

Wayne Gonzales

Works on Paper

1 – 29 September 2012

Private View 31 August 2012, 6 – 8pm



Stephen Friedman Gallery is delighted to present a solo exhibition of works on paper by American painter Wayne Gonzales. This is the first time that the artist's unique gouaches have been the focus of a show in London and offers unparalleled new insights into Gonzales' practice. Conceived as finished works, they explore the artist's trademark language working across the spectrum of the figurative and the abstract.

Gonzales' characteristic painterly style is often associated with large abstract swathes of paint which, on viewing at a distance, depict intricate scenes ranging from crowds of people to topographical landscapes and architectural scenes. Exploring a similarly wide range of subject matter in the exhibition, the gouaches on paper reveal the intricate layering process inherent in the artist's work. Far smaller in scale, these detailed scenes are painted in beautiful and delicate precision. The graduating hues of Gonzales' palette here take on a new life as light and shadow are tantalisingly accentuated across the paper.

Born in New Orleans in 1957, Gonzales was influenced early in his childhood by the characters and crowds of the city's bustling French Quarter. Following the assassination of JFK, his youth became surrounded by a period consumed by the event's investigations and conspiracy theories. Images of the tragedy became vital to its unlocking, pored over by press and public. A smudging hint of a clue in the speeding blur of the car, a face picked out in the crowd: all these photographs and more were to become the start of the artist's lifetime exploration into the dissemination and manipulation of imagery.

Often sourcing photographs from the internet or taken by the artist himself, Gonzales dissects and distils the chosen image so that upon its final and often untitled presentation we are left to free associate its possible origin. For every new creation, the artist decides on a particular palette by selecting one or two colours within the original image from which graduations of tone then fill each layer of the scene. Through this very deliberate intention, every adaptation exudes a different mood and feeling. Meditative and enigmatic, the works reach out to us for our own personal interpretation and yet rebuff explanation.

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By isolating and suspending moments in time, Gonzales' work blurs the lines of power between the individual subject and the collective mass. This is most apparent in his 'crowd' scenes, where washes of paint simultaneously define and yet compete with the lines of the people. In one gouache 'Untitled' (2012), this is taken further as two distinct layers of the original source are divided. Four figures are seated facing us appear as tourists painted over the native crowd in subtly contrasting tones. By dividing the image, Gonzales marks a distinctive separation between the two groups and we are invited to read further into its possible message. Indeed, if 'the medium is the message', here it is actually the method that presides. Through Gonzales' exploitation of photographs, he creates a potent and timely commentary on our digital age as we are reminded of the abundance of images in our daily lives, and their everyday manipulations. The works on paper therefore act as windows in to a particular scene, transformed by the artist's unique and contemporary lens.

Throughout the exhibition we tap not only deeper into the artist's technique but further into his myriad of influences. These new works on paper reveal Gonzales' great inspiration from art history. Re-working the same image in a manner akin to the layering of a silkscreen immediately draws up the influence of Andy Warhol. And yet similarly, the washes of colour in other works remind us of an Impressionist beach or outdoor scene. One such image, identified as the crowded Venice Beach, appears almost Pointillist in its precise variations of colour, while another gouache of a bustling crowd pressing against a railing draws to mind the muted hues of Picasso's 'Guernica'. Every work speaks its own language and ignites a different reaction. At every turn, the gouaches on paper surprise and delight.

Contemplative, evocative and mysterious, these delicate and yet potent works on paper are an integral and standalone part of the artist's practice. Allowing us to pause, consider, and reflect, they are an intimate reminder of the diversity of our everyday lives.

Wayne Gonzales (b. 1957, New Orleans) lives and works in New York, USA.

Recent solo exhibitions include; *Wayne Gonzales: Light to Dark/Dark to Light*, New Orleans Museum of Art, Louisiana (2011); *Wayne Gonzales*, CAC Málaga, Málaga (2011); Stephen Friedman Gallery, London (2010); Paula Cooper Gallery, New York (2009); and Patrick de Brock Gallery, Knokke, Belgium (2008).

Recent group exhibitions include: *Dark Matters*, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institute, Washington DC, (2012); *All that Glisters*, Stephen Friedman Gallery, London (2011); *Big New Field: Artists in the Cowboy's Stadium Art Program*, Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, Texas, USA (2010); *Infinitesimal Eternity*, Yale University School of Art, New York, USA (2009); *Every Revolution is a Roll of the Dice*, curated by Bob Nickas, Paula Cooper Gallery, New York (2009); *Reflections*, Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago (2008); *Say Goodbye to...*, curated by Donna Harkavy and Marion Wilson, The Clifford Gallery at Colgate University, Hamilton NY (2009); *Empires and Environments*, curated by Dominique Nahas and Margaret Evangeline, The Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham (2008) and *Resistance Is*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, USA (2007).

Gallery hours are: Tuesday to Friday, 10am - 6pm and Saturday, 11am - 5pm
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