This is his first solo exhibition in London.

Tansey constructs visual allegories about the nature and implications of perception, meaning and interpretation in art. Manipulating the conventions and structures of figurative painting, he creates corollaries for sometimes arcane literary, philosophical and historical concepts. Raised by a family of art historians, he incorporates an exhaustive knowledge of art history into his paintings through a time-intensive process. His images originate from the extensive archive of magazine, journal and newspaper clippings that he has accumulated over the years, as well as from his own photographs. He continuously photocopies stretched, rotated, and cropped images, resulting in a collage that ultimately serves as a preliminary study for a painting. Rendered in a single hue, his paintings have a precise photographic quality that is reminiscent of scientific illustration, achieved by applying gesso then washing, brushing and scraping paint into it.

Tansey has painted his most recent works in ultramarine, a color that combines the depth and complexities of black with the lightness and transparency of blue and which imparts the historicizing feel of now-obsolescent blueprint. His subject matter has expanded to include figures from political, philosophical, and economic history as well as from art history. In *EC 101*, he traces the lineage of economic theory by inscribing human faces into a creviced mountain, something like Mount Rushmore, a structural device that recalls his earlier use of landscape to blur the traditional distinction between figure and ground. At the top of the mountain are classical economists such as David Hume, Adam Smith, and John Stuart Mill while the heterodox economists such as Karl Marx, Joseph Stalin, and John Maynard Keynes are at the base. In a parallel narrative, Dante and Virgil stand in the lower half of this painting, a reversed image of the mountain. In *The Divine Comedy* Virgil guides Dante through Hell and Purgatory while Beatrice guides him through Heaven. Tansey incorporates similar reversals in other works, such as *Land Fall* which presents two distinctly different scenes of a group of beachgoers as a mirror image, disrupting the possibility of determining a fixed meaning in this painting.

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Mark Tansey was born in San Jose, California in 1949 and lives and works in Portsmouth, Rhode Island and New York. His work is in major collections including the Modern Art Museum, Fort Worth; the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; the Broad Art Foundation, Los Angeles; and the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington D.C. His solo exhibitions include *Mark Tansey*, Kunsthalle Museum, Basel (1990); *Mark Tansey: Art and Source*, Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, Washington (1990), traveled to Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal, Canada; St. Louis Art Museum, Missouri; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota; List Visual Art Center, MIT, Cambridge, Massachusetts; Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas (through 1991); *Mark Tansey*, Fisher Landau Center for Art, Long Island City, New York (2005) and *Mark Tansey*, Museum Kurhaus Kleve, Germany (2005), traveled to Württembergischer Kunstverein, Stuttgart, Germany.

For further inquiries please contact the gallery at london@gagosian.com or at +44.207.841.9960.