



101 / EXHIBIT

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ALFRED STEINER

CONTRARIWISE
SEP 21 - NOV 16, 2013

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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OPENING SEP 21
FROM 7 TO 10 PM

LOS ANGELES, CA- 101/exhibit proudly presents **Contrariwise**, a solo exhibition from American artist **Alfred Steiner**. This is the artist's first solo showing with the gallery and will include paintings, sculptures, and installation-based works. The opening reception with the artist will be held on Saturday, September 21, from 7:00 to 10:00 pm. The exhibition will conclude on November 16th. 101/exhibit is located in West Hollywood at 8920 Melrose Avenue on the corner of North Almont Drive, one block east of Santa Monica Boulevard.

[TO ALICE] "I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING ABOUT," SAID TWEEDLEDUM; "BUT IT ISN'T SO, NO HOW."
"CONTRARIWISE," CONTINUED TWEEDLEDEE, "IF IT WAS SO, IT MIGHT BE; AND IF IT WERE SO, IT WOULD
BE; BUT AS IT ISN'T, IT AIN'T. THAT'S LOGIC."

- LEWIS CARROLL, *THROUGH THE LOOKING-GLASS, AND WHAT ALICE FOUND THERE (1871)*.

A sequence of events typically unfolds when considering the works of Alfred Steiner for the first time. One is immediately confronted with the overall visual impact – the precision of his impeccable drafting, the diverse palette, the delicate control. But in the next instant, one senses that there is something more interesting lurking just beyond the edge of perception. At first glance, the works may conjure the absurd, grotesque and bizarre, perhaps even provoking a reflex to simply shy away. But such a dismissal would indeed be cutting the viewer's experience prematurely short.

In a sense, Steiner is a contradiction himself. The artist first forged a successful career as a lawyer in New York City (where he currently resides), practicing copyright and trademark law for 15 years before shifting to his studio full-time. Drawing upon his extensive knowledge of intellectual property for fodder, the artist strikes a balance between two ways of thinking that many would consider incommensurable, using appropriation as a tool to challenge the validity of appropriation itself as a critical mode. In a very direct sense, Steiner's work is an inevitable result of the desire to retain the concept of intangible property in the age of mechanical reproduction. But it is also a challenge to conventional notions of authenticity.

Today, our concept of "real" rarely involves any serious questioning of authorship, originality or uniqueness, the foundational stones of institutionalized aesthetic culture – even in the art world. Our "real" beliefs and attitudes imitate the links we quickly exchange on social media platforms. Our "real" ideas of necessity come from advertisements. Our "real" perspective of politics is shaped by whatever news media source we find to be most digestible. By creating startlingly original works using found compositions and imagery, Steiner challenges the viewer to rethink the much-heralded end of originality, and with it, the critical power of mere appropriation.

For instance, consider *Five Grotesque Heads*, a watercolor on paper. Immediately, we begin to recognize something familiar: it's genitalia, and a lot of it. This mass of sexual organs, culled mostly from adult websites, is strategically arranged to recall the highly recognizable aesthetic of *The Simpsons*. So out of this prurient tangle emerge the familiar faces of Montgomery Burns, Edna Krabappel and Barney Gumble, along with the lesser-known Michael Jackson and Shauna Tifton. Says Steiner, "I chose these characters, all of whom hail from *The Simpsons*, based on their similarity to the busts depicted in da Vinci's drawing, *Cinque Teste Grottesche*. Virtually all of the imagery is pornographic, with the exception of one image adapted from Courbet's *L'Origine du Monde*."

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The beauty, then, stems from the fact that copyrighted characters from a popular television program are cleverly reconstituted from other copyrighted imagery, which is then reinterpreted by the hand (as these works are not collages, they are watercolors), all while referencing a master work of the Renaissance. But the question remains: at what point in the process did the work become Steiner's own? Numerous examples of this approach involving imagery from popular culture and art history will be on display.

The artist will also be featuring works that challenge the creative property of Los Angeles's finest, from Mike Kelley and Ed Ruscha to relative newcomers such as Allison Schulnik. For example, Steiner provides a quintessentially New York spin on Ruscha's iconic painting OOF (1962, reworked 1963), changing the text to "OFF" and the colors to black-on-black. But, as with much of Steiner's work, first appearances do not necessarily reveal the whole story. When photographed with a flash, the letters in OFF reveal themselves in glowing white, a reference to Steiner's anti-paparazzi works and L.A.'s celebrity culture. In another work, Steiner uses 3D printing in a tech-forward re-visitation of Rauschenberg's famous Erased De Kooning to recreate a heavily impastoed painting in monochrome white. While some works in the show will reveal themselves more quickly than others, Steiner has crafted a body of work that clearly prompts the viewer once again to invest actual time in viewing art. To go one local nod further, it would be useful to remember the mantra from L.A. author Bret Easton Ellis' 1998 novel, Glamorama: "The better you look, the more you see."

Steiner was born in 1973 in Cincinnati, Ohio. He graduated from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio in 1995 and Harvard Law School in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1998. He has exhibited internationally in nearly 20 group exhibitions since 2006, in New York, San Francisco, Miami, Denmark, Germany, and Switzerland. His work is included in the West Collection, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and he is included in the White Columns and Drawing Center curated registries.

101/exhibit is a contemporary art program dedicated to presenting international emerging and established talent. Spanning multiple mediums, with a particular focus on figurative painting and drawing, the gallery engages its audience with a finely tuned roster of artists in consistent and flourishing states of production in practice. 101/exhibit is unique in its twofold mission to promote the artist and to inspire the collector. Founded by Sloan Schaffer in 2008, the gallery is situated within the heart of West Hollywood, California with ancillary spaces in New York and Miami.

IMAGE CREDIT: *Crab*, 2013, Watercolor on Arches Paper, 30 x 22 in.

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