

MERLIN CARPENTER

INTRINSIC VALUE

1 – 25 April 2009

The Opening: Tuesday, 31 March, 6 - 8pm

Simon Lee Gallery is proud to announce Merlin Carpenter's Intrinsic Value as its forthcoming exhibition. This marks the fifth show in a series where the artist only produces the paintings in the midst of the show's preview. The Opening first took place in 2007 at Reena Spaulings Fine Art in New York and was followed by a show at Overduin & Kite in Los Angeles. The third The Opening, organised by Galerie Christian Nagel took place in a fashion store and a Mercedes Benz showroom in Berlin. In the latter show the artist painted the bare canvases whilst reaching out of a moving car. Last year Carpenter also staged The Opening at Mitterrand+Sanz in Zurich.

Merlin Carpenter writes: "In the fifth of a series of shows called The Opening Merlin Carpenter will sign eleven blank canvases shortly before the opening. If the works are painted this will happen during the posh private view. Like Dalí signing hundreds of blank pieces of paper, or La Monte Young performing pieces before they were composed, the empty canvases beg the question of what possible value these works have. The guarantee of the biography of the artist? The power of the gallery? Price-fixing or oligarchy? Energy stolen from the bohemians who decorate the room? Or something intrinsic to a work which evidently could be anything? A Matisse is still heralded by the auction houses as being of 'intrinsic value'. For the contemporary art scene this implies finding a source of value untouched by the recent speculative madness, whether it's painting or critical authenticity. Meanwhile, with a gnawing sense of dread, capitalists are looking for a way to rebuild profits in the depression. Pay will have to go down and work hours increase for most people under the threat of starvation and Mad Max. Only Marx shows where value comes from (labour, surplus-value) and offers the explanation for credit crises. Because of this, I wonder whether this time Marxism itself will be used to locate real value. Those cultural producers studying Marx, like Carpenter (me), could unwittingly provide fuel for further exploitation by explaining to government elites just how to reassert profitable conditions. Better to go on art strike, wander into your own show, outraged... ready to vandalise and destroy".

Merlin Carpenter was born in the UK in 1967. He lives and works in London. He has had solo exhibitions in major institutions in the United States and in Europe, these include the Bergen

Kunsthall in Norway and the Vienna Secession. Carpenter has also participated in numerous international group shows, such as at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia, the Whitechapel Gallery in London and the current exhibition at Kunsthalle Düsseldorf (SONIC YOUTH etc.: SENSATIONAL FIX), which will run until 10 May 2009. Published monographs on the artist include Nueva Generación, (Distrito 4, Madrid, 2004) with an essay by Melanie Gilligan and As a Painter I Call Myself the Estate of (Secession, Vienna, 2000).

Merlin Carpenter is represented by Nang Gallery. With thanks to Reena Spaulings Fine Art, New York.

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