

For Immediate Release:

Michael St. John

*Now I See it Clearly, My Whole Life is Pointed in One Direction,
There Has Never Been any Choice for Me*

09 October through 06 November 1999

Team Gallery will present a solo exhibition of new work by Michael St. John from 09 October through 06 November 1999. The gallery is located at 527 West 26th Street, between Tenth and Eleventh Avenues, on the ground floor.

Michael St. John's exhibition of new paintings and sculptures takes as its title a menacing line, spoken by the character of Travis Bickle in the film *Taxi Driver*. Although Bickle speaks specifically in the voice of the post-Vietnam era, disenfranchised American male, his words transcend the political specifics of that time, and St. John's appropriation makes them speak of the call to creation that leads many an artist to ruin and perdition.

The large-scale paintings here are executed primarily on gritty, seemingly scuffed, beige grounds, their images arranged in piles like foodstuffs in *natures mortes*. Piled, stacked and strewn, St. John's renderings push and pull against each other, both resting and engaging. They are privy to the rules of gravity, and one senses their weight as they are supported by some invisible horizontal surface. The images selected by the artist often speak of violence, either singly or in the manner of their juxtaposition. A tire is a neutral object, but when placed near the face of a battered housewife it becomes a menacing abstract for toxic masculinity.

One of the paintings on view depicts a sea of yellow smiley faces, swimming on an orange field. To their right is the realistically rendered head of a black man. Its eyes are closed and the head depicted is detached from its body, lending the image an extremely brutal valence. Contextually, the smileys take on a sinister quality. The edginess of St. John's imagery and the bluntness of his message are always honeyed by his soft handling of paint, by the manner in which his works are so exquisitely rendered.

The show's two sculptures — busts displayed in the classical manner, sat on white pedestals — are of Michael Myers, the serial killer from the *Halloween* films, and the KKKlansmen who people many of Philip Guston's paintings. Within this exhibition, they serve as both witnesses and as reminders of the violence of American life, the central theme that echoes throughout St. John's work.

This is St. John's second solo exhibition at Team.

Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 11am to 6pm. For further information and/or photographs please call 212 279 9219.