

BRAND NEW GALLERY

presents

THE LAST UPPER

JOSÉ LERMA

31 MAY | 9 SEPTEMBER 2017

OPENING 31 MAY 2017 | 19.00-21.00



Brand New Gallery is pleased to present “*The Last Upper*”, José Lerma’s first solo exhibition at the gallery. The show will feature a group of paintings from Lerma’s most recent body of work.

Born in Spain in 1971 and raised in Puerto Rico, José Lerma draws inspiration from his personal history, as well as historical figures and events, claiming that “*all art is about other art and about your parents*”. Lerma explores conceptually and materially the medium of painting, recognizing it as a medium that, historically, has often been a vehicle for commemorating status and power.

“Portraiture has traditionally been a way to depicting status... The portraits were idealized, even theatrical... They were instruments. Images serve that function”

Power remains a recurrent theme for Lerma, who had a background in social science and he studied law before taking a hard left turn to pursue contemporary high-concept art. Neither critical nor celebratory, Lerma’s approach to his subject matter exposes paradoxes ranging from the site and context to his projects to the medium of painting itself.

Using varying methods and alternative materials, Lerma’s gestures and depictions continue to unfold upon investigation, his compositions are at one abstract and figurative, humorous and dark, chaotic and controlled, encouraging a deeper engagement with the content and narrative embedded in the work.

“The gallery’s exhibition is a continuation of themes that I have worked on in the past few years. What has interested me has been the nexus between finance, economics and history all expressed with an somewhat infantile aesthetic. The title is a rather obvious pun that makes allusions to drug use, and of course to Milan’s most celebrated work of art. The two versions presented here are cartoonish depictions of works by Lucas Cranach and the Master of the Housebook. The apostoles are jumbled and exist in a severely compressed but frantic, speedy and paranoid state. The Royal Family underwater is based on Jean Nocret’s famous group portrait of the Bourbons depicted as Greek gods and is a nod to the fortunes of Americas current first family. The Money Changers are loosely based on versions by Jan Sanders van Hemessen and Jacob Jordaens. Another portrait is an image of the banker Roberto Calvi of Banco Ambrosiano which is done using bank security envelope patterns. A similar technique is used on the portraits of Madoff’s right hand man Frank DiPascali and his secretary Annette Bongiorno. The paintings are full of contradictions. They are detailed and direct, idiotic and philosophical, historical and topical. They are disarming and distracting like a skilled confidence man”.

→ José Lerma

(1971, Seville, Spain) lives and works in Chicago.

He received his MFA in Painting at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. He is Professor of Drawing and Painting at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Recent solo exhibitions include: Kemper Museum of Art (Kansas City, 2016), Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de San Juan (San Juan, 2016), Andrea Rosen Gallery (New York, 2014), Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit (Detroit, 2014), Kavi Gupta Gallery (Chicago, 2014), Museum of Contemporary Art (Chicago, 2013), Contemporary Art Museum (Raleigh, 2012), Galeria Marta Cervera (Madrid, 2010), Arario Gallery (Seoul, 2007), Xavier Hufkens (Brussels, 2005).

Recent group exhibitions include: Institute of Contemporary Art at Maine College of Art (Portland, 2017), Kavi Gupta Gallery (Chicago, 2016), Saatchi Gallery (London, 2014), Lisa Cooley Gallery (New York, 2014), Deste Foundation (Athens, 2014), Centro Atlantico de Arte Moderno (Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, 2014), Misako & Rosen (Tokyo, 2014), Museo de Arte de Ponce (Ponce, 2012), Oakland University Art Gallery (Rochester, 2012), 47 Canal (New York, 2011), Lehmann Maupin (New York, 2010), Milwaukee Art Museum (Milwaukee, 2008).

BRAND NEW GALLERY

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June, September from Tuesday to Saturday

11.00-13.00 | 14.30-19.00

July from Monday to Friday 12.30-19.30

August Closed

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