

## HAUSER & WIRTH

LIMMATSTRASSE 270 CH-8031 ZÜRICH  
TELEFON +41(0)44 446 8050 FACSIMILE +41(0)44 446 8055

Press Release

### Rodney Graham The Four Seasons

Hauser & Wirth Zürich  
2 November – 21 December 2013  
Opening: Friday 1 November, 6 – 8 pm

Nestled between snow-covered mountains and the edge of the Pacific Ocean, Vancouver is the most extraordinary city; it is at once remote and removed from the centre of the Western World, yet it sustains the vibrancy of a thriving modern metropolis. One of the most distinguished representatives of this city's vibrant art scene is Rodney Graham. He has created a practice which operates through systems of quotation, reference and adaptation, working with diverse media such as film, photography, installation, painting, music and text.

In his photographic work, each image is a fictional self-portrait, with the artist costumed but always recognisable, portraying a variety of characters. Graham has produced this new work both in his Vancouver studio and in public leisure facilities throughout the city.



Four lightboxes, created between 2011 and 2013, will be unveiled together for the first time and presented under the exhibition title, 'The Four Seasons'. Graham did not originally conceive these works as a series, but, he says, they evolved into a series 'organically'. Dedicated to the four seasons, these meticulously staged mis-en-scènes represent the artist's major late body of work. Over the past three years, the artist and his team worked tirelessly until they reached the point of perfection.

The first of these works to be photographed was 'Betula Pendula Fastigiata (Sous Chef on Smoke Break)'. The subject was inspired by a scene that the artist witnessed behind a restaurant on Vancouver's main street: a member of the kitchen staff taking a smoke break.

## HAUSER & WIRTH

LIMMATSTRASSE 270 CH-8031 ZÜRICH  
TELEFON +41(0)44 446 8050 FACSIMILE +41(0)44 446 8055

He resolved to make a work from the situation but decided to transfer the image to a park. Graham wanted to make a reference to his own position in the art world:

'In this work I wanted to make a kind of reference to my previous 'portraits' of trees. This tree is identified too with a tag (it is after all in an arboretum) as a member of the birch family. I was quite conscious of the fact that a sous-chef works under a chef as a subordinate, and in this case I am also subordinate to the tree, as the title (which identifies the tree first) indicates.'

Another smoke break that the artist witnessed in Vancouver inspired him to make the second work in the series: 'Smoke Break 2 (Drywaller)'. It was a dry-waller standing on stilts in front of a building under construction:

'I thought it was an interesting idea to make a kind of sequel to the first smoke break picture and re-enact this piece in my studio, which was also under construction at the time. In my picture I was curious to explore the painterly aspects of the plastering of drywall as I have always appreciated the quality of patterns of white plaster on the cool grey drywall panels. The heating unit in the right panel is of the kind used to speed up the drying process but here it suggests a kind of warming campfire as the white pattern on the grey wall behind me suggests snow in a wintry grey sky.'



With summer and winter completed, in the autumn of 2012 Graham started to work on the large three-panel work that was to represent autumn: 'Paddler, Mouth of the Seymour'. He says:

'I had long wanted to do a work based on Thomas Eakin's great 'Max Schmitt in a Single Scull', and here I transposed the scene into a contemporary setting with me playing a recreational kayaker pausing on a trip up the Seymour River in Vancouver. This is the only 'break' in the series in which I am not smoking. My assistant Josh Olson reminds me that it is rather an 'oxygen break'.'

In Graham's adaptation the environment is much less idyllic, with a rusty bridge and shabby industrial buildings in the background. While Schmitt and a companion seem to enjoy their activity in Eakin's painting, Graham's look towards the camera seems to be a rather bewildered and distressed one.

# HAUSER & WIRTH

LIMMATSTRASSE 270 CH-8031 ZÜRICH  
TELEFON +41(0)44 446 8050 FACSIMILE +41(0)44 446 8055

The 'Actor/Director, 1954', referring to spring and created this year, is the only work in an historical setting. It was directly inspired by an image, a publicity still of the actor/director Eric von Stroheim looking through a camera while wearing one of his Ruritanian military costumes.

'In my work I wanted to continue my tradition of self-portraiture and set it in a double past. Thus I appear in 18th century costume on a film set representing a park in Versailles in what the fake apple blossoms clearly indicate as Spring. I am pausing from my work as an actor to set up an insert shot of my own hat on a park bench. The camera is an old 3 reel Technicolor one, discontinued in 1954, the year in which the picture is set.'

The exhibition is accompanied by a publication with a text by the artist and an essay by Dorothea Zwirner.

Rodney Graham (born 1949) lives and works in Vancouver. Significant solo exhibitions include: Vancouver Art Gallery (2012); a retrospective at MACBA, Barcelona (2010), travelling to Hamburger Kunsthalle and the Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Basel; MoCA Los Angeles (2004); ICA Philadelphia (2005), Whitechapel Gallery, London (2002), and Hamburger Bahnhof Berlin (2001). The artist was included in Documenta IX (1992), the Venice Biennale in 1997, the Whitney Biennial in 2006, and is currently represented at the 2013 Carnegie International, Pittsburgh PA.

**Press Contact:**

Anna Helwing  
+41 44 446 6517  
anna@hauserwirth.com

Amelia Redgrift  
+44 207 255 8247  
amelia@hauserwirth.com

[www.hauserwirth.com](http://www.hauserwirth.com)



Full Copyright and Courtesy Credits:

Betula Pendula Fastigiata (Sous-Chef on Smoke Break)  
2011  
Painted aluminum lightbox with transmounted chromogenic transparency  
242.6 x 181.6 x 17.8 cm / 95 1/2 x 71 1/2 x 7 in  
© Rodney Graham. Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth

Paddler, Mouth of the Seymour  
2012 – 2013  
Painted aluminum lightboxes with transmounted chromogenic transparencies; triptych  
303.8 x 550.5 x 17.8 cm / 119 5/8 x 216 3/4 x 7 in  
© Rodney Graham. Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth