

Petzel

TROY BRAUNTUCH

November 3, 2016 – December 23, 2016

Opening Reception: Thursday, November 3rd, 6–8pm

456 West 18th Street

An enormous painting of a nude welcomes the viewer: her arms are outstretched, her hands cropped, her torso slightly abstracted, her head tilts backward to the left into the dark blue background. Supposedly, she represents eternal beauty and perfection; however, the work is derived from a Heinrich Hoffmann photograph—a German propaganda image of a marble sculpture from the 1930s. A second picture in this gallery space closes in on an artist standing high atop a ladder, chiseling the head of a giant sculpture. Josef Thorak, Hitler’s most admired sculptor has been a source for various works by Brauntuch, who appropriated images of disinformation back in the 1970s when he was a member of the Pictures Generation, and sets the stage for this, Brauntuch’s sixth solo exhibition at Petzel.

Also in the 1930s, but working in the States, the British-born fashion designer, Charles James, known as “America’s First Couturier” viewed his sculptured ball gowns and evening dresses as works of art. James’ precisely constructed designs were the subject of a 2014 exhibition at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. After photographing the displays at night, Brauntuch selected five dresses—Swan, Butterfly, Tree, Clover Leaf, Wedding gown—and used these sources to create paintings that are slightly oversized relative to the original luxury items. If these renderings evoke a bygone era of elegance and style, they are now frozen as exquisite objects, absent a human body, phantoms of opulence.

June 15, 1995, O.J. Simpson attempts to slip on the bloodied gloves found behind his Rockingham Drive Estate. The courtroom explodes, the media erupt, and images of the gloves circulate endlessly throughout Simpson’s trial and for years to come, forever cemented into the American consciousness. Six double panels focus on this pair of gloves in extreme close-up as amplified signifiers of guilt or innocence, formatting an almost ghost-like dance and accordingly arranged on the gallery walls in a cinematic succession.

Brauntuch’s pictures revisit this dramatic public event but his signature applications in chalk on black cloth force an almost intimate and microscopic perception. The delicate hues and shades evoke an inner reflection, more the memory of an image than the presentation of such. A chilling atmosphere of crime, decadence and slaughter have haunted Brauntuch’s oeuvre for four decades, betrayed by his extraordinary touch and skill for rendering pictures of violence and decay in the most beautiful, elegiac manner.

Petzel Gallery is located at 456 West 18th Street New York, NY 10011 and 35 East 67th Street New York, NY 10065. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 10:00 AM–6:00 PM. For press inquiries, please contact Janine Latham at janine@petzel.com, or call (212) 680-9467.