

GAGOSIAN

Gagosian to Present an Exhibition of Recent Paintings and Graphite Drawings
by Mark Tansey in New York



Mark Tansey, *Xing*, 2021, oil on canvas, 88 × 60 inches (223.5 × 152.4 cm) © Mark Tansey. Photo: Rob McKeever

*I think of the painted picture as an embodiment of the very problem we face with the notion of “reality.”
The problem or question is, which reality?*
—Mark Tansey

NEW YORK, November 9, 2021—Gagosian is pleased to present an exhibition of paintings and drawings by Mark Tansey, representing more than six years of work. The exhibition at 980 Madison Avenue in New York will feature one new painting—*Xing* (2021)—three other recent paintings, and a selection of new drawings made in graphite mixed with oil or water.

Working within the stylistic conventions of figurative painting, Tansey pursues a fascination with history by layering imagery derived from an extensive archive of printed ephemera, collages, and sketches, often depicting sublime landscapes punctuated by figures or vessels. In detailed monochromatic scenes—since 2004 he has made particular use of blue—he distorts perspective and scale, emphasizing their sensate presence while restructuring our readings of historical period and

spatial orientation. Tansey paints using a subtractive process, first priming the canvas with gesso, then painting one section at a time and removing the light passages while the paint is still fluid.

In the works on view, Tansey makes use of complex mirroring and reflection to explore the idea and painterly tradition of the “picture-within-a-picture” and its concomitant splitting and doubling of meaning and association. In *Spinner* (2015), a lush vase of flowers sits on a table in front of a restaurant wall that reflects a room filled with diners, while in *Reverb* (2017), a formally dressed man and woman converse in front of an array of portraits of other couples, their own images framed by a mirror in a haunting visual echo that alludes to the title’s aural equivalent. Russian artist and designer Alexander Rodchenko, the individual subject of *Resight* (2019), lies on a rocky outcrop, training his camera on the morphing waves and eddies that swirl around him, and *Xing* shows two figures walking together on wet sand, their reflected and inverted images distorted by light and water.

Tansey characterizes the inverted composition of *Xing* (pronounced “crossing”) as further emphasizing the expressive potential of reflection and shadow. He notes that the mirroring it depicts—through which the work’s physical subjects (as opposed to their reflections) are absented—has parallels in Jacques Lacan’s concept of the “mirror stage,” and in the provocative notion of what Tansey calls “a reductively purified art.” *Xing* incorporates multiple visual modes and methods, and features an isometric perspective, making for “a two-way picture (up or down—right or left) depending on your spatial or political orientation.”

The exhibition also includes new drawings derived from imprints made with crumpled newspaper in liquid graphite, which suggest illusionistic representations of sand, snow, clouds, waves, and rocks. The unique molecular behavior of the graphite combined with the spontaneity of the technique generates base images comparable to Rorschach inkblots, from which multiple possible interpretations may emerge. Introducing deliberately drawn dry graphite figures and other variables such as shadows and reflections, Tansey then reframes and transfigures the works’ grounds to become what he refers to as “sites or situations.”

Mark Tansey was born in San Jose, California, in 1949 and lives and works in Portsmouth, Rhode Island, and New York City. Collections include the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, TX; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Broad Art Foundation, Los Angeles; and Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC. Solo exhibitions include Kunsthalle Basel (1990); *Art and Source*, Seattle Art Museum (1990, traveled to Musée des Beaux-Arts Montréal; St. Louis Art Museum; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; List Visual Arts Center, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge; and Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, TX, through 1991); Fisher Landau Center for Art, New York (2005); and Museum Kurhaus Kleve, Germany (2005, traveled to Württembergischer Kunstverein, Stuttgart, Germany).

#MarkTansey

MARK TANSEY

Recent Paintings and Graphite Drawings

Opening reception: Friday, November 12, 4–7pm

November 12–December 17, 2021

980 Madison Avenue, New York

Press

Gagosian

Hallie Freer | hfreer@gagosian.com | +1 212 744 2313

Polskin Arts

Meagan Jones | meagan.jones@finnpartners.com | +1 212 593 6485

Julia Esposito | julia.esposito@finnpartners.com | +1 212 715 1643