



CONCEPTUAL FIGURES

**COLLEEN ASPER
ALISON BLICKLE
AIN COCKE
CALEB CONSIDINE
SOPHIA DIXON
MICAH GANSKE**

**AARON GILBERT
EVAN GRUZIS
RIDLEY HOWARD
KURT KAUPER
ANDERS OINONEN
COLETTE ROBBINS**

**SEPTEMBER 4 –27, 2008
76 GRAND STREET**

Conceptual Figures, an exhibition of new conceptually based figurative painting, opens on September 4th at Deitch Projects. The twelve artists in the exhibition are fusing two seemingly contradictory approaches to art, Conceptualism and Illusionism. Painting is approached as an intellectual construct rather than as a visual impression of a live model. This does not mean that the resulting images are the product of rational thought. The current strand of Conceptualism reaches back through the pre-rational mind, becoming almost metaphysical.

Conceptual figuration builds on the innovations of Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray. It represents a break with the impressionistic and expressionist traditions of modern figuration. The emerging generation of painters featured in this exhibition embraces the innovations of Karen Kilimnik, John Currin, and Glenn Brown pushing figuration

further toward the uncanny. Their realism extends their vision into the unreal. Previous generations of figurative painters explored the position of painting after photography. This generation is refining the position of painting after Photoshop.

All of the artists in the exhibition, with the exception of Anders Oinonen, who lives in Canada, are working in New York. Most of them are recent graduates of New York area art schools. Several of the artists participated in the Conceptual Figuration seminar taught by Kurt Kauper at Yale. Kauper, whose work is also included in this exhibition, has been a leader in articulating a new conceptual approach to figurative painting.

Colleen Asper sees painting as a history of suggestions for how presentation and meaning, form and content should intersect, using

representation to point always to its status as a construct. Alison Blickle paints her own doppelganger protagonist, stretched out and bulging, to explore imaginary worlds of post-hippie spirituality. Ain Cocke's precise and adoring graphite lines evoke a conceptual homoeroticism.

For Caleb Considine the human figure in artistic representation, as in physical reality, is problematic and requires special care and maintenance. Play, affection, and abuse get mixed up in the effort to fit the body into the confines of a rectangular picture plane.

Sophia Dixon's conceptual figures inhabit a liminal world that includes elements of the supernatural. Her figures seem to be taking part in an erotic game. Micah Ganske's sun bleached, luminous figures invite narrational speculation, catching the viewer off-guard in order to cast them as the final character in the plot.

Aaron Gilbert's portraits of himself and his family create a gutted world through hyperrealization, where simplified bodies carry complex emotional gravity. Evan Gruzis' deceptively photographic ink paintings demonstrate that absurdity and spirituality are not mutually exclusive. Ridley Howard focuses on the way a painting's construction intersects with the expression of

thought. Kurt Kauper's uncanny old master-like renderings of contemporary subjects serve to heighten one's perception of the world we live in.

Anders Oinonen sees the face as an arrangement of just so many slabs of color, and uses illusionistic shadow effects and visual puns to play with the face as fantasy landscape. Colette Robbins deals with the remnants of the figure grouped in absurd ways; in this exhibition, she depicts severed legs rolled in a carpet.

Conceptual Figures is Jeffrey Deitch's fourth thematic exhibition to try to articulate approaches to conceptual figuration. The first project, *Lives*, presented in 1975, featured artists like Vito Acconci and Hannah Wilke who used elements of their own life as an art medium. *Post Human*, in 1982, focused on a generation of artists including Jeff Koons, Charles Ray, and Paul McCarthy whose conceptual approach to figuration manifested itself primarily in sculpture. *Form Follows Fiction* in 2001 articulated the deliberate confusion between reality and fantasy in the work of artists like John Currin, Chris Ofili and Takashi Murakami.

A panel discussion on *Conceptual Figuration*, organized by Ad Hoc Vox and moderated by Colleen Asper will take place in the gallery on Tuesday, September 9 at 7:00 PM.

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