

Vilma Gold is pleased to present an exhibition that will bring together for the first time the work of R.H. Quaytman and Josef Strau.

Though working in differing mediums, Quaytman and Strau's work can be seen to meet at the mutually generative intersection of biography and temperament. Biographically both artists developed their work and careers through close collaboration with other artists and both have run non-traditional art spaces. Perhaps through these biographical crossovers, similar concerns with textual qualities, exhibition design and the art-objects permeability seems in evidence. In "Iamb, the limbo of vanity" Strau and Quaytman pursue their shared interest in the historic practice of illustration and how the status and function of illustration influences and informs each of their quite diverse working methodologies. Illustration can be understood as a second order art activity of the 19th century as can the more contemporaneous practice of organizing art spaces and working with other artists as both Quaytman and Strau have repeatedly done throughout their careers. For this exhibition illustration is the limbo in which both artists would comfortably place the vanity of their work.

As the title of the exhibition 'iamb' suggests, there is evidence of an interest in how text can become objectified, broken down and reconstructed to emphasize new meanings and confirm points of potency and stress. It was through a discussion about these subjects that they arrived at a very particular exhibition path/architecture which invites the viewer through a hybrid letter form based on their initials RQ/JS. The walls of the freestanding structure 'letter form' have been used to incorporate Strau's altered lamps or copies from original paintings. In his work, Strau often emphasized the primacy of his texts to his overall sculptural practice, using the exhibition as a prelude to a later period of engagement, through piles of texts presented alongside his lamp sculptures that can be taken away so that perception is both delayed and extended in time, or through ways of incorporating text in spatial situations, creating spaces that allow the viewer to experience the physicality of letters or words. In this exhibition, however, Strau takes a slightly different path in that the viewer is invited to take home Xeroxes of his works on canvas rather than text.

Along side this letter form structure the artists chose one work of Quaytman's silkscreened painting of a mezzotint by the visionary 19th Century illustrator John Martin of John Milton's "Paradise Lost." The overall structure of Quaytman's painting practice is modeled on the idea of books, their chapters and the way they are placed on shelves. On one level, the paintings can be seen to function as illustrations, whether to reflect a particular exhibition site's history, to illustrate what paintings

do, illustrate what eyes do, or to illustrate the picture itself. She consciously plays with the injunction against a painting becoming illustration. The second gallery space houses a collection of new paintings displayed within a shelving structure. Here visitors can pull paintings from the shelves and hang or prop them on the wall. Some of paintings included here are directly inspired by the formal qualities of Strau's work, using the imagery of a lamp as if to light the paintings from within.

R.H. Quaytman lives and works in New York. Quaytman has participated in group shows including Gallery of Contemporary Art in Sculpture Center, New York (2006), Lodz Biennial, Lodz, (2004) and P.S.1 Museum, New York (1997). She currently has a solo exhibition at Miguel Abreu, New York and up until earlier this year also was the Director of Orchard, a cooperatively organized exhibition and event space in New York's Lower East Side.

Josef Strau lives and works in Berlin. In 2007 he had a solo show at Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam and has also participated in group shows at Maison populaire, Montreuil, (2008) Portikus, Frankfurt, (2006) White Columns, New York (2006) and Museum Ludwig, Cologne (2002). Strau initiated and ran the non-profit space Galerie Meerrettich in Berlin for many years and currently has a solo show at Greene Naftali, New York.

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