

# WHITNEY

## Press Release

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May 2005

### ***REMOTE VIEWING: INVENTED WORLDS IN RECENT PAINTING AND DRAWING* OPENS JUNE 2 AT THE WHITNEY**

**June 2 through October 9, 2005**



**Terry Winters, *Display Linkage*, 2005**

New painting and drawing is the subject of *Remote Viewing: Invented Worlds in Recent Painting and Drawing*, opening on June 2, 2005, at the Whitney Museum of American Art. *Remote Viewing*, curated by Elisabeth Sussman, brings together eight artists, some well known, others emerging, all of whom create new worlds that exist somewhere between abstraction and representation. In general they share a fascination with assertive color, invented form, and the construction of dynamic spaces. The exhibition remains on view through October 9, 2005.

Each of the artists – Franz Ackermann, Steve DiBenedetto, Carroll Dunham, Ati Maier, Julie Mehretu, Matthew Ritchie, Alexander Ross, and Terry Winters – is part of a revitalization that has been seen in recent years in contemporary painting and drawing. Their work grapples with the overwhelming abundance of information now present in our lives, information that is historical, scientific, technological, geographical, visual, literary, hallucinogenic, mass-media, or otherwise.

"In the early twenty-first century, painting and drawing are a means of controlling information, opening it to both precision and chaos," says Sussman. In her introductory essay to the exhibition catalogue, Sussman continues, "If all of the artists in *Remote Viewing* are interested in information, what does that information look like? If there are invented worlds, what do they have in common? If there are narratives, even figures, do they resemble one another? In a formal and perhaps superficial sense the work in this exhibition does share certain characteristics. First, the grid and geometrical order is frequently replaced by the vortex or by a circular way of organizing space. For the most part, color is intense, not muted. Some of the work is highly abstracted: Winters and Mehretu, particularly, have morphed all their sources of visual information into forms and gestures that generate structure but retain no recognizable residual information. Ross's work appears simultaneously abstract and referential."

"At the other extreme," Sussman goes on to note, "are artists quite invested in information and narrative. Ritchie invents an epic story, a kind of creation myth. Ackermann's mental maps and wall drawings are replete with the atmosphere of the urban *dérive* and transcontinental experience. Maier, on the other hand, switches from channel to channel, space to space, to suggest the mental and visual concentration of virtual space. Dunham's recognizable "character" – an everyman who mysteriously emerged in the 1990s – gets cut, fragmented, expanded, and absorbed into the surface of the painting. DiBenedetto mines a group of recurrent circular and vertical images that, like Dunham's character, get absorbed into a rich field of color, line, and painterly passages. "

Support for *Remote Viewing: Invented Worlds in Recent Painting and Drawing* was provided by The Broad Art Foundation, The Andrew J. and Christine C. Hall Foundation and Margaret and Daniel Loeb.

## **About the Artists**

### ***Franz Ackermann***

Since visiting Hong Kong on a fellowship after finishing his studies in Hamburg in 1991, Franz Ackermann has made travel the point of departure for his work, drawing imagery from extensive journeys to such diverse destinations as Bangkok and São Paulo, Minneapolis and Zurich. The Berlin-based artist's installations generally include wall murals, postcard-sized drawings that he calls *Mental Maps*, and his large *Evasion* paintings, along with tourism posters and a variety of

other travel-related items. The contrast between the pleasure and adventure promised by the tourism industry and the less romantic realities of travel are at the heart of Ackermann's concerns. His project's ends are clearly political, critiquing the effects and counter-effects of tourism and globalization, but his means are subjective: Linking recollections of the places he has been to his own emotional state and perceptions, Ackermann presents a delicate and nuanced train of thought, which he configures by layering past and present, the real and the re-imagined.

### ***Steve DiBenedetto***

Steve DiBenedetto concocts topsy-turvy underworlds that disturb almost as much as they enchant. In his paintings and drawings, swirls, tendrils, lattices, and vortices crisscross, interweave, sever, and re-form, resulting in a kaleidoscopic vision of a deep unconscious in apparent distress. Cavernous beds of polychromatic crystalline forms are juxtaposed against neighboring webs of thick, opaque paint. Radiant color wheels churn in and around rainbow-laden blue and yellow skies, suggesting a fantastical landscape right out of *The Wizard of Oz*. Whether this is a paradisiacal vision of Oz or its antithesis, an unsettling netherworld, is not clear. DiBenedetto says he wants to give us a "greater sense of place in the big picture." And he does: He gives a big picture of a place where reality cohabits with and wages war against fantasy, a place caught between heaven and hell and enlivened in our minds.

### ***Carroll Dunham***

Over the past three decades, Carroll Dunham has produced a great breadth of experimentation in form and in content, ranging from large-scale canvases of rotating planetary bodies to suites of portraiture of a recurring male subject to small, ink-and-pencil doodles of densely abstracted landscapes. While testifying to remarkably expansive ingenuity, the stylistic peculiarity of his semi-abstract paintings and drawings and their unique iconography constitute a signature style that is instantly recognizable. The bubblegum pinks and black outlines, the square-headed, eyeless figures, the expressive orifices and protrusions -- all recur again and again in Dunham's work, proving that this artist is nothing less than the creator of a fully realized ulterior universe.

