

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

12 June 2009

PRESS RELEASE

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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PIOTR UKLAŃSKI: *Brut*

Thursday, 11 June – Friday, 31 July 2009

Opening reception for the artist: Tuesday, June 16th from 6 to 8pm

Gagosian Gallery is pleased to present "Brut", Piotr Uklanski's first solo gallery exhibition in London since 1998. The exhibition debuts a new body of work that was born out of the artist's critical interest in a specific set of European aesthetics and politics from the immediate postwar era.

The title of the exhibition makes reference to *art brut*—a term coined by artist Jean Dubuffet in 1945. Roughly translated as "rough" or "crude" art, this blanket phrase was applied to various forms of so-called outsider art that informed the work of Dubuffet and other artists of his generation, such as Jean Fautrier, Wols, Michel Tapié, and Germaine Richier—part of a larger circle of artists that formed the *art informel* movement.

Whether made by inmates, tribal people, children, the self-taught, or the mentally ill, *art brut* was heralded as form of a political opposition to the bourgeois, refined forms of art that dominated the cultural establishment. Fueled by this interest in outsider art, the *art informel* movement built a confrontational aesthetic that emphasized "deskilled" techniques and tactile, impastoed painting surfaces, as well as an attraction to dirty, corporeal and scatological references, to register the traumas of WWII. Just as Dubuffet and his comrades were looking for inspiration outside the cultural status quo, Uklanski looks back at this movement, which, as art historian Yve-Alain Bois has asserted, has been subjected to art historical sublimation: "the repression of this work is not only an American phenomenon—it just took a different form in Europe, that of sanitization."

For "Brut", Uklanski has created two new resin paintings with heavy impasto surfaces, *Untitled (Lava)* and *Untitled (Pink Placenta)*; a collage of burned handmade paper, *Untitled (Crack)*; and a new three-dimensional, woven-fiber painting, *Untitled (Monster)*. While formally and materially diverse, these three different modes of pictorial art making all employ labor-intensive and process-oriented techniques that recall French 1950s *matièreisme* and *tekstura artystyczna* (Polish textile art). In addition to these historically established practices, Uklanski incorporates visceral yet artificial materials, such as resin, that function as a contemporary equivalent to the *art brut* aesthetic. These works evoke for example the vulva-like vortexes of Wols' oil paintings or the misunderstood, infantile "*haute pâte*" (thick paste) paintings of Dubuffet. These works also reflect Uklanski's ongoing attraction to the suggestive power and political contention of postwar European aesthetics. Looking backwards to go forwards, Uklanski's "Brut" posits this neglected chapter of art history as a contemporary form of outsider art. "Brut" represents a new focal point within Uklanski's radically heterogeneous oeuvre and marks a return to a traditional studio practice that engages materiality, alchemical processes and the human body.

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Piotr Ukiński was born in 1968 in Warsaw, Poland. Recent solo exhibitions include "Biało-Czerwona", Gagosian Gallery, New York (2008); "Summer Love: The First Polish Western", Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2007); "Piotr Ukiński: A Retrospective", Wiener Secession, Vienna (2007); and "The Joy of Photography", Musée d'art moderne et contemporain, Strasbourg (2007). His work is currently on view in the exhibition "Mapping the Studio: Artists from the François Pinault Collection" at the Punta della Dogana and the Palazzo Grassi in Venice.
He lives and works in New York and Warsaw.

For further information please contact the gallery at +44.207.493.3020 or london@gagosian.com.