

Murray Guy

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LEIDY CHURCHMAN

*The Meal of the Lion*

25 April – 6 June 2015

Opening Saturday 25 April, 6–8pm

Violence and struggle are at the heart of Henri Rousseau's *The Meal of the Lion*, a painting central to a new body of work by Leidy Churchman. Rousseau's imagined landscape, lush with gargantuan flowers and foliage, here carefully re-painted by Churchman, is a stage for a gruesome and distorted act. The arousing confrontation is initiated by Rousseau, devoured by Churchman, and reconsidered by the viewer.

Churchman's *The Meal of the Lion* is the starting point to what the artist calls an "extraordinary junkyard" of symbols, representations and alliances featuring: a hyper sunset viewed through the bathroom window of a penthouse in the tallest residential tower in the Western Hemisphere; the last known passenger pigeon waiting at the top of the list for "de-extinction"; the flayed skin of an elephant as it is rendered on a Tibetan tantric rug; the constantly circulating system of deep-ocean currents; an insecure rat; a man-made island airport in Japan; and a small crab floating in a universe of plankton. Vital to the group is a large cross, painted in a brilliant red and leaning against a flat white background. Have we ever seen these images? How do we engage with the reappearance and self-reflection that occurs in the paintings? Conflating a series of seemingly incongruous issues, the artist disturbs the current social and economic order in and around the jungle. By claiming Rousseau's provocative title, the artist asks: What does it mean to paint the jungle – or anything – that one has never seen?

*The Meal of the Lion* is a tryst of the real and the imagined. Employing a series of modernist styles, the artist presents an environment in which we recognize aspects of a transmogrified reality. The works are powerful and complicated – an unlikely combination of images and semi-authentic representations that give us pause, and anticipate our own anxious questions about the organization of the world.

Leidy Churchman (b. 1979) lives and works in New York. His work will be in upcoming group exhibitions at Kunsthalle, Bern; Museum Brandhorst, Munich; and MUMOK, Vienna. He has recently been shown at The National Gallery of Denmark; ICA, Philadelphia; Contemporary Arts Museum Houston; Silberkuppe, Berlin; Human Resources, Los Angeles; Stroom Den Haag, The Hague; the Museum of Art at Rhode Island School of Design; and MoMA PS1, Long Island City, NY. In 2013, Boston University Gallery staged his first solo museum exhibition and Dancing Foxes Press, published the book *Emergency* for the occasion. Churchman received his MFA from Columbia University in 2010, and his BA from Hampshire College in 2002. From 2011-12, he was a resident artist at Rijksakademie in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. His work has been reviewed in the *New York Times*, *Artforum*, *Art Agenda*, and *Frieze d/e*.

For more information or images, please contact the gallery at +1-212-463-7372 or info@murrayguy.com.