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EXHIBITION: LUC TUYMANS- Fortune

DATES: April 24 - May 21, 2003

Opening on Thursday, April 24, the gallery will present new paintings by the Belgian artist Luc Tuymans. The exhibition, entitled Fortune, is the artist's fifth solo show at the gallery. The artist's work has been shown widely throughout Europe and the United States. Earlier this month an exhibition of recent work entitled The Arena opened in Germany at the Kunstverein Hannover, and will travel to the Pinakothek der Moderne Kunst, Munich and then to the Kunstverein, St. Gallen in Switzerland. Another museum exhibition of his work will open in August at the Kunsthalle in Helsinki, and will travel to the Centro de Arte, Salamanca in Spain. The artist's work was recently included in Documenta XI in Kassel, Germany. Tuymans was also the Belgian representative of its national pavilion in the 2001 Venice Biennale. His work will be the subject of a major retrospective at the Tate Modern in London in May 2004.

Born in 1958, Luc Tuymans produced his first mature work in his late teens. He abandoned painting for an extended period in the 1980s to pursue filmmaking, only to return to the canvas with a renewed focus. With the art world's attention on post-conceptual work, installation art, film and video from the late 80s through the 90s, Tuymans, nonetheless, established himself as a unique voice in the visual arts. Today, amidst a worldwide and triumphant renaissance of painting, he is widely regarded as one of the most influential artists working today.

Tuymans' paintings are deceptive. His trademark muted palette that shuns primary colors, his off-hand choice of subject matter, and his general avoidance of spectacle and narrative, have resulted in a "quiet" body of work. Only slowly have these paintings revealed their explosiveness. Tuymans' paintings explore the dark side of human behavior. Terror, fear, violence and the pursuit of power have informed his work from the very beginning. Tuymans confronts the limitations of representation in the face of real terror from the events of recent history, such as war, the holocaust, racism, terrorism and other senseless violence through the imagery of memory. Memory, by definition, is subjective, and its imagery unrecordable by technological means, proves to be the perfect vehicle for Tuymans to approach his difficult subject matter. His search for images that communicate with our collective memory and conscience is the foundation for his projects.

Tuymans entitled his new exhibition “Fortune” and thus deliberately chooses a title of great ambiguity. In conversation, the artist has explained that it is the notion of paranoia that informs this body of work. For Tuymans, who was in the United States during 9/11, the paintings in the exhibition reflect on the changed world we live in today. Tuymans believes that the images of 9/11 are so powerful that they represent one of the most stunning examples of collective memory to date. The artist argues that, as the world becomes more unsettled, the here and the now and our familiar surroundings gain importance. A number of paintings depict the artist’s everyday environment. The painting entitled “Fortune” depicts a storefront seen at night and occupied by ghost-like mannequins. “Frank” depicts a man within his SUV, his head encased in the top corner of the painting behind the wheel and the hood of the car. SUVs are advertised as symbols of protection but the painting portrays this object in a more sinister and menacing way, almost predatory. One of the most disturbing works in the exhibition is titled “Mayhem” and depicts a paintball contest, an image of which the artist found in a guns and ammo magazine. Seen from a bird’s eye viewpoint, the figures in the contest are wearing color-coded athletic uniforms and suggest the trappings of a more serious contest—a war game.

As with all of his work, Tuymans’ stance is remote, neither accusatory nor moralizing, yet the urgency of these paintings cannot be denied. The mood and the psychological atmosphere of these paintings heighten the terror that lies within, that moment of realization when all is silent.

For further information, please contact the gallery at 212 727 2070.