

## MIGUEL ABREU GALLERY

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Exhibition:** PIETER SCHOOLWERTH

**Dates:** January 20 – March 2, 2008

**Reception:** Sunday, January 20, 6:30 – 9 PM

Opening on Sunday, January 20th, Miguel Abreu Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of new paintings by Pieter Schoolwerth, his first solo show at the gallery.

Any attempt to trace the trajectory of Pieter Schoolwerth's pictorial practice should establish the *tabula rasa* of the image world underlying his early work before allowing the category of "painting" – its vocabularies and multiple histories – to enter the picture.

Years ago, during a trip to Paris with him, I remember slowly walking through the long, permanent collection galleries of the Pompidou Center without once stopping in front of a particular work for further consideration or commentary. Back in the Empire of the Sign, repeated drives through the suburban landscapes of Southern Californian provided us with excessive material to formulate clever *détournements* and numerous jokes. If language and its operative games was ubiquitous and the dominant element of experience, the alphabet, hence, was to become the fundamental material of his work, the literal source of meaning construction. Through the direct and systematic manipulation of one letter of the alphabet after another, Schoolwerth produced highly restraining, yet liberating narratives, the immediate outgrowth of which were miniature hybrid figurines that were subsequently photographed and placed into a book alongside the words and sentences that had rigorously generated them. Schoolwerth's rejection of the constituted world afforded him a new order of the image, one he could abide by and live with as well as share with us. Later projects, such as *Thee 83 Altered States ov Americcka* (1995-96) or *The Black Rainbow's Domino Effect on the Infinite Burgundy Line* (1997) painstakingly measured and mapped out imaginary territories around which a profusion of iconography, brought in from popular culture and other darker sources, was drawn and distributed on the page in a manner reminiscent of medieval illuminations. This made for the emergence of a second order of the image, which was soon followed by the abandonment of self-imposed, generative structures in favor of apprehensions of everyday life through carefully articulated multi-figure paintings. These tightly rendered narrative works tended to allegorize the very process of formation of their depicted content.

The artist's large scale, theatrical paintings in the current exhibition, entitled *Pieter Schoolwerth*, can be described as attempts at self-portraiture. Here Schoolwerth repeatedly stages himself in complex, quasi-narrative tableaux in which the stuff of paint allegorically acquires the function of performance. This might point to a third or fourth order of the image.

Pieter Schoolwerth has exhibited his work internationally since 1994. In New York, he has had one person shows at Thread Waxing Space, Greene Naftali, American Fine Arts, and Elizabeth Dee Gallery. In April, he will participate in the group exhibition, *Des Jeunes Gens Modernes*, curated by Jean-Francois Sanz, at Galerie du Jour, Paris.

For more information or for visuals, please contact the gallery:

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**Gallery hours:** Wednesday – Sunday, 11:00 AM to 6:30 PM

**Subway:** F to East Broadway; B, D to Grand Street or J, M, Z to Delancey / Essex Street

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