

For Immediate Release

## NEO RAUCH

May 12 – June 21, 2008

Opening Reception: Monday, May 12, 6 - 8 pm



David Zwirner is pleased to present an exhibition of new work by German painter Neo Rauch. In 2007, Rauch was the subject of a solo exhibition at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, which then traveled to the Max Ernst Museum in Brühl, Germany. He has had one-person exhibitions at such prestigious museums as Rudolfinum Prag, Prague, Czech Republic (2007); Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Wolfsburg, Germany (2006); Musée d'art Contemporain de Montréal, Montreal, Canada (2006); Centro de Arte Contemporáneo Málaga, Málaga, Spain (2005); and the Albertina, Vienna, Austria (2004). This will be the artist's fourth solo exhibition at the gallery.

Educated at the now legendary Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst in Leipzig, Germany, Rauch (b. 1960) has become one of his generation's most influential and virtuoso painters. He continues the rich tradition of Leipzig figurative painting. The artist transforms typical industrious scenes into veritable dreamscapes, transporting viewers to a deeply personal and enigmatic, symbolic universe.

Rauch does not rely on existing imagery or models for his paintings, and while some begin as tiny sketches, he works his imagined scenes directly onto the canvas. He likens his process to reading a novel, with the paintings unfolding as surprisingly for their maker as for any viewer. Springing from dreams and shaped by experience, both past and present, Rauch's instinctive imagery and automatic approach exceed straightforwardly Surrealist concerns and restrictive exercise.

Unlike many of his contemporaries, Rauch does not set out to create a cohesive group of paintings for his exhibitions. Made without preconceptions, the pictures fertilize one another in the studio, with colors, symbols, and forms (cartoon-like and realistically rendered) drifting and reappearing among canvases. In many of his compositions, hulking figures engaged in manual labor or indeterminable tasks work against backdrops of mundane architecture, bizarre and often barren landscapes, or domestic interiors. Rauch's fascination with the figure and work-related props allow for a formal exploration, based in part on the properties of paint itself. A swirling puddle on the ground, for example, or the tumbling folds of brightly colored fabric, blur the line between rendered object and reference to the artist's materials.

Inspired as much by Old Masters as by the rebelliousness of painters Georg Baselitz and Jörg Immendorff, Rauch's work refuses fixed interpretation and defies categorization. In *Das Gut*, 2008, the artist presents three figures seemingly embroiled in a lovers' quarrel, as a disquietingly stoic heroine stands between a man wielding a sword and his defenseless victim. Upon closer inspection, a stranger scene is revealed, as the male figures' legs converge and dissolve into an amorphous finlike appendage. In the background, the same threesome is involved in an equally nebulous scene. Despite the art historical precedence, this gesture of continuous narrative, common to early Italian Renaissance painting, highlights feelings of disorientation.

Influenced by writer Léon Bloy, Rauch explores the philosophy that events occur simultaneously, rather than successively. By allowing multiple moments to visually coalesce on one canvas, his paintings act as an apt metaphor for this understanding of existence. More poignantly, the works also function reflexively as allegories of painting and the creative process. For Rauch, the creative process can be plagued with expectations, restrictions, and limitations – practical and theoretical, external and self-imposed – provoking an acute tension that pervades every aspect of the works. This tension is epitomized by the gripping *Parabel*, 2008. Amidst a discordant industrial landscape, an artist falls before his blank canvas, his neck tethered by a noose. The feelings of paralyzation, depression, fear, and vulnerability that characterize the creative process, and ultimately human existence, are presented honestly and poetically.

Press preview with the artist, March 12 at 5 pm. For information contact [jwitkin@davidzwirner.com](mailto:jwitkin@davidzwirner.com)