

Simon Lee Gallery is proud to present TATE CAFÉ, an exhibition of new works by Merlin Carpenter.

TATE CAFÉ follows *Intrinsic Value* (2009), the artist's first exhibition with the Gallery and the fifth iteration of the series *The Opening*. Occurring in a diversity of venues, from galleries in New York, Zurich, London and Brussels to a Mercedes-Benz showroom and a fashion boutique in Berlin, *The Opening* demonstrated Carpenter's interest in undercutting both the fetishisation and valuation of art objects. All of the paintings included under the collective title *The Opening* were produced in the midst of each exhibition's preview; and, in line with the artist's attitude toward institutions, bore slogans such as "BANKS ARE BAD", "Kunst = Kapital", and "DIE COLLECTOR SCUM".

In his most recent exhibition, "Heroes" (MD72, 2011), Carpenter continued to satirise the art economy. "Heroes" included a series of figurative paintings, which were locked behind closed doors, and open to those willing to pay a €5,000 entrance fee. For the general public, however, the paintings could be viewed by means of reproductions printed on a deck of playing cards.

While Carpenter's manner of working is sardonic and polemic, to leave it at this would be to oversimplify. What becomes clear from the artist's oeuvre is that his enquiries and critiques are circular: they implicate all of the players in the art world - and this includes Carpenter himself. As the artist has written, 'All cultural producers are critics, all are involved with marketing information and are thereby involved with the politics of knowledge. Information is the institution. If we - we are all critics - are the institution, then institutional critique is of ourselves and our role as value suppliers at the margin of a huge cultural industry'.\*

Merlin Carpenter was born in the UK in 1967, and lives and works in London. He has had solo exhibitions in major institutions in the United States and Europe, including the Bergen Kunsthall in Norway and Secession in Vienna. Carpenter has also participated in numerous international group exhibitions, such as at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia, the Whitechapel Gallery in London and the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf. Published monographs on the artist include *Nueva Generación* (2004), *Merlin Carpenter - Social Aesthetics* (2010); and *The Opening* (2011), which is published by Sternberg Press and available for purchase at Simon Lee Gallery.

\*Merlin Carpenter, 'The Tail that Wags the Dog', a lecture for Art Center in Pasadena, not delivered (2008). Available on the artist's website: [www.merlincarpenter.com/tail.htm](http://www.merlincarpenter.com/tail.htm)

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