Ashley Bickerton
Susie

April 3rd – May 12th 2013
Opening: April 3rd, 6pm

"Susie was the very first painting I did upon arriving in New York in 1982, and it was for this reason that I used Susie as a brand name. There was never an actual person named Susie. I'd vacillated between emotionally hot and cerebrally cool work while a student at CalArts, and when I arrived in New York Neo-Expressionism was at the raging height of its power and influence. While work this austere is not my natural comfort zone, I felt happily pushed in this direction as a reaction to what I felt was the intellectual slovenliness and overall gluttony of Neo-Espressionist practice.

Working as an illustrator for Jack Goldstein, I soon found encouragement for this direction amongst his peers, who considered themselves the adversaries of the Neo-Exers. These earliest works are probably most influenced by Sherrie Levine's early advertisements cut out in the shape of a male head in profile. I decided to work on four-by-eight-foot sheets of Masonite. This was the size they came in, so there was no decision making involved. They were thin, and I painted them white because walls are white. I chose the word Susie because it is the casual form of a female first name, thus the exact opposite of Picasso. I thought of the painting as a portrait, but Susie was now also a brand, a logo, a signal, and an icon. Once these parameters had been established, my inclination was to mess with them.

I was drifting towards monosyllabic words, as they represented essentially just a grunt of very basic utterance. I chose the palindrome Bob because it is both a sound and a name, but I purposefully invented a ridiculous and overly elaborate typeface that would itself carry far more referential information than the

word that was being conveyed. This led directly to the next series, the Non-Word Word paintings. It was irresistible to see if I could use this monosyllabic language to tackle the biggest abstraction of them all, the one that has eluded representation: God."

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