

For immediate release

CHRIS OFILI

Afro Margin

September 10 – October 24, 2009

Opening reception September 10, 6 – 8pm



Afro Margin Four, 2004, Pencil on paper
40.16 x 26.46 inches, 102 x 67.2 cm

David Zwirner is pleased to present *Afro Margin*, an exhibition of eight pencil drawings by Chris Ofili. This is the artist's second exhibition at the gallery. His 2007 debut, *Devil's Pie*, was an expansive exhibition uniting his work in painting, sculpture, printmaking, and graphite drawing.

To accompany the exhibition, Radius Books/David Zwirner will publish *Chris Ofili: Afro Margin*, a limited edition catalogue of 500, signed and numbered by the artist. The catalogue includes a poem by Inua Ellams, a poet, writer, teacher, and performer based in London and an essay by Cameron Shaw, a New York-based writer.

Begun in 2004, while Ofili was still living in London, the *Afro Margin* series continued after he moved to Trinidad in 2005, and was finally completed in 2007. Known primarily for his bold, large-scale paintings, these intimate drawings reveal Ofili to be a master draughtsman. In this exquisite series, Ofili employs his

distinguished "afro heads," a signature motif he began working with in the early 1990s. Here the "margin" – created by darkened "afro heads" piled vertically into columns and varying in size – suggests gothic towers and aboriginal totems. With each work, Ofili started by consciously considering the width of the column, discovering and breaking the tension of the blank page. As the series progressed, conceptions of blackness also figured as a way to understand the margin. Moving transformed this idea, as he left a metropolitan center – London – for a place on the fringe of cultural activity – Trinidad. Formally, however, the series was not affected by the changes in the landscape. Unlike much of his other work, he tried to confine the relationship to the structure of the idea. As Cameron Shaw states in the catalogue essay, "Ultimately, the significance is in the arrangement . . . Like an automatic drawing, notebook doodle, or physical meditation, his intention was to disappear into the action, while simply maintaining awareness of its natural direction."

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Chris Ofili was born in 1968 in Manchester, England, and currently lives in Trinidad. He was the recipient of the 1998 Turner Prize, and his recent solo exhibitions include *Devil's Pie*, David Zwirner, New York (2007); *The Blue Rider Extended Remix*, kestnergesellschaft, Hannover, Germany (2006); *The Upper Room*, Tate Britain, London, England (2005); *Afro Muses*, The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York (2005); and *Within Reach*, British Pavilion, 50th Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy (2003).

In October, Rizzoli will publish the first major monograph on the artist. The book encompasses Ofili's entire oeuvre, and includes over 200 color images. The book includes a foreword by Peter Doig, an interview between the artist and Thelma Golden, and essays by others, including David Adjaye on *The Upper Room*, Okwui Enwezor on *Within Reach*, Carol Becker on *The Holy Virgin Mary*; and short texts by Kara Walker and Cameron Shaw.

On **Saturday, October 24** (5 to 7pm), the closing day of the exhibition, David Zwirner and Rizzoli will host a book launch for the artist at the gallery. Please contact the gallery for further information.

In January 2010, Tate Britain will present a major survey of Ofili's work. This will be the most substantial exhibition of his work to date, bringing together approximately 45 paintings. Covering the period from the mid-1990s to the present day, it will also include pencil drawings and watercolors, as well as new work brought directly from the artist's studio in Trinidad.