

For immediate release

## NEO RAUCH

### At the Well

November 6 – December 20, 2014

Opening reception: Thursday, November 6, 6–8 PM

Press preview with the artist: 10 AM



*Skulpteurin*, 2014  
Oil on canvas  
110 ¼ x 82 ¾ inches (280 x 210 cm)

David Zwirner is pleased to present an exhibition of new works by Neo Rauch, on view at 533 West 19th Street in New York. *At the Well* brings together small and large format paintings that expand the artist's unique iconography of eccentric figures, animals, and hybrids within vaguely familiar but imaginary settings.

Born in 1960 in Leipzig, then East Germany, Rauch is part of a generation of artists who came of age in a war-torn, divided country. He spent his youth in the Eastern Bloc, and received his arts education at the Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst in Leipzig. The impermeable border within Germany famously tempered the advance of Western avant-garde movements in the East, where figurative painting maintained its predominance. Not until the end of the 1980s did a shift become apparent, and Rauch, then in his late twenties, came to spearhead a break with the existing dogma.

His paintings are characterized by a unique combination of realism and surrealist abstraction. In many of his compositions, human figures engaged in indeterminate tasks work against backdrops of mundane architecture, industrial settings, or bizarre and often barren landscapes. These figures, though squarely centered in his paintings, often have the appearance of being part of still lifes. Scale is frequently arbitrary and non-perspectival, and differences between the characters seem to allude to different time zones or planes of existence.

In the present show, Rauch continues this collage-like approach to his paintings. In *Heilichtung*, which measures three meters tall and five meters wide, a rectangular "insert" shows a complementary scene which is visually distinct from the main composition. A man lies on a stretcher while several people gather around him. A satellite-like dish in the background could indicate a telepathic link between the primary subject and the added scene, and abstract biomorphic shapes add to a sense of mysterious mutability. *Hüter der Nacht* similarly shows a man lying down, this time in a bed while a woman tends to his needs with claw-like gloves and a uniformed male figure pauses at an entrance with a broom. The English translation of the title means "Guardian of the Night" and the sweeper, in this light, seems to become a symbolic stand-in for removing the contents of the day before the dawn of the next.

The bright yellow flowers, an indication of Spring also used in previous works by Rauch, recur in *Am Brunnen*, the painting which lends its title to the exhibition. Here, the artist depicts a narrow alleyway that doubles as a well. As a horse drinks from its water, characters with little apparent cohesion take part in a discussion. Yet despite their close proximity, the exchange appears to involve non-verbal communication, as each of the figures seems emerged within their own realm. The composition is kept predominantly in brown, purple, and yellow shades, and in

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a new development within his work, Rauch has used distinct color schemes for the paintings in the exhibition. *Späte Heimkehr* and *Skulpteurin* are two particularly bright works, in which red and blue colors dominate. In the former, birds and winged humans are illuminated against a dark background by several light sources—a lantern, moonlight, and what appears to be fires—while the latter scene showing a female sculptor is depicted in stark daylight. While the notion of labor has always been central to Rauch's subject matter, the focus has in recent paintings shifted from physical labor to creative work, and as in *Skulpteurin*, many of the characters in the present show are engaged in artistic pursuits.

While similar figures and buildings reappear throughout Rauch's compositions, each of his works nonetheless emerges as a self-contained entity—a standalone epic complete with its own unique storyline. Rauch refers to this sense of integrity as a painting's "nervous system," a metaphor which also elucidates how the otherwise arbitrary and often otherworldly narratives retain a sense of plausibility. As he notes, "As soon as I have the feeling that the thing has blood circulating through it, a nervous system, a skeleton, then questions as to the message become...marginal."<sup>1</sup>

The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated publication by David Zwirner Books. Created in close collaboration with the artist, it will feature an essay by Norman Rosenthal.

*At the Well* is **Neo Rauch's** sixth solo exhibition with David Zwirner since he joined the gallery in 2000. Previous shows include *Heilstätten* (2011), *Neo Rauch* (2008), *Renegaten* (2005), *Neo Rauch* (2002), and *Neo Rauch* (2000).

Rauch's work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at prominent institutions internationally, most recently in 2013 at BOZAR – Centre for Fine Arts in Brussels. In 2010, his first major museum survey was co-hosted by the Museum der Bildenden Künste Leipzig and the Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich. A version of this survey was shown at the Zachęta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw in 2011. Other venues which have presented solo exhibitions over the past decade include the Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz, Germany (2012); Museum Frieder Burda, Baden-Baden, Germany; Essl Museum, Klosterneuburg, Austria (both 2011); The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Galerie Rudolfinum, Prague (both 2007); Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal; Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Germany (both 2006); Centro de Arte Contemporáneo de Málaga, Spain (2005); Albertina, Vienna (2004); and the Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht, The Netherlands (2002).

The Grafikstiftung Neo Rauch opened in June 2012 in the artist's hometown of Aschersleben, Germany. The foundation is dedicated to maintaining and preserving Rauch's entire graphic oeuvre.

Museum collections which hold works by the artist include the Gemeentemuseum, The Hague; Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin; Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Germany; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum der Bildenden Künste Leipzig; Museum Ludwig, Cologne; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; and the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.

<sup>1</sup> Neo Rauch, cited in Rita Pokorny, "You won't find an 'Untitled' among my works [interview]," *The Art Newspaper* no. 224 (May 2011), p. 51.

## **Special Event**

### **Book signing with Neo Rauch at David Zwirner**

**Friday, November 7, 4 – 5 PM**

The artist will be signing specially designed book plates for the forthcoming exhibition catalogue *Neo Rauch: At the Well*, due to be published by David Zwirner Books in late November. A selection of other books will be available as well. For more information and to reserve signed copies, contact Molly Stein +1 212 727 2070 [mstein@davidzwirner.com](mailto:mstein@davidzwirner.com).

**For all press inquiries and to RSVP to the November 6 press preview, contact**

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