

PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

José Lerma

European Mixed Masters

May 7, 2014 – June 14, 2014

Opening reception: May 6 from 6:00 – 8:00 pm

It is with great pleasure that Andrea Rosen Gallery announces our fourth solo exhibition of José Lerma. Expanding a dialogue within the context of painting, Lerma's work continues to evolve in its exploration of both the material and conceptual issues of painting through his innovative use of non-traditional materials and techniques. Drawing inspiration from his personal history and an interest in long-passed historical figures and events, Lerma creates work that expounds on the profound contingency of the present on the past, and how art and history share innate parallels of progression and innovation.

Simultaneously lush and beautifully composed abstract paintings, José Lerma's works are critical interrogations of viewers' expectations and desires for painting. What initially appear to be bold, expressionist gestures, slowly reveal themselves as meticulous constructions of colored, silicone caulk—with each rendered gesture then collaged onto the painting's surface. Lerma functionalizes our contemporary desire for materially, chromatically rich abstract painting as a way to encourage the possibility of a deeper engagement with the motivating content and narrative behind the work.



Tracing the history of 17th century French theater, *European Mixed Masters* features a series of paintings inspired by Palissot's play, *Critique de la Tragédie de Charles IX*, a satire of a historical tragedy that became one of the catalysts for the French Revolution. Staging the theatrics within the space of a tennis match, Lerma casts four iconic tennis players from the 1980s as the leading figures of the play. Recognizing portraiture as a historical vehicle for commemorating status and power, each player, painted on reflective mylar, is rendered in silhouette in late 18th century fashion. Bridging the aesthetics of the old regime and contemporary era, the "implied" portraits of Lerma's idealized figures are overtaken by a collage of chromatic strokes in the palette of 80s sportswear, that represent thrown flowers proceeding a performance.

As the protagonists face off in a conceptual and abstracted mixed doubles match, the epicly scaled, *Parterre*, on the north wall of the gallery, gives rise to an impossibly arranged and intricately rendered theater audience. Based on Pietro Martini's classic engraving, *The Exhibition at the Salon Du Louvre in 1787*, *Parterre* refers to the open space in a theater where the public could traditionally interrupt and intervene in performances, and their opinions, much as the populist bent of the Salon could do for the artist, could validate or obliterate a production's success. Though rooted within chronologically distant democratic spaces, the audience, players and viewers within the court of the gallery engage in a metaphorical rally, conceptually activated by the motion of each painting's reflection within the other, and collectively traversing a historical lineage.

José Lerma received his MFA in Painting at the University of Wisconsin, Madison and had residencies at the CORE Residency Program, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas and the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Skowhegan, Maine. Since his previous exhibition here in 2011, Lerma has

exhibited his work widely both nationally and internationally, including major solo institutional exhibitions at CAM Raleigh, Raleigh, NC and MCA Chicago, Chicago, IL. Forthcoming institutional exhibitions include a major solo exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, MI opening late May 2014, and an exhibition at Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de San Juan, Puerto Rico in 2015. Lerma lives and works in Chicago and is Professor of Drawing and Painting at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

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