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Luc Tuymans: *Forever* The Management of Magic

February 14 - March 22, 2008

Reception: Thursday, February 14, 2008, 6 - 8 pm



Opening on February 14, David Zwirner is pleased to present new work by Belgian artist Luc Tuymans. The artist is currently the focus of a retrospective traveling from Mucsarnok Kunsthalle, Budapest, Hungary (closes February 10) to Haus der Kunst, Munich, Germany (March 2-May 12) and Zacheta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw, Poland (May 30-August 17). Tuymans has recently been the subject of one-person exhibitions at Kabinet für Aktuelle Kunst, Bremerhaven, Germany (2007); MuHKA Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst Antwerpen, Antwerp, Belgium (2007); Museu Serralves, Porto, Portugal (2006); Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain (MAMCO), Geneva, Switzerland (2006); and the Tate Modern, London, England (2004). In 2009, the Wexner Center for the Arts and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art will mount the artist's first US retrospective, which will travel to the Dallas Museum of Art and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago.

A pivotal figure in the field of contemporary painting, Tuymans has explored diverse themes ranging from the colonial history of Belgium, the effects of images from 9/11, to the elusive power of the Jesuit order. In his seventh solo exhibition at the gallery, the artist will focus his exacting gaze on the globally influential, yet distinctly American phenomenon of Disney. Founded in the early 1920s as a small animation studio, The Walt Disney Company has become one of the largest media and entertainment corporations in the world. A conscious purveyor of family values and the virtue of American industry, Disney has vigorously defended its role in the creation of what the artist has termed a "spiritual utopia." With characteristic intensity, Tuymans explores the transformation of entertainment into ideology, while at the same time offers a critique of the hegemonic control of economic and cultural capital and the implicit dangers in a reality based on the production of magic.

The exhibition will include eight new paintings and eight new drawings, in which Tuymans puts forth the image of a disintegrating utopia. Largely depicted in flat, muted hues, an uneasy sense of nostalgia pervades, which shuns the obvious and circumvents easy interpretation. In a key painting entitled *Turtle*, we are confronted by the looming image of a mechanical float in Disneyland's famous, now-defunct attraction, the Main Street Electrical Parade. Divorced from the bright lights and whirring excitement of the parade, the familiar childhood favorite is rendered gruesome and hollow by Tuymans' broad brushstrokes and anemic colors. Clear from a distance, the image dissolves into abstraction upon close view.

Integral to the artist's practice is the reliance on existing visual materials, including drawings, photographs, and film stills. Referencing a 1960s promotional film, the work *W* presents a shadowy vision of Walt Disney before his original, unrealized plans for an expansive residential project known as EPCOT (Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow). Employing discomfort as a formal device, Tuymans crops the corporate leader's actual body from view, thus raising questions of control, labor, and invisibility, while simultaneously suggesting a latent grim reality that undermines the proposed fantasy ideals. Large drawings continue to explore the two-dimensional plans for EPCOT, which consisted of a complex tunnel system for covertly supplying the imagined, carefully controlled community; through repetition the images metamorphose from practical proposals into disassociated patterning.

A striking aura of concealment emerges from the collection of works in the exhibition, as Tuymans explores the history of Disney's adamant and complex entertainment agenda. For example, one of the smaller paintings depicts a set from *The Carousel of Progress*, an attraction that Disney developed for the 1964-1965 New York World's Fair. An unabashed celebration of the history of electricity and American domestic improvements, the attraction notably depended on theatrical scrimms to hide multiple rotating stages. The painting and exhibition's shared title, *Forever*, seemingly refers to the endurance of an ideology and a timeless, fairytale paradigm. Rife with paradox, it simultaneously proposes the practical opposites – anachronism, mortality, and dissolution. In these works, plans fail, memories fade, and perception is clouded by illusionism.

A fully illustrated catalogue will be published in conjunction with the exhibition.

Press preview with the artist, February 13 at 5 pm. For information contact julia@davidzwirner.com