

**JEFFREY VALLANCE**

March 20 – April 19, 2014

Gallery 2

For immediate release

Tanya Bonakdar Gallery is pleased to present two separate bodies of work by Jeffrey Vallance, Enamel Paintings: Idols & Villains and Islomania: Key West.

Jeffrey Vallance's works turn a critical and humorous eye toward his own wide-ranging experiences, and in this newest exhibition the artist presents paintings, drawings, and performance-based works that employ a pseudo-anthropological approach to address themes of faith, myth, celebrity, ritual, and popular culture. Since childhood Vallance has collected objects of personal significance and fabricated displays for them. This lifelong penchant for collecting and exhibition however transcends mere presentation, as the artworks themselves provide both evidence of and a unique perspective on the vernacular that is intrinsic to our culture's broader social evolutions, tastes and patterns.

The first series on view, Enamel Paintings: Idols & Villains, began in the late 1970s and early 80s. Vallance produced a group of paintings featuring images of television personalities in Rust-oleum and Krylon brand enamel paint, as well as graffiti decals intended for use on professional model train dioramas or "Hot Rod" cars. Many of the decals were produced during the Iran Hostage Crisis of 1979-81, and included such slogans as "Nuke Iran" and "A Weenie for Kohmeini," examples of how knee-jerk populist jargon during crisis situations find their way into seemingly apolitical American culture - e.g. the model train hobbies of middle class Americans. The recent enamel paintings begin where this series left off in the early 1980s, now featuring such historical political figures as Ugandan dictator Idi Amin, Kim Jong-il, television personality Connie Chung, actor Leonard Nimoy, the King of Tonga, artist Mike Kelley, best-selling author Temple Grandin, and many other eminent personalities, pop-culture heroes, writers, dictators, despots and scoundrels.

Also included is a selection of painted preliminary drawings that show the development of the works. Playing with the meanings we impose upon public figures on both a personal and mass cultural level, Vallance explores in equal measure notions of the archetype, and more specifically who is labeled an idol or a villain. Carefully crafted, handmade artworks embellished with everyday items reveal hidden messages, as small overlooked objects are made special and important.

Islomania: Key West was created during Vallance's recent artist residency in Florida, and features documentation and imagery from the island. While in Key West, the artist took part in local traditions, including participation in the annual Ernest Hemingway "Papa Look-Alike Contest." Vallance found the legendary character of Hemingway even more interesting than the real person, as stories of Hemingway's adventures were essentially rewriting the biographical account of the author, merging fiction and reality. The gallery exhibition presents a performance relic from his participation in the Look-Alike contest, with anecdotal wall text and documentation much like the wall label a museum curator might use to contextualize a work of art.

The exhibition also presents a series of drawings of local fish, as well as enamel paintings inspired by Key West tourist maps. Masterful, humorous paintings illustrating regional highlights, symbols, and even images of the chickens that inhabit the island, these map paintings serve as geographical dislocations of a real place. Other drawings with ink on paper catalog the fish that Vallance saw during his residency, like vacation snapshots used to record a trip. Through the documentation of his experience, Vallance highlights the ways value is created through narrative, and how context shapes the meaning of objects, animals, and people on both a personal and social, cultural level.

Recent exhibitions include The Vallance Bible, Centre d'édition contemporaine, Geneva, Switzerland, 2012 (solo); The Word of God, Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA, 2011-2012 (solo); The Spectacular of Vernacular, Walker Art Center and traveled to the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, TX, Montclair Art Museum, Montclair, NJ, Ackland Art Museum, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, NC, 2011-2012 (group); and Seventh Dream of Teenage Heaven, Columbus College of Art & Design, Columbus, OH, 2011 (group). His work has been included in group exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, Barbican Centre, London, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, Germany, Tate Gallery, Liverpool, UK, UCLA Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, and the Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art in Rotterdam, among others.