### ***Ati Maier***

In Ati Maier's paintings, whirling and exploding clouds of celestial matter expand, contract, and finally morph into something resembling cyber networks. But whether her images are literal representations of outer space or a virtual simulation of infinite three-dimensionality is difficult to

decipher. Fusing these, she employs both microcosmic and macrocosmic vocabularies, superimposing their seemingly incongruous systems in dizzying feats of composition. A journey through Maier's expansive vocabulary and dense composition can set the viewer on edge. Volcanoes erupt, tempests reel, supernovas explode, and satellites zoom, and we're left with only a glancing premonition of what will remain when the calamity subsides. Like the Big Bang, Maier's paintings are an act of creation -- one with the potential to give birth to all the matter and energy that will compose and power the universe for years to come. Perhaps they might be called Little Bangs, diminutive portals to our future, however volatile, unpredictable, and far-out it might be.

### ***Julie Mehretu***

Julie Mehretu's paintings and drawings simultaneously deflect, refract, implode, and explode -- all with ferocious speed. Her work incorporates everything from aerial views of teeming African cities to detailed studies of architectural structures in Istanbul to fragments from unidentifiable ancient city plans, all surrounded by richly colored shards, swooping vectors, and frenzied lines, dots, and swirls. Her style is reminiscent of maps, charts, architectural drawings, and calligraphy. But unlike these methodical tools, which give coherence to our lives, Mehretu's constructed world is in a constantly capricious state; the compositional elements cyclically detonate, crumble, and rebuild, and any chance at coherence does much the same. Merging disparate sites, sources, and eras, Mehretu juxtaposes here and there, past and present, to mold a new vision of the future.

### ***Matthew Ritchie***

Pulsating with pure energy and clotted with gobbets of sticky matter, Ritchie's paintings, drawings, sculpture, and installations diagram the very workings of the universe. His references include the first and second laws of thermodynamics (where energy is conserved, but everything changes), and quantum physics, as well as mythological and religious explanations for the way things are. The totalizing environments that Ritchie creates are made up of "paintings" that spill off the canvas onto the walls and floors, materializing unexpectedly in the third and fourth dimensions as the viewer encounters sculptural elements and is enveloped by architectural space. The commanding visual presence forms a network of associations in the mind of the viewer, who intuits through the visual relationships between color, line, and abstract form the matrix of myth and science, experience and philosophy that comprises Ritchie's worldview.

### ***Alexander Ross***

Alexander Ross is best known for his large-scale, luminous paintings of precisely rendered yet unidentifiable forms presented in a carefully gradated color scale of cool greens and blues. His forms float mysteriously against a space that is at once deep and indeterminate, as the nooks and crannies, holes and protuberances within them invite exploration. But as the viewer begins to be seduced by beautiful execution, a sense of vague repugnance may creep in. This counterbalance between attraction and repulsion is at the heart of Ross's mastery, as he bends to his will the basic vocabulary of painting to investigate a realm between the artificial and organic, the mineral, vegetable, and animal, breaking down the boundaries between the categories that underpin our most fundamental assumptions about the world.

### ***Terry Winters***

Materiality has played a significant role in Terry Winters's work from his first solo exhibition at Sonnabend Gallery in 1982 to his recent show at the Addison Gallery of American Art, *Terry Winters: Paintings, Drawings, Prints; 1994-2004*. Throughout, he has focused on the painting process, often mixing his own paints and applying them freely in works that draw on rich sources of reference that range from scientific diagrams to ancient textiles. The logic of each work's creation, the way that Winters structures paintings and drawings in layers formed by successive mark making, becomes a method for visualizing animated forces and worlds. It opens myriad possibilities for creating pattern and significance, providing the impetus for the artist's project "to make a new optic, a new description of nature."

### **Catalogue**

*Remote Viewing* is accompanied by a catalogue that will include an introductory essay by Elisabeth Sussman, as well as essays by Katy Siegel, Associate Professor of Art History and Criticism at Hunter College, CUNY, and contributing editor of *Artforum*, and Caroline Jones, Associate Professor of Art History, MIT; and a contribution by Ben Marcus, who directs the fiction program at Columbia University's School of the Arts. Each artist is the subject of a case study by Elizabeth M. Grady or Tina Kukielski. The book includes color illustrations of works in the exhibition as well as studio photography of each artist, in addition to a selected exhibition history and bibliography.

### ***About the Whitney***

The Whitney Museum of American Art is the leading advocate of 20<sup>th</sup>- and 21<sup>st</sup>-century American art. Founded in 1930, the Museum is the preeminent collection of American art and includes the entire artistic estate of Edward Hopper, the largest public collection of works by Alexander Calder, Louise Nevelson, and Lucas Samaras, as well as significant works by Jasper Johns, Donald Judd, Agnes Martin, Bruce Nauman, Georgia O'Keeffe, Claes Oldenburg, Kiki Smith, and Andy Warhol, among other artists. With its history of exhibiting the most promising and influential American artists and provoking intense critical and public debate, the Whitney's signature show, the Biennial, has become a measure of the state of contemporary art in America today.