

For immediate release

## RAOUL DE KEYSER FREEDOM

September 20 – October 29, 2011

Opening reception: Tuesday, September 20, 6 – 8 PM



*No Title (8 Verticals/6)*, 2010. Oil on canvas mounted on wooden panel. 11 x 8 1/8 inches (28 x 20.5 cm).

David Zwirner is pleased to present an exhibition of new paintings by Raoul De Keyser, on view at the gallery's 525 West 19<sup>th</sup> Street space.

For nearly fifty years, De Keyser has created subtly evocative paintings and works on paper which appear at once straightforward and cryptic, abstract and figurative. Composed of basic but indefinable shapes and marks, his works often invoke spatial and figural illusions, though they remain elusive of any descriptive narrative.

In this exhibition, De Keyser presents small-scale compositions that appear to be variations of an abstract idea. Certain forms reoccur across a number of works, such as a thick elongated line with a round head at its end, the porous outline of a circle, or a sketchy grid. Yet a serial logic remains difficult to pinpoint and the constancy of his works derives rather from the physical characteristics of the medium of painting itself, with the relationships between figure and ground, plane and depth, and form and gesture constituting the main components of the canvases.

The paintings' vivid titles offer an uncertain relationship to the compositions they denote. *The Failed Juggle* depicts six solid red circles against an empty white background, thus suggesting an explicit narrative component; in *A Road*, a thick white curve might be just that. The black eye-glass shape in *Double Eye*, which appears partly covered by a semi-transparent layer and has a hint of a shadow attached to it, may belong to a fantastical faceless creature represented by the yellow oblong. Yet it seems wholly unclear what constitutes the "hooks and eyes" in a painting by that title, where two adjacent, incompletely outlined triangles make up a monochromatic square. And a series of paintings counting "verticals" and numbers in their titles have little in common visually. Curiously, as abstract works do not rely on perspective or realistic likeness, there is a pervasive feeling of spatial dislocation in the paintings, whereby forms and shapes appear in unanticipated positions. As the art historian Robert Storr has pointed out, the artist's modest pictorial framework offers "quiet dislocations of consciousness."<sup>1</sup>

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Despite—or precisely because of—their sparse gesturing, De Keyser's works convey a grandeur that inspires prolonged contemplation. Individually as well as collectively, his works revolve around the activity of painting, but also move beyond its physical means to become more than the sum of their parts. Their apparent simplicity belies a lengthy gestation period, which is guided largely by intuition, rather than by following a pre-existing plan. The paintings comprising the present exhibition seem more impulsive and express an urgency not apparent in previous work by the artist, yet their visual elegance make them integral parts of a practice that has remained unwavering in its dedication to mystery and ambiguity throughout the decades.

**Raoul De Keyser** was born in 1930 in Deinze, Belgium, where he still lives and works, and attended the Academy of Fine Arts from 1963 to 1964. Since 1999, his work has been represented by David Zwirner, and *Raoul De Keyser: FREEDOM* marks the artist's fifth solo show at the gallery.

De Keyser's work has been the subject of several solo exhibitions at prominent institutions, most recently in 2011 at the De Loketten, Flemish Parliament, Brussels. In 2009, his paintings were exhibited in a retrospective at the Kunstmuseum Bonn, Germany, and his watercolors were presented jointly at the Museu Serralves, Porto, Portugal, and the Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin. A major survey of the artist's paintings traveled extensively from 2004 to 2005 to the Whitechapel Art Gallery, London; Musée de Rochechouart, France; De Pont Museum for Contemporary Art, Tilburg, The Netherlands; Museu Serralves, Porto, Portugal; and the Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, Switzerland. Other venues that have hosted important solo exhibitions over the past decade include the Fonds Régional d'Art Contemporain Auvergne, Clermont-Ferrand, France (2008); Museum van Deinze en de Leiestreek, Deinze, Belgium (2007); Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, Deurle, Belgium (2002); Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (S.M.A.K.), Ghent; The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago (both 2001); and The Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin (2000).

Work by the artist is held in a number of permanent collections worldwide, including the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum Ludwig, Cologne; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst Antwerpen, Antwerp; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (S.M.A.K.), Ghent; among numerous others.

1 Robert Storr, "On Knowing One's Place," in *Terminus: Drawings (1979-1982) and Recent Paintings*. Exh. cat. (New York and Göttingen, Germany: David Zwirner/Steidl, 2010), n.p.

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