

# GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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## PRESS RELEASE

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## **DAN COLEN: *Trash***

Monday, 19 September – Saturday, 29 October 2011

Opening reception for the artist: Monday, September 19th, from 6:00 to 8:00 pm

*I'm interested in using the "real world" as a material and a force within my process. I like how these materials take some control away from me, allowing for a more uncertain future and yet a more finished piece. These materials come with a history, not one I necessarily know, but a history for sure. There is an infinity in "real world objects" that, no matter how much I try, I couldn't paint or sculpt into being.*

--Dan Colen

Gagosian Gallery Rome is pleased to announce Dan Colen's first major exhibition in Rome.

In "Poetry," a large-scale exhibition at Gagosian New York last year, Colen moved closer to reality while plumbing its metaphysical potential. Rather than "deceiving the eye" with techniques that mimic real materials, he used the real materials themselves – a brick wall, a halfpipe, and a row of customized motorcycles -- transforming them in bold and singular acts, and on a scale befitting his romance with environment. Since this time, Colen has been pushing his studio practice, defined with a band of constant collaborators, into a knowingly "informal" realm where the mark (or trace of action) remains live and visible, rather than sublimated or concealed. Trying to control what transpires while making sure that all gestures are sincere is an internal and external struggle that has been instrumental in forming Colen's relationship to his own work.

Colen's current phase of artistic development brings to mind Charles Baudelaire's *flâneur* "who walks the city in order to experience it". While on one hand Baudelaire characterized the *flâneur* as a disinterested dandy possessed of detached but aesthetically attuned observation, he also attributed to this character a key role in understanding, participating in, and portraying the city. Over time, the *flâneur* has accumulated significant historical and sociological meaning as a referent for understanding urban phenomena and modernity, to the point of embodying a complete philosophical way of living and thinking. Spinning through the aesthetic grist of streetwalking artists – from Robert Rauschenberg to David Hammons and Gabriel Orozco – in order to revitalize the very stuff and syntax of painting, Colen combines the intensity of real life with reflection on the subjects of immanence and belief.

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The exhibition "Trash" makes visible and palpable how Colen's studio has learned to work with abject things and materials by tapping into their individual histories and exposing their latent energies -- as painting tools, vestigial imprints, and physical elements that sometimes remain attached to the canvas at the spot where they cease moving. The fervid paintings readdress mid-century painterly investigations of gravity and the flatbed picture plane, but unlike his predecessors' radical experiments where the composition of elements -- whether pure paint or repurposed objects -- equal the sum total of the work, here the spirited debris of the street -- a flipflop, a paint can, rags, string, bottles, a tire, and so on -- becomes the means by which paint is moved around on the canvas until they both (the tool *and* the medium) come to rest. Thus each painting is an actual and still-potent record of real time and visceral experience, offering unexpected moments of transcendence.

**Dan Colen** was born in New Jersey in 1979. He graduated with a BFA in Painting from the Rhode Island School of Art and Design in 2001. Exhibitions include the 2006 Whitney Biennial, New York; "USA Today," The Royal Academy, London (2006); "Defamation of Character," PS1 Contemporary Art Center, Long Island, New York (2006); "Fantastic Politics," The National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo (2006); "Skin Fruit: Selections from the Dakis Joannou Collection," The New Museum, New York (2010); and "Peanuts," Astrup Fearnley (2011).

Press Enquiries

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