

For immediate release

STAN DOUGLAS Humor, Irony and the Law

October 30 – December 23, 2008

Opening reception: Thursday, October 30, 6 – 8 pm

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David Zwirner is pleased to present an exhibition by Stan Douglas. In 2007, the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart and Württembergischer Kunstverein in Stuttgart, Germany jointly hosted Douglas' first museum retrospective, surveying the artist's key works over the past two decades, and published a comprehensive catalogue. Douglas has recently been the focus of solo exhibitions at the Vienna Secession, Vienna, Austria (2006); Studio Museum in Harlem, New York (2006); Art Gallery of York University, Toronto, Canada (2006); Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada (2006); and Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska (2005). He co-curated *Beyond Cinema: The Art of Projection, Films, Videos, and Installations from 1963 to 2005* at Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin, Germany in 2006. A monograph of the artist's work from the Friedrich Christian Flick Collection was recently published by Dumont. In February, *Stan Douglas: Klatsassin* will be on view at Vancouver Art Gallery. This is Douglas' ninth solo exhibition at David Zwirner.

The exhibition features a new series of large-scale photographs. Using his native Vancouver as a local example, Douglas explores crowd phenomena in the 20th century. Each of the four photographs takes a public event as its starting point, ranging from a 1912 Free Speech Demonstration to the 1935 Battle of Ballantyne Pier to a 1955 horserace at Hastings Park (pictured above). In the work *Abbott & Cordova, 7 August 1971* (2008), Douglas stages a scene from the famous Gastown Riots, which exploded mounting tensions between local hippies and law enforcement. Striving for historical accuracy, the work replicates local businesses, as well as music posters and newspapers from the time. Commissioned by Westbank Projects, the image will be on view later this year as a 44-foot photographic mural in the Atrium of the new Woodward's development, located at Abbott and Cordova in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

This exhibition also marks the first U.S. presentation of *Vidéo* (2007). The work premiered in 2007 at Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, France, when Douglas was invited to create a work to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Samuel Beckett's birth. It continues Douglas' longstanding involvement with the Irish dramatist's work, beginning with the 1988 exhibition he curated at the Vancouver Art Gallery entitled *Samuel Beckett: Teleplays*. *Vidéo* combines references to Franz Kafka's *The Trial* and its screen adaptation by Orson Welles (1962), as well as Beckett's only motion picture, *Film* (1965), starring Buster Keaton. Set in the suburbs of Paris, specifically in La Courneuve, *Vidéo* begins (and ends) with the red pilot lamp of a panning surveillance camera. Douglas' protagonist, K, a young woman of African descent, is apprehended on unexplained charges and brought to trial. As in Beckett's *Film*, the face of the protagonist remains unseen throughout, and only one audible sound punctuates the otherwise silent film. In *Vidéo*, subject is constituted not through language but simply through gazes, of both the viewer and the camera. Furthermore, in the dimly lit film, the dark-skinned K practically disappears into the image, suggesting the unresolved status of the individual in the state-operated machine of criminal legislation.

The title of the exhibition is derived from French philosopher Gilles Deleuze's 1967 essay "Humor, Irony and the Law." The text argues that in modern times humor and irony function as viable modes of subverting the law, highlighting the artist's own modes of questioning the cultural and ideological traditions of modernity. Douglas' works exemplify a critical revision of Western history, past and present, and expand, both sensorially and intellectually, the experiential spaces of cinema, television, and the museum.

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